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COMMENTARY ON JEREMIAH AND LAMENTATIONS

VOLUME 2

Jeremiah 20–52 • Lamentations 1–5



JOHN CALVIN

SOLI DEO GLORIA

Commentary on Jeremiah
and Lamentations
Volume 2
Jeremiah 20–52 and Lamentations 1–5

John Calvin

Translated from the original Latin and edited by the Rev. John Owen

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Commentary on Jeremiah and Lamentations
Volume 2: Jeremiah 20–52 and Lamentations 1–5

John Calvin

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Translator's Preface

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

volume third

The derangement as to the order of the chapters first occurs in this Volume. It is commonly thought that chapters 21, 24, and 27, were delivered in the time of Zedekiah; while chapters 20, 22, 23, 25, and 26, contain Prophecies delivered in the previous reign of Jehoiakim. The early Versions and the *Targum* retain the same order with the *Hebrew,* only there are derangements of another kind both in the *Septuagint* and the *Arabic,* which commence at verse 14 of chapter 25, and continue to the end of chapter 51: It hence appears that the disorder had taken place early, before the Versions were made.

There are a few particulars to which the Editor wishes to draw the attention of Literary Readers, some of which have been already noticed in the Notes appended to previous Volumes, though not perhaps so fully specified as to attract attention; and there is one subject which belongs especially to this Volume.

The first thing is in reference to a Hebrew idiom; and that with regard to the pronoun relative {אשר}, who, which, whom. There is a peculiarity as to the use of this which has been overlooked, as far as the writer knows, by Grammarians. It precedes in Hebrew, as in other languages, the verb by which it is governed; but when it is not governed in a transitive sense, a personal pronoun follows the verb with a preposition prefixed to it, as, for instance, in Jeremiah 1:2,

"To whom the word of the Lord came;"

which is literally, "Whom the word of the Lord came to him." "To him" and "whom" are the same. It is an idiom, and the same exists in *Welsh,* which in many of its peculiarities corresponds exactly with the Hebrew. This

passage, and others of a similar kind, are literally the same in that language, "Yr hwn y daeth gair yr Arglwydd atto;" and the last word, "atto," the preposition being prefixed to the pronoun, and made, as it were, one word, corresponds exactly with the Hebrew.

We have, in Jeremiah 7:10, these words —

"Which (God's house) is called by my Name," literally, "which my Name is called on it;"

which means, *"on* which my Name is called." The following are similar examples: —

"Unto whom they offer incense" literally, "whom they offer incense to them,"
(Jeremiah 11:12;)

"Against whom I have pronounced;" literally, "whom I have pronounced against them," (Jeremiah 18:8;)

"Upon whose roofs they have burned incense;" literally, "which they have burned incense on their *roofs,*" (Jeremiah 19:13.)

In all these instances the *Welsh* is literally the *Hebrew.* The last example is rather remarkable, but the *Welsh* is exactly the same, "y rhai yr arogldarthasant ar eu pennau." The verb, also, is similar, derived from the noun which means incense, "they have incensed;" but the verb in *English* is not so used. There is hardly a noun or a verb in *Hebrew* which the *Welsh* cannot literally express — a peculiarity which neither *Latin* nor *Greek* possesses, and perhaps no modern language. See also Genesis 44:5, 10, 16; 48:15; Deuteronomy 11:24; Deuteronomy 12:2; Isaiah 31:4; Jeremiah 14:15; Jeremiah 17:19; Amos 9:12; Jonah 4:10, 11. [1]

But it must be especially observed, as the point will be hereafter referred to, that when the relative pronoun is governed by the verb in a transitive sense, without a preposition, there is then no personal pronoun added after the verb, either affixed to it or separately. This seems to be an invariable rule, —

"The land that I have given for an inheritance; {הנחלתי} {אשר}" (Jeremiah 3:18.)

"In the land that I gave; {נתתי} {אשר}" (Jeremiah 7:7.)

"My law which I set before them; {לפניהם} {נתתי} {אשר}"
(Jeremiah 9:13.)

See also Psalm 78:69; 86: 9; 105:5; Jeremiah 7:23; 9:16; 11:10; 13:4; 15:4;

[1] There is another peculiarity as to {{אשר which may be mentioned, that is, when connected with a noun and rendered ``whose,'' in the genitive case in our language. ``Whose land the rivers have spoiled;'' literally, ``whom the rivers have spoiled her land.'' (Isaiah 18:2.) ``Whose merchants are princes;'' literally, ``who-her merchants are princes.'' (Isaiah 23:8.) Here, again, the Welsh is exactly the Hebrew, and in the first of these verses, the very order of the words is the same, --- ``Yr hon yr yspeiliodd yr avonydd ei thir.'' ``Whose mouth speaketh vanity;'' literally, ``who --- their mouth speaketh vanity.'' (Psalm 144:8.) The Welsh is literally the same, --- ``Y rhai y llevara en genan wagedd;'' the ``who'' is in apposition with ``their,'' both being in Hebrew the same in every case. See also Deuteronomy 8:9; Psalm 95:4, 5; Psalm 144:15; Psalm 146:5 The following are similar instances: --- ``Whose seed was in itself;'' literally, which --- its seed was in itself. (Genesis 1:12.) ``In the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; literally, which --- in it is the fruit of a tree yielding seed;'' (Genesis 1:29.) ``Wherein is the breath of life;'' literally, ``which --- in it is the breath of life.'' (Genesis 6:17.) ``Of beasts that are not clean;'' literally, ``of the beast which --- not it was clean.'' (Genesis 7:8.) ``That hath statutes;'' literally, ``which to it are statutes.'' (Deuteronomy 4:8.) See Deuteronomy 19:1; Ruth 3:2.

16:13; Ezekiel 18:27; Daniel 9:10.

The Second point is connected with the style of the Hebrew prophets.

1. The order in which they arrange their ideas. — They frequently mention, first, the effect, then the cause — first, the last act, then the previous act or acts — first, the deed or action, then the motive or what led to the deed — first, the later event, then the former — first, what is most evident and visible, then what is less ostensible and hidden. In all these instances, the order is the reverse of what is commonly found in other writers.

"My people is foolish," the effect; "they have not known me," the cause. (Jeremiah 4:22.) "Before me continually is grief," the effect; "and wounds," the cause. (Jeremiah 6:7.) "I sent them not," the last act; "neither have I commanded them," the preceding; "neither spake to them," the first. (Jeremiah 14:14.) "With an outstretched hand and a strong arm," the deed or action; "even in anger and in fury, and in great wrath," what led to the deed. (Jeremiah 21:5.) "The truth to Jacob," the later event; "and the mercy to Abraham," the former event. (Micah 7:20.) "Hast thou utterly rejected Judah?" the visible act; "hath thy soul loathed Zion?" the hidden reason. (Jeremiah 14:19.)

Similar instances are found in the New Testament. What is palpable and evident is stated first, then what leads to it, or the source from which it comes; as when St. Paul mentions "rioting" first, and then "drunkenness," which leads to it; and "strife" first, and then "envying," from which it proceeds. (Romans 13:13.) In a like manner he puts "joy," the higher and the most manifest feeling, before "peace," which is the source of it. (Romans 15:13) In Ephesians 6:23, the Apostle mentions "peace, love, and faith;" the right order is reversed — the most evident thing is first referred to. There are many passages which can be satisfactorily explained on no other principle.

2. The order in which subjects are often treated. — When two things are referred to, the last mentioned is first spoken of, and then the first. This is what is very commonly done. Pollution and going after Baalim are laid to the charge of Israel in Jeremiah 2:23. To prove the last it is added,

"See thy way in the valley;"

and to bring connection as to the first, God says,

"Know what thou hast done."

In Jeremiah 4:28, we have these words,

"I have spoken it, I have purposed it."

The next sentence applies to the last,

"and I will not repent,"

and the following to what he had spoken,

"Neither will I turn back from it."

Neighbor and brother are mentioned in Jeremiah 9:4; the order is reversed in the latter clause of the verse. Pashur and the people of Judah are addressed in Jeremiah 20:4; the doom of Judah is described in the following

verse, and in the sixth the doom of Pashur. God speaks of

"The way of life and of the way of death,"

in Jeremiah 21:8; in the next verse, such as would meet with death are first referred to, and then those to whom life would be granted. In Deuteronomy 27:11-26, and Deuteronomy 28:1-6, "blessing" and "curse" are mentioned, and then the "curse" is first described, and afterwards the "blessing." This mode of treating subjects is indeed so common that it would be useless to multiply examples; and there are not a few instances of the same kind in the New Testament. [2]

The Third subject is the construction of a passage in this Volume, in connection with another, which will be included in the next. — The two passages are Jeremiah 23:6, and 33:16. The doctrine involved is important; but our business is to ascertain the real meaning according to the current diction of the language. These passages are not rendered alike in our Version, nor in the same sense; and yet it is evident from the context that the meaning of both passages must be the same, though the words are in some measure different. However we may differ from *Blayney,* he yet seems to have been at least so far right, as he renders them both in the same sense. His versions are the following: —

"And this is the Name by which Jehovah shall call him, Our Righteousness."
(Jeremiah 23:6.)

"And this is he whom Jehovah shall call, Our Righteousness."
(Jeremiah 23:16.)

In a Note on the last verse, it is said, "This is the strict grammatical translation of the words of the text." There is no doubt but that it may be so rendered; and here is an instance of what has been already observed as to the relative {אשר}. It has often after the verb a personal pronoun with a preposition prefixed: and as the verb {קרא}, whenever it means to name, has the preposition {ל} after it, so it has here. The relative and the pronoun in this case always refer to the same thing or person. Since this is the idiom of the language, it becomes evident that {לה} in this verse, is a masculine

[2] A few passages shall be referred to, and they shall be arranged in lines that the order may be more clearly seen, — But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, But ye are justified, In the name of the Lord Jesus, And by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:11.) He mentions sanctification first, and then justification; the next line refers to justification, and the last to sanctification. That if thou wilt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, And shalt believe in thine heart, etc., etc.; For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, And with the mouth confession is made, etc. (Romans 10:9, 10.) Confession and faith, and then faith and confession. This inversion seems to shew their inseparable connection, as in the former case as to sanctification and justification; and it is to be observed that in both instances the right order is given last; but the case is different in the following example: — And he gave some apostles, And some prophets, and some evangelists, And some pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, For the work of the ministry, For the edifying (or building) of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:11, 12.) The work of building the Church, which included especially the laying of the foundation, belonged to the Apostles; the ministerial work generally was performed by those called prophets and evangelists, who were the assistants of the Apostles; but the perfecting work, that of furthering the continual progress of the saints in a religious life, was carried on by stationary pastors and teachers. See similar instances in Matthew 7:6, and 1 Corinthians 1:24, 25.

according to Chaldee dialect, as *Blayney* regards it, or a misprint for {לו} according to three MSS.; for {אשר}, with which it is connected, has, {זה}, "this" for its antecedent; and "this" is clearly the "king" mentioned in the previous verse.

The matter then is so far clear as to construction of this part of the verse; but whether "Jehovah" is the nominative to the verb is another question; and this we shall presently consider.

The words in the other passage, Jeremiah 23:6, are somewhat different. The word "Name" is in it; but it has no personal pronoun with a {ל} prefixed, which is ever the case when {קרא} means to name, and when the word "name" is omitted. See Genesis 21:31; Genesis 35:18; 1 Samuel 23:28; 1 Chronicles 11:7; Jeremiah 30:17. But when "name" is connected with the verb in this sense, the preposition {ל} is not found. See Genesis 11:9; 29:35; 1 Chronicles 4:9. This accounts for the absence of the pronoun with a {ל} prefixed coming after the verb in this passage, which is found in the other in which the word "name" is omitted. The {אשר} then here refers to the "name," and stands as it were in its place; and the literal rendering, if we adopt *Blayney's* arrangement of the words, would be as follows, —

And this *is* His Name, which Jehovah shall call it,
Our Righteousness.

Now there is a grammatical objection to this rendering; for {אשר}, as before mentioned, when governed by a verb in the objective *case,* is never followed by a personal pronoun after the verb, either postfixed or separately. But here the {ו} in {יקראו} is made a pronoun, wholly contrary to the usage of the language in such a case as the present. The other passage may admit of *Blayney's* construction; but his version here is, as I conceive, inadmissible, being ungrammatical; the verb is in the plural number and not in the singular, with an affixed pronoun, therefore Jehovah cannot be its nominative case.

It may then be asked, how is the passage to be translated? Let the reader bear in mind, that when the word "Name — {שם}," is connected with {קרא}, there is no preposition used; and as {אשר} here has "Name" as its antecedent, it is not necessary to have a pronoun with a prefixed {ל} after the verb; but this is necessary in the other passage, for the word "name" is not given. Here we see a perfect consistency in the two passages, though differently worded. Then the true version of this passage I conceive to be the following, —

"And this is His Name, which they shall call,
Jehovah our Righteousness."

But in our language it might be rendered, "by which they shall call *him"* The pronoun "they" refers to Judah and Israel, at the beginning of the verse. As then "Jehovah" cannot be here the nominative case to "call," there is no grammatical necessity to make it so in the other passage, though there is nothing contrary to the usage of the language in such a construction. The other passage may be rendered literally thus, —

"And this is *He*, whom it shall be called on Him,
Jehovah our Righteousness."

The words in the idiom of our language may be thus correctly expressed, "who shall be called." But however awkward and even unintelligible the literal rendering may be in English, yet it is in *Welsh* both expressive and elegant. The phrase is word for word the same, and thoroughly idiomatic, —

"Ac eve *yw'r* hwn y gelwir arno, Jehova ein cyviawnder." [3]

We shall now refer to the early versions and the Targum.

In the *Septuagint,* the passage in Jeremiah 23:6, is rendered substantially according to what is done by *Blayney;* he indeed defends himself by appealing to that version. As to the passage in Jeremiah 33:16, it is wanting in the *Septuagint;* as supplied in the *Complutensian* Edition, it is evidently a version of the *Vulgate,* as is the case in other instances; and as given by *Theodoret,* it is as follows, —

"This is He who shall be called (ὁ κληθήσεται)
The Lord our Righteousness."

The *Vulgate* version is the same in both places, —

"And this is the Name which they shall call him,
Our righteous Lord."

The *Syriac* version is the same in both places, —

"And this is the Name by which they shall call Him,
The Lord our Righteousness."

The *Arabic* version is the same with the preceding, only "righteousness" is not translated; it is "The Lord Josedek." It is wanting like the *Septuagint* as to the second passage.

The paraphrase of the *Targum* is substantially the same as to both places, —

"And this is the Name by which they shall call Him, Done shall be righteousness for us from the presence of the Lord in his days."

It appears then from all the Early Versions, except the *Septuagint* as to the first passage, and from the *Targum,* that "Jehovah" is not connected with the verb to call, but with "righteousness;" and this, as we have seen, comports with what the usage of the language requires. There can therefore be no reasonable doubt as to the real meaning of these two passages.

As to the peculiar idioms of the Hebrew language, the *Septuagint* version

[3] As to {אשר} I may here state the result of a minute examination as to the Book of Psalm. It is found there as a relative, and as an adverb, about a hundred and seven times; about forty times as a nominative to verbs; nearly thirty times as an adverb or conjunction, for, because, that, whom, how, whose, etc.; in a few instances, in construction with nouns to which are affixed pronouns in the same case, as exemplified in a previous note; in twenty-six instances governed by verbs in the objective case, without any pronouns affixed to the verbs; and five times, according to our version, accompanied by pronouns when thus circumstanced. But in these five instances our version seems to me to be incorrect, the construction being inconsistent with what appears to be the common usage of the language. The passages are the following, Psalm 1:5; Psalm 8:3; Psalm 88:5; Psalm 94:12; and 107:2; {אשר} should be when in the first, how in the second, where in the third, when in the fourth, and that in the fifth, or how. as it is sometimes rendered in our version. In the first twelve chapters of Deuteronomy, there are at least a hundred instances of {אשר} being governed in a transitive sense; and in no case it has a corresponding pronoun after the verb, but there are several instances of this, when governed by an intransitive verb --- such as the following, ``A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness,'' literally, ``A land which without scarceness thou shalt in it eat bread.''

of Jeremiah and of the minor prophets, is by no means so satisfactory as the *Vulgate* and the *Syriac* versions. This is what the Editor can testify after a minute examination.

J.O.

Thrussington, September, 1852

Jeremiah 20

Lecture Seventy-Fifth

CHAPTER 20

Jeremiah 20:1-2

1. Now Pashur the son of Immer the priest, who was also chief governor in the house of the LORD, heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things.

1. Et audivit Phassur filius Immer sacerdos et ipse praefeetus erat (dux) in Templo (in aede) Jehovae, Jeremiam vaticinantem (prophetantem) hos sermones:

2. Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the LORD.

2. Et percussit Phassur Jeremiam Prophetam, et posuit eum in cippum (vel, in carcerem; sed mihi magis placet nomen carceris) qui erat in porta Benjamin superiore, quae spectabat ad aedem Jehovae.

Jeremiah relates here what sort of reward he had received for his prophecy, — that he had been smitten and cast into prison, not by the king or by his courtiers, but by a priest who had the care of the Temple. It was a grievous and bitter trial when God's servant found that he was thus cruelly treated by one of the sacred order, who was of the same tribe, and his colleague; for the priests who were then in office had not been without right appointed, for God had chosen them. As, then, their authority was founded on the Law and on God's inviolable decree, Jeremiah might well have been much terrified; for this thought might have occurred to him, — "What can be the purpose of God? for he has set priests of the tribe of Levi over his Temple and over his whole people. Why, then, does he not rule them by his Spirit? Why does he not render them fit for their office?

Why does he suffer his Temple, and the sacred office which he so highly commends to us in his Law, to be thus profaned? or why, at least, does he

not stretch forth his hand to defend me, who am also a priest, and sincerely engaged in my calling?" For we know that God commands in his Law, as a proof that the priests had supreme power, that whosoever disobeyed them should be put to death.

(Deuteronomy 17:12.) "Since, then, it was God's will to endue the priests with so much authority and power, why therefore did he not guide them by his grace, that they might faithfully execute the office committed to them?"

Nor was Jeremiah alone moved and shaken by this trial, but all who then truly worshipped God. Small, indeed, was the number of the godly; but there was surely no one who was not astonished at such a spectacle as this.

Pashur was not the chief priest, though he was of the first order of priests; and it is probable that Immer, his father, was the high priest, and that he was his vicar, acting in his stead as the ruler of the Temple. [4] However this may have been, he was no doubt superior, not only to the Levites, but also to the other priests of his order. Now this person, being of the same order and family, rose up against Jeremiah, and not only condemned in words a fellow-priest, but treated him outrageously, for he smote the Prophet. This was unworthy of his station, and contrary to the rights of sacred fellowship; for if the cause of Jeremiah was bad, yet a priest ought to have pursued a milder course; he might have cast him into prison, that if found guilty, he might afterwards be condemned. But to smite him was not the act of a priest, but of a tyrant, of a ruffian, or of a furious man.

We may hence learn in what a disorder things were at that time; for in a well-ordered community the judge does not leap from his tribunal in order to strike a man, though he might deserve a hundred deaths, as regard ought to be had to what is lawful. Now, if a judge, whom God has armed with the sword, ought not thus to give vent to his wrath and without discretion use the sword, it is surely a thing wholly inconsistent with the office of a priest. Then the state of things must have been then in very great disorder, when a priest thus disgraced himself. And from his precipitant rage we may also gather that good men were then very few. He had been chosen to preside over the Temple; he must then have excelled others not only as to his station, but also in public esteem and in the possession of some kind of virtues. But we see how he was led away by the evil spirit.

These things we ought carefully to consider, for it happens sometimes that great commotions arise in the Church of God, and those who ought to

[4] The account which Blayney gives is the most probable: that he was the first of his order. There were twenty-four courses of priests, as appointed by David, 1 Chronicles 24; and the head of each course was for the time the ruler or governor of the Temple. These heads of the courses were no doubt the "chief priests" mentioned in the New Testament, for in fact there was only one chief priest. They were also called the "captains" of the Temple. "The chief overseer in the house of Jehovah" is the most suitable rendering. The whole verse might be rendered as follows, — "When Pashur, the son of Immer, the priest, while he was the chief overseer in the house of Jehovah, heard Jeremiah prophesying these words, then Pashur smote Jeremiah," etc. So the Syriac, and so does Blayney connect the first with the second verse. The family of "Immer" formed the sixteenth course. See 1 Chronicles 24:14. "The priest" refers to Pashur, and not to "Immer;" and it is so rendered by the Sept., Vulg., and the Arab., though not by the Syr. Immer was the name of the family. — Ed.

be moderators are often carried away by a blind and, as it were, a furious zeal. We may then stumble, and our faith may wholly fail us, except such an example as this affords us aid, which shews clearly that the faithful were formerly tried and had their faith exercised by similar contests. It is not then uselessly said that *Pashur smote Jeremiah* Had he struck one of the common people, it would have been more endurable, though in that case it would have been an act wholly unworthy of his office; but when he treated insolently the servant of God, and one who had for a long time discharged the prophetic office, it was far less excusable. This circumstance, then, ought to be noticed by us, that the priest dared to strike the Prophet of God.

It then follows that Jeremiah was cast by him *into prison* But we must notice this, that he had *heard* the words of Jeremiah before he became infuriated against him. He ought, doubtless, to have been moved by such a prophecy; but he became mad and so audacious as to smite God's Prophet. It hence appears how great is the stupidity of those who have once become so hardened as to despise God; for even the worst of men are terrified when God's judgment is announced. But Pashur heard Jeremiah proclaiming the evil that was near at hand; and yet the denunciation had no other effect on him but to render him worse. As, then, he thus violently assailed God's Prophet, after having heard his words, it is evident that he was blinded by a rage wholly diabolical. We also see that the despisers of God blend light with darkness, for Pashur covered his impiety with a cloak, and hence cast Jeremiah into prison; for in this way he shewed that he wished to know the state of the case, as he brought him out of prison the following day. Thus the ungodly ever try to make coverings for their impiety; but they never succeed. The hypocrisy of Pashur was very gross when he cast Jeremiah into prison, in order that he might afterwards call him to defend his cause, for he had already smitten him. This great insolence, then, took away every *pretense* for justice. It was therefore extremely frivolous for Pashur to have recourse afterwards to some form of trial for deciding the case.

The word {מהפכת}, *mephicat,* is rendered by some, fetter; and by others, stocks; and they think it to be a piece of wood, with one hole to confine the neck, and another the feet. But I know not whether this is suitable here, for Jeremiah says that it was in the higher gate of Benjamin. This certainly could not be properly said of fetters, or of chains, or of stocks. It then follows that it was a prison. [5] He mentions the *gate of Benjamin,* as it belonged

[5] The versions differ — "dungeon" is the Sept.; "stocks-nervum" is the Vulg.; and "circle," or "circuit," is the Syr.; but the Targ. has "prison." The word occurs in two other places, in 1 Chronicles 29:26, and in 2 Chronicles 16:10, and is rendered "prison." Venema renders it "the torturing prison," taking the verb from which the word comes in a bad sense, as signifying to distort, and hence to torture. Symmachus favors this view, for he renders it "a place of torment — {ζασανιστήριον}," and ``a rack --- {στρεζλωτήριον}.'' The form of the expression is in favor of this idea, ``and set him in the stocks,'' or on the rack. And so in Jeremiah 29:26, the rendering ought to be --- ``that thou shouldest set him on the stocks (or rack) and in prison'' Of what kind was this instrument of torture it is not known. Prisons had especially three names --- ``the house of roundness '';({הסהר}) ``the house of confinement '';({הכלא}) and ``the house of the rack, or stocks, ''.({המהפכת}) See Genesis 39:20; 1 Kings 22:27; and 2 Chronicles 16:10. But ``the house'' is not here torture itself. Had the prison been intended, the word ``house,'' as in 2 Chronicles 16:10, would have been placed before it. It is at the same time probable that the prison was the place where the rack or the stocks were. --- Ed

to that tribe; for we know that a part of Jerusalem was inhabited by the Benjamites. They had two gates, and this was the higher gate towards the east. He says that it was opposite *the house of Jehovah;* for besides the court there were many small courts, as it is well known, around the Temple. It follows: —

Jeremiah 20:3

3. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The LORD hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magormissabib.

3. Et accidit postridie (die crastino) ut educeret Phassur Jeremiam e carcere; et dixit ei Jeremias, Non Phassur vocavit Jehova nomen tuum, sed potius terrorem undique.

No doubt Pashur called other priests to examine the case. It was, indeed, a specious pretense, for he seemed as though he did not wish to condemn the holy Prophet hastily, or without hearing his defense. But Jeremiah only says briefly that he was brought out of prison: we at the same time gather that he was not dismissed, for he was summoned before Pashur to give a reason for his prophecy.

But here the Prophet shews that he was not cast down or disheartened, though he had been most contemptuously treated; he bore patiently the buffetings and stripes he had received, and also his incarceration. We know that such outrages are so bitter to ingenuous minds, that they can hardly sustain them. But Jeremiah teaches us, by his own example, that our constancy and firmness ought not to be weakened though the whole world loaded or almost overwhelmed us with reproaches. We ought, then, to understand that courage of mind ought not to fail or be weakened in God's servants, however wickedly and contumeliously they may be treated by the world. For Jeremiah, when he came out of prison, spoke more boldly than before; nor was he beyond the reach of danger. Courage increases when one obtains the victory, and he can then safely and securely insult his enemies; but Jeremiah was yet a captive, though he had been brought out of prison, and he might have been afterwards cast there again and treated more cruelly than before. But neither the wrong he had received, nor the fear of new contumely, deterred him from denouncing God's judgment on the ungodly priest. Such magnanimity becomes all God's servants, so that they ought not to feel shame, nor grow soft, nor be disheartened, when the world treats them with indignity and reproach; nor ought they to fear any dangers, but advance courageously in the discharge of their office.

It must in the second place be noticed, — that God's Prophet here closes his eyes to the splendor of the priestly office, which otherwise might have hindered him to denounce God's judgment,. And this ought to be carefully observed; for we know the ungodly he hid under masks, as the case is in the present day with the Pope and all his filthy clergy: for what do they allege but the name of Catholic Church and perpetual priesthood and apostolical

dignity? Doubtless, Pashur was of the priestly order; but what the Papacy is, the Scripture neither mentions nor teaches, except that it condemns it as altogether filthy and abominable. And the Levitical priesthood, as I have said, was founded on God's Law; and yet Jeremiah, guided by the command of God, hesitated not severely to reprove the priest and to treat him as he deserved. It is, therefore, then only that we tightly and faithfully discharge the prophetic office, when we shew no respect of persons, and disregard those external masks by which the ungodly deceive the simple, and are haughty towards God while they falsely pretend his name. [6]

Now he says, *Jehovah has called thy name not Pashur, but terror on every side* Some render the words, "Because there will be terror to thee on every side;" but incorrectly, for in the next verse a reason is given which explains what the Prophet means. Jeremiah no doubt had a regard to the meaning of the word Pashur, otherwise it would have been unmeaning and even foolish to say, "Thy name shall be called not Pashur, but terror on every side." Interpreters have expounded the word Pashur as meaning an increasing prince, or one who extends power, deriving it from {פשה}, *peshe*, to increase, and transitively, to extend; and they add to it the word {שר}, *sher,* which means a prince; and so they render it, a prince extending power, or a prince who increases. But as there is some doubt as to the points, I know not whether this etymology can be maintained. I am more inclined to derive the word from {פשח}, *peshech,* to cut or break. It is indeed but once found in this sense in Scripture, but often in the Chaldee language. However this may be, it is taken in this sense once by Jeremiah in the third Chapter of Lamentations. [7] And hence by a metaphor it means to open; and {א}, *aleph,* may be deemed quiescent in the second word, so that it means one who breaks or opens the light. The words which follow — "terror on every side" — induce and compel me to give this interpretation. He does not say that he would be a terror on every side; but that terrors surrounded him, {מסביב}, *mesabib,* so that there was no escape. As then the name of Pashur was honorable, signifying to open light, he mentions this, (it is indeed a metaphor, by which breaking means opening:) as then he had this name, which means to bring forth light, Jeremiah says, "Thou shalt be called a terror on every side;" that is, a terror that so surrounds all that no escape is possible. [8] We see that the contrast is most suitable between the opening of

[6] I would render the verse thus: — 3. And it happened on the morrow that Pashur brought out Jeremiah from the stocks; and Jeremiah said to him, — Not Pashur does Jehovah call thy name, But, Terror on every side. I take {קרא} to be a participle, and not a verb in the past tense. --- Ed

[7] The word is not spelt with {ח} but with {ה}; it is "Pashchur." Therefore, the former derivation cannot be admitted. Venema derives it from {פוש}, to be proud, or ferocious, and {חור} which means "white," or splendid; then the meaning is, "splendid prince." Gataker seems to prefer the opinion of those who derive the word from {פש}, diffusion, and {חור}, paleness, because he diffused, or spread fear, which produces paleness to all around. Instead of this, a terror, the cause of paleness, would be to him and to all his friends, as stated in the following verse. --- Ed

[8] The Vulg. alone gives this meaning to the phrase; the Sept. has "{μέτοικον} --- emigrant," and the Syr. "stranger and wanderer." And then in the fourth verse both these versions give a correspondent meaning. "I will deliver thee into emigration (or captivity) with all thy friends." That this word, rendered "terror," may be derived from {גור}, which means to sojourn, to peregrinate, is undeniable; as a participle noun from Hiphil, it may mean a sojourner, or an emigrant. The word in this sense is found often in the plural number. See Genesis 47:9; Exodus 6:4. But the phrase, as found here, occurs four

light and that terror which spread on every side, so that there is no opening and no escape; and the explanation follows:

Jeremiah 20:4

4. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword.

4. Quia sic dicit Jehova, Ecce ego pono to in terrorem tibi et omnibus amicis tuis; et cadent per gladium hostium tuorum, oculi tui videntes, (id est, oculis tuis videntibus,) et totum Jehudah tradam in manum regis Babylonis, et transferet eos (vel, traducet) Babylonem, et percutiet eos gladio.

Here Jeremiah explains more at large why he said that Pashur would be terror on every side, even because he and his friends would be in fear; for he would find himself overwhelmed by God's vengeance, and would become a spectacle to all others. In short, Jeremiah means, that such would be God's vengeance as would fill Pashur and all others with fear; for Pashur himself would be constrained to acknowledge God's hand without being able to escape, and all others would also perceive the same. He then became a spectacle to himself and to others, because he could not, however hardened he might have been, do otherwise than feel God's vengeance; and this became also apparent to all others.

Behold, he says, *I will make thee a terror to thyself and to all thy friends; and fall shall they by the sword of their enemies, thine eyes seeing it; and all Judah will I deliver into the hand,* etc. He repeats what he had said; for Pashur wished to be deemed the patron of the whole land, and especially of the city Jerusalem. As, then, he had undertaken the cause of the people, as though he was the patron and defender of them all, Jeremiah says, that all the Jews would be taken captives, and not only so, but that something more grievous was nigh at hand, for when the king of Babylon led them into exile, he would also smite them with the sword, not indeed all; but we know that he severely punished the king, his children, and the chief men, so that the lower orders on account of their obscurity alone escaped; and those of this class who did escape, because they were not noble nor renowned, were indebted to their own humble condition. It follows, —

Jeremiah 20:5

5. Moreover I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give into the hand of their enemies, which shall spoil them, and take them, and carry them to Babylon.

5. Et ponam totam fortitudinem urbis hujus, et omnem laborem ejus, et omnem pretiousum ejus, (vel, omnem gloriam,) et omnes thesauros regum

times in this book, where it can have no other meaning than ``terror (or fear) on every side,'' Jeremiah 6:25; Jeremiah 20:10; Jeremiah 46:5; Jeremiah 49:29; and it occurs once elsewhere, in Psalm 31:13; where also its meaning is evident from the context. --- Ed

Jehudah ponam in manum inimicorum ipsorum, et spoliabunt ipsos et tollent eos et abducent eos Babylonem.

He goes on with the same subject, but amplifies what he had said in order to confirm it. At the same time there is no doubt but that Pashur was more exasperated when he heard these grievous threatenings; but it was right thus to inflame more and more the fury of all the ungodly. Though, then, they may a hundred times raise a clamor, we must not desist from freely and boldly declaring the truth. This is the reason why the Prophet now more fully describes the future calamity of the city.

I will give up, he says, the whole strength *of this city,* etc. This word "strength" is sometimes taken metaphorically for riches or wealth. Then *the whole strength,* or substance, *of this city and all its labor will I give up,* etc. This second clause is still more grievous, for what had been acquired with great labor was to be given to plunder; for when any one becomes rich without labor, that is, when riches come to one by inheritance, without any trouble or toil, he is not so distressed when he happens to be deprived of his wealth; but he who has through a whole life of labor obtained what he expects would be for the support of life, this person grieves much more and becomes really distressed with anguish, when enemies come and deprive and plunder him of all he possesses. There is therefore no doubt but that "labor" is here mentioned, as in other parts of Scripture, in order to amplify the evil. He then adds, *all its precious things and all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I deliver into the hand of their enemies; who* will carry away, not only riches, labor, and treasures, but also the men themselves, and *bring them to Babylon* [9] The rest to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that we may not by our perverseness increasingly provoke thy wrath, but that whenever thou threatenest us, we may immediately fear and tremble at thy word, and also obey thee in the true spirit of meekness, and so dread thy threatenings as to anticipate thy judgment by true repentance, and thus strive to glorify thy name, that thou mayest become our strength and glory, and that we may be able not only before the world, but before thee and thy angels, really to glory, that we are that peculiar people whom thou hast favored with thy adoption, that thou mayest to the end carry on in us the work of thy grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

[9] What Calvin and our version render "strength" is rendered the same by the Sept., {ἰσχὺν}, --- by the Vulg., ``substance,'' --- by the Syr., ``citadels,'' --- and by the Targ., riches. The primary meaning of the word is to be strong, or firm; and then what is strongly, or firmly secured --- store, or treasure, here, and the two things which follow are explanatory of this store, --- the labor, or the fruit of labor, --- their garments; and precious things, --- their gold, silver, and precious stones and furniture: --- 5. And I will give the whole store of this city, Even all the fruit of its labor, And every precious thing in it, --- Yea, all the treasures of the kings of Judah will I give, Into the hand of their enemies: And they shall plunder them and take them, And bring them into Babylon. All the versions refer ``them'' in the two last lines to the people, but the Targum to the things mentioned in the preceding lines; but the former view is the right one. To render the last verb to ``carry,'' as in our version, is not correct; for it means to cause to come, and hence to bring; and this clearly supports the versions. The exposition of Blayney is, that by ``strength''' is meant the military, by ``labor'' the workmen, and by ``the precious'' the respectable part of society. Then he ought to have gone on and said, that by ``the treasures'' were meant the kings of Judah! But all this is fancy, and wholly inconsistent with the tenor of the passage. They were to ``plunder'' them; and if their stores were not referred to, how could this be said of what their enemies would do? And then, according to this view, the treasures of the kings were to become a spoil, and not the stores of the city. To spoil the people of their property was one of the most common threatenings of the Prophets. --- Ed.

— Amen.

Lecture Seventy-Six

Jeremiah 20:6

6. And thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.

6. Et tu Phashur et omnes habitatores domus tuae (hoc est omnes domestici tui) venietis captivitatem; tu venies Babylonem, et illic morieris, et illic sepeheris, et omnes amici tui, quibus vaticinatus es in mendacio.

Now Jeremiah declares that Pashur himself would be a proof, that he had truly foretold the destruction of the city and the desolation of the whole land. He had indeed before exposed his vanity; but he now brings the man himself before the public; for it was necessary to exhibit a remarkable instance, that all might know that God's judgment ought to have been dreaded.

Though that impostor flattered the people, yet Jeremiah says, that he and all his domestics would be led into captivity; that is, that the whole family would be as it were a spectacle, so that all the Jews might see that Pashur would be brought to nothing. "Let all the Jews then know," he seems to have said, "that he is a false prophet."

But what follows might have raised a question; for Jeremiah declares as a punishment, that Pashur dying in Babylon would be buried there; but he had said before, "I will give their carcasses for meat to the birds of heaven and to the beasts of the earth;" and now it is not consistent in the Prophet to represent that as a punishment which is reckoned as one of God's favors. In answer to this, let it be especially noticed, that God does not always punish the ungodly alike, or in the same way. He would have some to be cast away unburied, as they were unworthy of that common lot of humanity; but he would have others buried, but for a different, purpose; for there is weight in the particle *there,* for Babylon is put in contrast with the holy land. Whosoever were buried in the land of Canaan, had even in their death a pledge of the eternal inheritance; for as it is well known, God wished them while they lived so to enjoy the land, that they might look forward to heaven. Hence burial in the land of Canaan was as it were a visible mark or symbol of God's adoption, as though all the children of Abraham were gathered into his bosom until they arose into a blessed and immortal life. Hence Pashur, by being buried in Babylon, became an outcast from God's Church; for it was in a manner a repudiation, as though God would thus openly put on him a mark of infamy.

If it be objected and said, that the same thing happened to Daniel, and to some of the best servants of God, and that Jeremiah himself was buried in Egypt, which was far worse; the answer we give is this, — that temporal punishments which happen to the elect and God's children for their good do in a manner change their nature as to them; though, indeed, it must

be held, that all punishments are evidences of the wrath and curse of God. Whatever evils then happen to us in this life ought to be regarded as the fruits of sin, as though God thereby shewed himself openly to be displeased with us. This is one thing. Then, when poverty, famine, diseases, and exile, and even death itself, are viewed in themselves, we must always say that they are the curses of God, that is, when they are regarded, as I have said, in their own nature. But God consecrates these punishments as to his own children, so they turn to their benefit, and thereby cease to be curses. Whenever then God declares, "Thou shalt be unburied," it is no wonder that this dishonor should be deemed an evidence of his wrath and a proof of his curse. And farther, whenever he formerly said thus, "Thou shalt be buried out of the holy land," it was also an evidence of his curse, that is, with regard to the reprobate. At the same time God turned to good whatever might otherwise be a curse to his elect; and hence Paul says, that all things turn out for good and benefit to the faithful, who love God. (Romans 8:28.)

Now, then, we understand why the Prophet says, that Pashur would be *buried* in Babylon; nor is there a doubt but that there was more disgrace in that burial, than if his body was cast out and devoured by wild beasts; for God intended to render him conspicuous, that all might for a long time turn their eyes to him, according to what is said in Psalm 59:12,

"Slay them not, O God, for thy people may forget them."

God then intended that the life and death of Pashur should be a memorial, in order that the minds of the people might be more impressed. At the same time, were the word burial taken in a wider sense, there would be nothing wrong, as though it was said, "There shall his carcass lie until it becomes putrified."

Then Jeremiah adds, *Thou and thy friends to whom thou hast prophesied falsely* [10] This passage teaches us that a just reward is rendered to the ungodly who wish to be deceived, when they sustain a twofold judgment from God. Behold, then, what all the wicked who seek flatterers that promise them wonderful things, gain for themselves! they thus earn for themselves a heavier vengeance. The more they strive to put afar off God's judgment, the more, no doubt, they increase and inflame it. This is the reason why the Prophet denounces a special judgment on the friends of Pashur, to whom he had prophesied; they had wilfully laid hold on those false promises by which he had flattered them, so that they boldly despised God. Since, then, they wished of their own accord to be thus deceived, it was right that these

[10] This verse ought to be thus arranged, — 6. And thou, Pashur, and all who dwell in thine house, Go shall ye into captivity: Yea, to Babylon shalt thou go, And there shalt thou die, and there be buried — Thou and all thy friends, To whom thou hast prophesied falsely. There is here an instance of the free and unmodified manner in which statements are often made in Scripture. It is said in Jeremiah 20:4, that "his friends" would fall by the sword; but here, that they would be carried into Babylon, die, and be buried there. The hearers of Jeremiah, no doubt, understood him, though a captious hearer could have made out a contradiction against him. But the meaning is, that many of them would be slain by the sword, and that many of them, or most of such as remained, would be led into captivity. A great number were to be slain, and a great number would be taken captives. — Ed.

deceptions through which they slandered the prophetic threatenings, and which they usually set up as a shield against them, should bring on them a heavier punishment. It then follows —

Jeremiah 20:7

7. O LORD, thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived: thou art stronger than I, and hast prevailed: I am in derision daily, every one mocketh me.

7. Decepisti me, Jehova, et deceptus sum; vim intulisti mihi, itfuisti superior; fui in ludibrium toto die, (vel, quotidie, hoc est, assidue;) omnes subsannant me.

Some think that these words were not spoken through the prophetic Spirit, but that Jeremiah had uttered them inconsiderately through the influence of a hasty impulse; as even the most eminent are sometimes carried away by a hasty temper. They then suppose the Prophet, being overcome by a temptation of this kind, made this complaint, to God, "What! Lord, I have followed thee as a leader; but thou hast promised to me what I do not find: I seem, then, to myself to be deceived." Others give even a harsher explanation, — that the Prophet had been deceived, according to what is said elsewhere,

"I the Lord have deceived that Prophet." (Ezekiel 14:9.)

But there is no doubt but that his language is ironical, when he says that he was *deceived* He assumes the character of his enemies, who boasted that he presumptuously prophesied of the calamity and ruin of the city, as no such thing would take place. The Prophet here declares that God was the author of his doctrine, and that nothing could be alleged against him which would not be against God himself; as though he had said that the Jews contended in vain, under the notion that they contended with a mortal man; for they openly carried on war with God, and like the giants furiously assailed heaven itself. He then says that he was deceived, not that he thought so; for he was fully satisfied as to himself; nor had he only the Spirit of God as a witness to his calling, but also possessed in his heart a firm conviction of the truth he delivered. But as I have already said, he relates the words of those who, by opposing his teaching, denied that he was God's servant, and gave him no credit as though he was only an impostor.

But this mode of speaking is much more striking than if he had said in plain terms, "Lord, I am not deceived, for I have only obeyed thy command, and have received from thee whatever I have made public; nor have I presumptuously obtruded myself, nor adulterated the truth of which thou hast made me the herald: I have, then, faithfully discharged my office." If the Prophet had thus spoken, there would have been much less force in his words than by exposing in the manner he does here the blasphemies of those who dared to accuse God, and make him guilty by arraigning his servant as a false prophet.

We now, then, understand why he spoke ironically, and freely expostulated with God, because he had been deceived by him; it was that the Jews might

know that they vomited forth reproaches, not against a mortal man, but against God himself, who would become the avenger of so great an insult.

Were any one to ask whether it became the Prophet to make God thus his associate, the answer would be this, — that his cause was so connected with God's cause, that the union was inseparable; for Jeremiah speaks not here as a private individual, much less as one of the common people; but as he knew that his calling was approved by God, he hesitated not to connect God with himself, so that the reproach might belong to both. God, indeed, could not be separated from his own truth; for nothing would be left to him, were he regarded as apart from his word. Hence a mere fiction is every idea which men form of God in their minds, when they neglect that mirror in which he has made himself known, Nay more, we ought to know that whatever power, majesty, and glory there is in God, so shines forth in his word, that he does not appear as God, except his word remains safe and uncorrupted. As, then, the Prophet had been furnished with a sure commission, it is no wonder that he so boldly derides his enemies and says, that God was a deceiver, if he had been deceived. To the same purpose is what Paul says,

"If an angel come down from heaven and teach you another Gospel, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:8)

Certainly Paul was inferior to the angels, and we know that he was not so presumptuous as to draw down angels from heaven, and to make them subservient to himself; no, by no means; but he did not regard what they might be; but as he had the truth of the Gospel, of which he was the herald, sealed in his heart, he hesitated not to raise that word above all angels. So now Jeremiah says, that God was a deceiver, if he was deceived: how so? because God would deny himself, if he destroyed the truth of his word.

We now, then, perceive that the Prophet did not exceed what was right, when he dared to elevate himself, so as to become in a manner the associate of God, that is, as to the truth of which God was the author and he the minister.

But from this passage a useful doctrine may be gathered. All who go forth to teach ought to be so sure of their calling, as not to hesitate to appeal to God's tribunal whenever any dispute happens. It is indeed true, that even the best servants of God may in some things be mistaken, or be doubtful in their judgment; but as to their calling and doctrine there ought to be that certainty which Jeremiah exhibits to us here by his own example.

He afterwards adds, *Thou hast constrained me* By saying that he had been *deceived,* he meant this, — "O God, if I am an impostor, thou hast made me so; if I have deceived, thou hast led me; for I have derived from thee all that I have; it hence follows, that thou art in fault, and less excusable than I am, if there be anything wrong in me." Afterwards, as I have said, he enlarges on this, — that God *constrained* him; for he had not coveted the prophetic office, but being constrained, undertook it; for he could not have rejected or cast off the burden laid on him. He then expresses two things, —

that he had brought no fancies of his own, nor invented anything of what he had said, but had been the instrument of God's Spirit, and delivered what he had received as from hand to hand: this is one thing. And then he adds, — that had he his free choice, he would not have undertaken the prophetic office; for he had been drawn as it were by constraint to obey God in this respect. We now then perceive the meaning of Jeremiah.

Were any to ask, whether it could be deemed commendable in the Prophet thus constrainedly to undertake his office; to this the plain answer is, — that a general rule is not here laid down, as though it were necessary for all to be thus unwillingly drawn. But though Jeremiah might not have been faultless in this respect., yet he might have justly testified this before men. And we have seen at the beginning, that when God appointed him a teacher to his Church, he refused as far as he could the honor,

"Ah! Lord," he said, "I know not how to speak."
(Jeremiah 1:6)

Though then he was constrained by God's authority, and as it were, led by force, and though he may have shewed in this respect that he was not free from fault or weakness; yet he might have rightly pleaded this against his enemies.

He then says, that he was *a scorn continually, and was derided by all* The Prophet no doubt tried here to find out whether any portion of the people was still reclaimable; for to hear that God was charged with falsehood, that the Prophet's office was rendered void by the wilfulness and audacity of men, was much calculated to rouse their minds. When, therefore, they heard this, they must surely have been terrified, if they had a particle of true religion or of right knowledge. Hence the Prophet wished to make the trial, whether there were any remaining who were capable of being reclaimed. But his object also was to shew, that their wickedness was inexpiable, if they continued wickedly and proudly to oppose his doctrine. [11]

And we ought carefully to notice this; for this passage has not only been written, that we may be instructed in the fear of God; but the Holy Spirit continually proclaims against all despisers, and openly accuses them, that

[11] I find none agreeing with Calvin in his view of this verse; nor many with our version in rendering the first verb "deceived." So is the Septuagint, but the Vulgate, Syriac, and Targum have "enticed." In other parts it is rendered in our version "enticed," "allured," and "persuaded." Blayney has "allured," but Gataker and Lowth prefer "persuaded;" and this wholly comports with the view the Prophet gives of his calling in the first chapter, to which he evidently refers, and also with what follows in this verse. He was unwilling to undertake the office, but he was induced to do so by what God said to him. There was nothing like deception in the case; for God had previously told him of the difficulties he would have to encounter. And then he adds, that he was "constrained," which I consider to be the meaning of the next verb. He had been persuaded by reasons and promises, and constrained by authority. I would render the verse thus, — 7. Thou didst persuade me, O Jehovah, and I was persuaded; Thou didst constrain me, and didst prevail: I am become a derision every day; The whole of it are jeering me. The "it" refers to the city where he was, and of which he speaks at the end of the last chapter; for this chapter is but a continuation of the narrative. What he relates there of the fate of the city drew the attention and excited the rage of Pashur. After having spoken of what Pashur did, Jeremiah gives utterance here to his complaints. Blayney renders the last line thus, and is approved by Horsley, — Ridicule hath spent its whole force upon me. All the versions and the Targum regard {,כלה not as a verb, but as signifying ``all,'' or every one; and the proposed rendering is too refined. --- Ed

they offer to God the atrocious insult of charging him with falsehood and deception. Let us then know that a dreadful judgment is here denounced on all those profane men who despise God's word and treat it with derision; for the Holy Spirit by the mouth of Jeremiah openly proclaims, as I have said, before God's tribunal, that God is made by them a liar. It afterwards follows, —

Jeremiah 20:8-9

8. For since I spake, I cried out, I cried violence and spoil; because the word of the LORD was made a reproach unto me, and a derision, daily.

8. Quia ex quo locuutus sum, vociferor violentiam et vastationem clamo; quia fuit sermo Jehovae mihi in opprobrium et in contumeliam toto die (vel, quotidie, assiduè, ut dictum est.)

9. Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

9. Et dixi (itaque dixi, copula enim illativam valet) non recordabor et non loquar amplius in nomine ejus; et fuit in corde meo quasi ignis ardens, clausus in ossibus meis, et fatigatus sum ferendo et non potui.

The Prophet says here that he found no fruit from his labors, but on the contrary, he saw that all his efforts and endeavors had an opposite effect; for they exasperated all the Jews, inflamed their rage, and drove them into a greater licentiousness in sinning. Hence he says, that he purposed to give up the office assigned to him, but that by a secret impulse he was constrained to persevere, and that thus he was not at liberty to desist from the course which he had begun.

But the verse is variously explained; *From the time I spoke, I cried violence aloud and proclaimed devastation* Thus some take the words, as though Jeremiah said, that since he began to teach he uttered complaints; for he saw that he was violently assailed and was exposed to all kinds of wrongs: but this view appears to me too frigid. Others come nearer to the truth who consider him as saying, that he had not ceased to cry against outrages and plunders, when he saw that all kinds of wickedness prevailed among the people; as though he had said, "I could not mildly and peaceably teach them, for their disposition and temper prevented me, but their wickedness compelled me to treat them with severity, as all God's servants ought wisely to consider what the state of the Church requires." If indeed we should in tranquil times cry aloud, it would be mad affectation; and this is what is done by many, who without thought and without any reason always make a great cry; but when we see Satan reigning, we ought not then to withhold nor to act as in a truce; but as it is an open war it is necessary to cry aloud. They who take this view, then, understand that Jeremiah cried aloud, because he saw that the people were refractory, and also saw that things were so bad that they could not be restored to a right state without the greatest sharpness and vehemence.

But I rather think that the Prophet had another kind of trial, — that he brought down a greater vengeance of God by his cries, as though he had said, "To what purpose should I furnish God with weapons by my preaching? since I do nothing but increase his wrath, which will at length fulminate and consume the whole land together with the people." He then says, that he cried violence and devastation aloud, for impiety itself is a sort of hostile violence by which God is provoked. The meaning is, that the Prophet saw no other fruit to his labor, but that men were rendered more insolent, and from being thieves became robbers, and from being disdainful became ruffians, so that they increasingly kindled God's wrath, and more fully abandoned themselves. This was indeed a most severe and dangerous trial; it is therefore no wonder that the Prophet says, that it came to his mind to turn aside from his office as a teacher.

Now this passage is especially worthy of being observed; for not only teachers are influenced by this feeling, but all the godly without exception. For when we see that men are, as it were, made worse through God's word, we begin to doubt whether it be expedient to bury every remembrance of God and to extinguish his word, rather than to increase the licentiousness of men, they being already inclined enough to commit sin. We indeed see at this day that the doctrine of the Gospel does not restore all to obedience; but many give themselves a more unbridled license, as though the yoke of discipline was wholly removed. There was some fear under the Papacy, there was some sort of obedience and subjection; and now the liberty of the Gospel, what is it to many but brute license, so that they sin with impunity and blend heaven and earth together. There are also others who, on observing so many controversies, do, under that pretext, throw aside every concern for religion, and every attention to it. There are some fanatics who allow themselves to doubt and even to deny the existence of God. As then we see that the effect of the truth is not such as might be wished, those who are otherwise firm must needs be shaken or made to totter. Therefore, this passage ought the more to be noticed; for Jeremiah confesses that he was sore troubled when he saw that the word of God was a derision, and hence he wished to withdraw from the course of his calling. Let us know that whenever such a thing comes into our minds we ought manfully to resist it; and, therefore, the two things here mentioned ought to be connected, for when he said, *I will no more mention him, nor speak in his name,* he added, *but* the word of God was *like a burning fire*

We hence see how God restrained his servant, lest he should fall headlong, or succumb under his temptation; for he would have been suddenly drawn in as it were into a deep gulf, had he not been preserved by God. Therefore, whenever temptations of this kind present themselves to us, let us pray God to restrain and to support us; or if we have already fallen, let us pray him to raise us up and to strengthen us by his Spirit.

But the way is shewn by which God aided his servant: The word of God

became *as a burning fire in his heart;* and it was also *closed up in his bones,* so that he was led by an ardent zeal, and could not be himself without going onward in the course of his office. He concludes by saying, that he *was wearied,* or could hardly bear himself, *with forbearing;* as though he had said, that it was not in his power either to abstain from teaching or to do what God commanded; for a burning ardor forced him to go on; and yet he had no doubt in his view those despisers with whom he had to do. It is the same then as though he had said, that he had found out what it was to have the whole world against him, but that God prevailed. Now this was said, because profane men take occasion to be secure and indifferent, when they imagine that Prophets and teachers are unfeeling men, — "O, what do we care for fanatics, who do not possess common feelings? and it is no wonder, since they are stupid and insensible, that they are thus angry and violent, disregard all others, and feel nothing that is human." As, then, they imagine that men are sticks, when they speak of God's servants as being without discretion, the Prophet seems to say, "Surely ye are deceived, for I am not so much an iron, but that I am influenced by strong and many feelings; nay, I have learnt and I know how great is my weakness, nor do I dissemble but that I am subject to fear, to sorrow, and to other passions; but God has *prevailed* There is then no reason for you to think that I speak so boldly, because I feel nothing human; but I have done so after a hard struggle, after all those things came into my mind, which are calculated to weaken the courage of my heart; yet God stretched forth his hand to me, and not only so, but I was constrained, lest I should arrogate anything to myself, or boast of my heroic courage. *I did not prevail,* he says, but when I submitted myself to God and desired to give up my calling, I was constrained, and God dealt powerfully with me, for his word became as *a burning fire* in my heart, so that at length, through the strong influence of the Spirit, I was constrained to proceed in the discharge of my office."

Therefore I said, I will mention him no more, nor speak in his name; not that the Prophet wished himself or others to forget God, but because he thought that he lost all his labor, and that he in vain made a stir, since he cried aloud without any benefit, and not only so, but he more and more exasperated the wicked; as an ulcer, the more it is pressed, the more putrid matter it emits; so the impiety of the people was more and more discovered, when the Prophet reproved sins which were before hid. [12]

Let us now then learn by the example of the Prophet, that whenever Satan or our flesh raises an objection and says, that we ought to desist from preaching celestial truth because it produces not its proper and legitimate

[12] The beginning of the eighth verse seems to be connected with the end of the seventh. Such appears to be the Syriac version. Then the remaining part of the eighth will coalesce with the ninth. This gives a consistency to the whole passage. I am become a derision every day; The whole of it are jeering me, 8. Whenever I speak, cry against violence, Or, proclaim a devastation. Because the word of Jehovah was to me A reproach and a scoff every day, 9. Therefore I said, "I will not mention it, Nor will I speak any more in his name;" But it became in my heart Like a burning fire, confined in my bones; And I was wearied with restraining and I could not. — Ed.

fruits, it is nevertheless a good odor before God, though fatal to the ungodly. Though then the truth of the Gospel proves the savor of death to many, yet our labor is not on that account of no value before God; for we know that we offer to God an acceptable sacrifice; and though our labor be useless as to men, it is yet fruitful as to the glory of God; and while we are the odor of death unto death to those who perish, yet to God, even in this respect, our labor is acceptable. (2 Corinthians 2:16)

Let us also beware lest we withdraw ourselves from God; but even when many things happen to impede our course, let us overcome them by the power of the Spirit. At the same time let us fear, lest through our sloth we bury our ardor of which the Prophet speaks. We see what happened to Jonah; he had so far fallen as to forsake entirely his office, by extinguishing, as much as he could, the judgment of God; and when he became a fugitive, he thought himself beyond danger, as though he was removed from God's presence. (Jonah 1:3.) God indeed saw him, but yet his word was not in him as a burning fire. As then so great a man through his own sloth extinguished, as far as he could, the light of the Holy Spirit, how much more ought we to fear, lest the same thing should happen to us? Let us then rouse the sparks of this fervor, until it inflame us, so that we may faithfully devote ourselves altogether to the service of God; and if at any time we become slothful, let us stimulate ourselves, and may the power of the Holy Spirit be so revived, that we may to the end pursue the course of our office and never stand still, but assail even the whole world, knowing that God commands us and requires from us what others disapprove and condemn.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as at this day a greater and viler impiety breaks forth than at any age, and thy sacred truth is treated with derision by many of Satan's drudges, — O grant, that we may nevertheless constantly persevere in it, nor hesitate to oppose the fury of all the ungodly, and relying on the power of thy Spirit, contend with them until that truth, which thou didst once proclaim by thy Prophets, and at length by thine only-begotten Son, and which was sealed by his blood, may attain its full authority, that as it proves to many the savor of eternal death, so it may also be a pledge to us of eternal salvation, until we shall be gathered into thy kingdom at the coming of the same thy Son Jesus Christ. — Amen.

Lecture Seventy-Seventh

Jeremiah 20:10

10. For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him.

10. Quia audivi contumeliam multorum, terrorem undique, Nuntiate et nuntiabimus: omnis vir (id est, omnes homines, homo pacis, ad verbum, {אנוש} omnes homines) pacis meae (id est, familiares mei, qui debuer-

ant colere mecum amicitiam), observant latus meum (vel, claudicationem, metaphorice et melius,) si forte erret, et praevaleamus ei, et sumamus ultionem nostram ex eo.

Jeremiah proceeds with the same subject, and before God accuses his enemies, — that they disgracefully contended with him, though he deserved no such treatment, for he had endeavored to secure as far as he could their safety. He then says, that he had *heard the slander of many,* or as it may be rendered, *of the great;* but the former rendering is more suitable, for it immediately follows, that there was *terror on every side,* as though all with one consent assailed him. He then says, that he was surrounded with terror on every side, because he saw that the whole mass was opposed and hostile to him, and that he stood alone. He says, also, that his enemies laid in wait for him, and sought occasions to destroy him.

Report ye, and we will report to him Here he assumes their person and relates what they consulted to do. He, no doubt, introduces here the chief men and the priests as the speakers, who were contriving means to form an accusation against the holy man; for we know what is commonly done in conspiracies of this kind; worthless men run here and there and hunt for every little thing; then they bring their report, and from this the accusation is formed. As, then, it did not comport with the dignity of the chief men and of the priests, to run here and there and to inquire of such as they might meet with what Jeremiah had said, they sat still and sent others, and said, "Go and report to us, and we shall then report to the king." For the word "king" must be here understood, as the pronoun is put without an antecedent; come then and *report, and we will report to him* We now perceive what Jeremiah complained of, even that he had not only many enemies who calumniated him, but that he had also those who wished insidiously to entrap him.

And he adds what was still worse, — that he was thus unjustly treated, not only by strangers or those who were openly his enemies, but by his own friends or relations; for the Hebrews called domestics and those connected by relationship, *men of peace;*

"the man of my peace, in whom I trusted,"

is an expression used in Psalm 41:9; but it is a phrase which often occurs. In short, Jeremiah means, that he was not only in a manner overwhelmed by a vast number of enemies, but that he was also without any friends, for they treacherously betrayed him. He says that they *watched his side,* or halting. Some render it "breaking;" but halting or debility is the most suitable; and the metaphor is most appropriate; it is taken from the side, and they who halt or through weakness totter, incline now on this side, then on that side. So Jeremiah says, that they *watched* him; *if by chance he go astray,* he again speaks in their name, "Let us then watch whether he will halt or go astray from the road; and then we shall prevail against him."

We may, in short, gather from these words, that this holy servant of God was not only harassed openly by professed enemies, but that he was also

insidiously watched, and perfidiously, too, by men who pretended to be his friends, while yet they were his worst enemies. If, then, deceitful men at this time assail us by secret means, and others oppose us openly, let us know that nothing new has happened to us; for in these two ways God tried Jeremiah. We also see that it was a common thing with the ungodly to lay hold on some pretext for calumny; for as soon as the Prophets opened their mouth, they could have said nothing but what was immediately misrepresented; and hence Micah complained that he was assailed by a similar artifice, for when the spoke with severity, they all cried out that he raised a tumult among the people, and sought nothing but new things, so that by disturbing the state of the city and kingdom, he would bring all things to ruin. (Micah 2:6.) If, then, God suffers us to be tried by such intrigues, let us bear such indignity with resigned and calm minds; for no Prophet has been exempt from this kind of trouble and annoyance.

They said further, *Let us take our revenge on him,* as though, indeed, they had a cause for revenge! for what had Jeremiah done? In what had he offended them? Though, then, they had suffered no wrong, they yet would take revenge! But it is no wonder that the ungodly and the despisers of God spoke thus; for we know that they thought themselves grievously injured whenever their wounds were touched; for they considered reproofs, however just and necessary, to be reproaches. Hence then it was, that their rage kindled in them a desire for revenge, though yet no wrong had been done to them. [13] He afterwards adds, —

Jeremiah 20:11

11. But the LORD is with me as a mighty terrible one: therefore my persecutors shall stumble, and they shall not prevail: they shall be greatly ashamed; for they shall not prosper: their everlasting confusion shall never be forgotten.

11. Atqui Jehova mecum tanquam gigas fortis (aut, terribilis;) propterea persecutores mei ruent, et non praevalebunt; pudefient valde, quia non prudenter agunt, (vel, non prospere succedet illis;) opprobrium seculi (id est, perpetuum, subaudiendum est, quod) non oblivioni tradetur.

Here the Prophet sets up God's aid against all the plottings formed against him. However, then, might perfidious friends on one hand try privately to entrap him, and open enemies might on the other hand publicly oppose him, he yet doubted not but that God would be a sufficient protection to him. And we ought to act exactly in the same manner, whenever Satan rouses the

[13] There is not much agreement in the early versions on this verse, nor in the Targum; and modern expounders somewhat differ, though the general meaning is obvious, and is given very lucidly by Calvin. I shall give what I consider to be the most literal rendering, — Truly I have heard the babbling of many, — "Terror on every side, publish ye, We also shall publish it:" All the men who are at peace with me, Watch for my halting, — "He may perhaps be enticed; Then we shall prevail over him, And shall take on him our revenge." Both Grotins and Blayney render {,{כ ``truly,'' or verily, and consider this verse connected with the following. There is evidently in the second line an allusion to the name given to Pashur: the multitude, by the way of ridicule, repeated the name. Cocceius and Blayney render the line according to this meaning. ``All the men,'' etc., literally, ``Every man of my peace,'' that is, who is at peace with him; they were those who seemed to be his friends, though really his enemies, and plotting for his downfall, and that by trying to entice him out of his course. --- Ed

wicked against us to oppose us either by secret artifices or by open cruelty; God alone must be, as they say, our brazen wall. But we must first know that he stands on our side; for the power of God can avail nothing to animate us, except we be firmly persuaded of this truth, that he is on our side. And how this confidence can be obtained, we shall presently see.

He says, that his *persecutors* would fall, so that they would *not prevail,* but be *ashamed* We see how many persecuted the holy man, and also with what arms they were furnished; for they possessed great power, and were also endued with guiles and intrigues. But the Prophet was satisfied with the help of God alone, and boldly concluded, that they would *fall;* for it could not be but that God would prove victorious. Whenever, then, we fight with the world and the devil and his slaves, this ought in the first place to come to our minds, that God stands on our side to defend our cause and to protect our safety. This being settled, we may then boldly defy both the artifices and the violence of all enemies; for it cannot be but that God will scatter, lay prostrate, overwhelm, and reduce to nothing all those who fight against him.

He further says that their *reproach* would be *perpetual,* and would never come to *oblivion* We have seen already that the Prophet was loaded with many reproaches; but whenever God suffers his servants to be exposed to the curses of the wicked, he in due time aids them; and therefore we ought fully to expect that he will shortly dissipate, as mists, such calumnies. As then God, according to what is said in Psalm 37:6, brings forth the innocency of the godly like the dawn, which in a moment appears while the earth seems buried in darkness, so the Prophet now says that on the other hand the *reproach* with which God will cover all the wicked will be *perpetual.* [14] It now follows, —

Jeremiah 20:12

12. But, O LORD of hosts, that triest the righteous, and seest the reins and the heart, let me see thy vengeance on them: for unto thee have I opened my cause.

12. Et (vel, tu autem) Jehova exercituum, probans justum, videns renes et cor, videbo ultionem tuam ex ipsis, quia tibi patefeci litem meam (vel, jus meam, causam meam.)

The Prophet shews here briefly how he dared to allege God's name and help against his enemies; for hypocrites often boast that God is their helper, but they falsely pretend his name. The proof, then, by which the Prophet shews that he did not falsely or presumptuously pretend what he had stated,

[14] Except in the first line, the Sept. and the Vulg. differ from the text as well as from one another; both are exceedingly confused. Few expounders have kept the proper tenses of the verbs. The Prophet states not only what would happen to his enemies, but also what had already in part happened to them, — 11. But Jehovah is with me as a terrible warrior; Therefore my persecutors shall stumble, And shall not prevail: They have become exceedingly ashamed, Because they have not succeeded; A perpetual shame! It shall not be forgotten. The last two lines are according to what Horsley suggests. "A terrible warrior" is rendered by the Sept., "a strong combatant, {μαχητὴς} {ἰσχύων};" by the Vulg., ``a brave warrior, bellato fortis, by the Syr., ``the strongest giant;'' and by the Arab., ``the strongest help.'' --- Ed

— that God was to him like a strong giant, who could easily lay prostrate all the wicked, ought to be well weighed; and it was this — that he dared to make God the witness and judge of his integrity. Hence if we desire to have God's name to plead for the purpose of repelling all those artifices which are contrived against us by the devil, we must learn to offer ourselves to be tried by him, so that he may really examine our thoughts and feelings.

Now, in the first place, let us bear in mind what the Prophet teaches, — that nothing is hid from God; for hypocrites will not hesitate to go so far as to offer themselves to be tried by God; but they do not yet duly consider what is said here, that nothing is hid from him. There are many recesses in the heart of man, and we know that all things there have many wrappings and coverings; but God in the meantime is a heart-discerner, ({καρδιογνώστης},) who proves the heart and reins. Under the word *reins,* the Hebrews include all the hidden thoughts and feelings. We must then remember this as the first thing, that the Prophet acknowledges that there can be no disguise as to God, and that men gain nothing by acting fallaciously, for he penetrates into the inmost thoughts and discerns between the thoughts and the feelings.

He adds that the *righteous are tried* by God. There is to be understood here a contrast, because men's judgment is commonly superficial; for when there is an appearance of integrity, there is an immediate acquittal, though the heart may be deceitful and full of all perfidy. The Prophet then means, that when we come to God's tribunal no one is there acquitted but he who brings a pure heart and real integrity. He then rises to a higher confidence, and says, that he should *see the vengeance* of God.

We now see whence the Prophet derived his confidence, even because he had thoroughly examined himself, and that before God; he had not appealed to earthly witnesses only, nor had he, as it were, ascended a public theater to solicit the favor of the people; but he knew that he was approved by God, because he was sincere and honest.

And then he justly adds, at the same time, that he had *made known his cause* or his complaint to God. There is to be understood here again a contrast; for they who are carried away by the popular breath do not acquiesce in God's judgment. Ambition, like a violent wind, always carries men along so that they cannot stop themselves; hence it is that neither the testimony of conscience nor the judgment of God has much weight with them. But the Prophet says, that he had made known his cause to God.

If any one objects and says, that hypocrites do the same, to this I answer, that though some imitation may appear in them, there is nothing real or genuine; for though they may boast that God is their witness, and that he approves of their cause, it is only what they speak vainly before men; for there is not one of them who deals thus privately with God. As long, then, as they are given to ostentation, they do not make known their cause to God, however they may appeal to him, refer to his tribunal, and declare that they have no other end in view but to promote his glory. They, then, who

boastingly sound forth these things before the world for their own advantage, do not yet make known their cause to God, but by frivolous and vain boasting pretend his name.

What, then, is it to make known our cause to God? It is to do this when no one is witness, and when God alone appears before us. When we dare in our prayers to address God thus, — "O Lord, thou knowest my integrity, thou knowest that there is nothing hid which I do now lay before thee," then it is that we truly make known our cause to God; for in this case there is no regard had for men, but we are satisfied with the judgment of God alone. This was the case with the Prophet when he said, that he had made known his cause to God; and it must have been so, for we have seen that all ranks of men were opposed to him. As then he was under the necessity of fleeing to the only true God, he justly says, that he had referred his cause to him.

By saying that he should see the *vengeance* of God, he alludes to that wished-for revenge before mentioned, for his enemies had said, "Let us take our revenge on him." The Prophet says, *"I shall see thy vengeance*, O Lord." By saying that he should *see* it, he speaks as though he had his hands tied; for thus the faithful, of their own accord, restrain themselves, *because* they know that they are forbidden by God's command to revenge themselves on their enemies. As, then, there is a difference between doing and seeing, the Prophet here makes a distinction between himself and the audaciously wicked; for he would not himself take vengeance according to the violence of his wrath, but that he should only *see* it; and then he calls it the vengeance of God, for men rob God of his right whenever they revenge themselves according to their own will. Paul says,

"Give place to wrath." (Romans 12:19)

While exhorting the faithful to forbearance, he uses this reason, that otherwise no place is given to God's judgment; for whenever we take revenge, we anticipate God, as though every one of us ascended God's tribunal, and arrogated to ourselves his office. We now, then, perceive what this mode of speaking means. [15]

But we must at the same time notice, that God's vengeance is not to be imprecated, except on the reprobate and irreclaimable. For the Prophet no doubt pitied his enemies, and wished, if they were reclaimable, that God would be propitious and merciful to them, according to what we have before seen. What, then, the revenge intimates of which he speaks is, that he knew by the prophetic spirit that they were wholly irreclaimable; and as his

[15] There is but little difference between this verse and the 20th of the 11th chapter (Jeremiah 11:20); the variety is in the first two lines. While here we have — But Jehovah of hosts, who art the trier of the righteous, The seer of the reins and of the heart; we have as follows in Jeremiah 11:20, — But Jehovah of hosts, who art a righteous judge, The trier of the reins and of the heart. As in the former instance, the Versions render what follows as an imprecation, — "May I see," etc., while the Targum does as Calvin, "I shall see," etc.; and this better comports with the passage. The Prophet first mentions God as a righteous judge, and then he concludes that he should see God's vengeance on his enemies, because he had devolved his cause on him, or revealed it to him. He had referred his cause to a righteous judge, and hence he felt assured that vengeance would overtake his enemies. — Ed.

mind was under the influence of right zeal, he could imprecate on them the vengeance of God. If any one now, after the example of the Prophet, should wish all his enemies destroyed, and would have God armed against them, he would act very presumptuously, for it does not belong to us to determine before the time who the reprobate and the irreclaimable are; until this be found out by us, we ought to pray for all without exception, and every one ought also to consider by what zeal he is influenced, lest we should be under the power of turbulent feelings, as is commonly the case, and lest also our zeal be hasty and inconsiderate. In short, except it be certain to us that our zeal is guided by the spirit of uprightness and wisdom, we should never pray for vengeance on our enemies. He afterwards adds, —

Jeremiah 20:13

13. Sing unto the LORD, praise ye the LORD: for he hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of evildoers.

13. Canite Jehovae, celebrate Jehovam, quia eripuit animam miseri (vel, afflicti) e manu scleratorum.

Here the Prophet breaks out into an open expression of joy, and not only gives thanks himself to God, that he had been freed from the intrigues and violence of the wicked, but he also summons others, and encourages them to sing praises to God; as though he had said, that his deliverance was such a favor, that not only he should be thankful to God for it, but that all should join to celebrate it, according to what is said by Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:11, that thanks might be given by many to God. The Prophet no doubt had experienced God's help, yea, that help which he had before so highly extolled. As, then, he had really found that God was victorious, and that his safety had been defended against all the ungodly by God's invincible power, he in full confidence expressed his thanks, and wished all God's servants to join with him. [16]

Whenever, then, we are reduced into straits, and seem to be, as it were, rejected by God himself, let us still wait patiently until he may be pleased to free us from the hand of the wicked; without misery and distress preceding, we should never sufficiently acknowledge the power of God in preserving us. Thus Jeremiah confesses that he was for a time miserable and oppressed, but that he was at length delivered, even when the ungodly and wicked thought themselves victorious. Now follows an outcry, which seems to be of a very different character, —

Jeremiah 20:14-16

14. Cursed be the day wherein I was born: let not the day wherein my mother bare me be blessed.

14. Maledictus dies, quo natus sum (in eo, sed abundat;) dies quo peperit me mater mea, non sit benedictus:

[16] The "poor" here does not mean him who is in low circumstances, but him who is helpless or defenseless; and this is the meaning of the word often in other parts, especially in the Psalm. The word "soul," too, here and in other places, means life, — Sing ye to Jehovah, praise Jehovah, For he hath rescued the life of the helpless From the hand of malignants. — Ed.

15. Cursed be the man who brought tidings to my father, saying, A man child is born unto thee; making him very glad.

15. Maledictus vir, qui nuntiavit patri meo, dicendo, Natus est tibi filius masculus; quoniam (vel, quando) laetificavit eum (hoc est, cum vellet exhilarare patrem meum.)

16. And let that man be as the cities which the LORD overthrew, and repented not: and let him hear the cry in the morning, and the shouting at noontide;

16. Et sit vir ille quasi urbes quas perdidit Jehova, et non poenituit, et audiat clamorem mane, et tumultum tempore meridiano, (hoc est, in meridie ipsa.)

It seems, as I have said, that the Prophet was inconsistent with himself; from joy and thanksgiving he immediately passed into curses and execrations; what could have been less appropriate? If we say that he was tried by a new temptation, yet this seems by no means satisfactory, though it is in this way that interpreters commonly untie the knot. But it seems to me a levity unworthy of the holy man to pass suddenly from thanksgiving to God into imprecations, as though he had forgotten himself. I, therefore, doubt not but that the Prophet here relates how grievously he had been harassed by his own thoughts. The whole of this passage, then, is connected with thanksgiving, for he amplifies the deliverance which he has just mentioned, that is, that he had been brought back, as it were, from the lower regions. Thus he recites, in the latter passage, what had before happened to him, as though he had said, "When I now declare that I have been rescued by God from the hand of the wicked, I cannot sufficiently express the greatness of that favor, until I make it more clearly known to all the godly how great and how dreadful agonies I suffered, so that I cursed my birth-day, and abhorred everything that ought to have stimulated me to give praise to God."

In short, the Prophet teaches us here that he was not only opposed by enemies, but also distressed inwardly in his mind, so that he was carried away contrary to reason and judgment, by turbulent emotions which even led him to give utterance to vile blasphemies. For what is here said cannot be extenuated; but the Prophet most grievously sinned when he became thus calumnious towards God; for a man must be in a state of despair when he curses the day in which he was born. Men are, indeed, wont to celebrate their birth-day; and it was a custom which formerly prevailed, to acknowledge yearly that they owed it to God's invaluable goodness that they were brought forth into vital light. As then it is a reason for thanksgiving, it is evident that when we turn to a curse what ought to rouse us to praise God, we are no longer in a right mind, nor possessed of reason, but that we are seized as it were with a sacrilegious madness; and yet into this state had the Prophet fallen. [17]

[17] The greatest difficulty in this passage is the connection. That Jeremiah should have cursed his birthday is what can be accounted for, as in the case of Job. Nature, even in the best of men, sometimes utters its own voice. But how he came to do this immediately after having

We may then here learn with what care ought every one of us to watch himself, lest we be carried away by a violent feeling, so as to become intemperate and unruly.

At the same time I allow, and it is what we ought carefully to notice, that the origin of his zeal was right. For though the Prophet indirectly blamed God, we ought yet to consider the source of his complaint; he did not curse his birth-day because he was afflicted with diseases, or because he could not endure poverty and want, or because he suffered some private evils; no, nothing of this kind was the case with the Prophet; but the reason was, because he saw that all his labor was lost, which he spent for the purpose of securing the wellbeing of the people; and further, because he found the truth of God loaded with calumnies and reproaches. When, therefore, he saw the ungodly thus insolently resisting him, and that all religion was treated with ridicule, he felt deeply moved. Hence it was that the holy man was touched with so much anguish. And we hence clearly see, that. the source of his zeal was right.

But we are here reminded how much vigilance we ought to exercise over ourselves; for in most instances, when we become weary of life, and desire death, and hate the world, with the light and all the blessings of God, how is it that we are thus influenced, except that disdain reigns within us, or that we cannot with resignation bear reproaches, or that poverty is too grievous to us, or that some troubles press on us too heavily? It is not that we are influenced by a zeal for God. Since, then, the Prophet, who had no regard to himself nor had any private reason either of gain or of loss, became yet. thus exasperated and so very vehement, nay, seized with so violent a feeling, we ought surely to exercise the more care to restrain our feelings; and though many things may daily happen to us, which may produce weariness, or overwhelm us with so much disdain as to render all things hateful to us, we ought yet to contend against such feelings; and if we cannot, at the first effort, repress and subdue them, we ought, at least, according to the example of the Prophet, to learn to correct them by degrees, until God cheers and comforts us, so that we may rejoice and sing a song of thanksgiving.

thanked God for his deliverance, seems singular. The explanation of Calvin, that he relates what had passed in his mind, while he was confined by Pashur, is plausible, and has been adopted by Grotius, Gataker, Cocceius, and Henry. Grotius considered, "I had said," to be understood at the beginning of the fourteenth verse. Adam Clarke thought that the words have been transposed, and that the five last verses ought to come in between the eighth and the ninth verse: and he says what is true, that there are many transpositions in this book. Houbigant, approved by Horsley, thought the right place for these verses is between the sixth and the seventh verse. But these transpositions are not satisfactory. Venema's notion is, that Jeremiah does not speak in his own name, but in the name of Pashur. Having described in the previous verse his own ease, the protection he found from God, he describes in these verses the wretchedness and misery of his persecutor, and introduces him as cursing his birth-day, etc. But this is very far-fetched and fanciful. Scott acknowledges the transition to be very extraordinary, but yet thinks that the Prophet describes what had passed through his own mind, and says that the experience of good men proves that such sudden changes occur. "An experimental acquaintance with our hearts," he says, "and the variations of our passions, under sharp trials, as encouraging or discouraging thoughts occur to our minds, will best enable us to understand it." This is probably the right view of the subject. The Prophet, indeed, acknowledged God's kindness in saving his life, and invited others to join him in praising him: yet when he considered his circumstances, he gave way to his own natural feelings. — Ed.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as virulent tongues now surround us, and the devil has many mercenaries, who have nothing else in view but to prevent by clamors whatever is rightly derived from thee, and has proceeded from thy mouth, — O grant, that we may firmly oppose such intrigues, and also stand with resolute minds against all their violent artifices, and proceed in the course of thy holy calling, until we shall at length surely know that they who trust in thee, and faithfully devote themselves to thy service, are never left without thy help; and that, having at last finished our warfare, we may be gathered into that blessed rest which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. — Amen.

Lecture Seventy-Eight

We said yesterday that the Prophet's confused state of mind is described in this passage; for he would have no doubt himself confessed, that he was carried away by an intemperate feeling, so as not to be himself; for it is to cast reproach on God when any one curses his own birth-day. And he goes farther than this, for he adds, *Cursed be the man who declared to my father, that a male child was born* Here he not only fights against God, but is also ungrateful towards men; for what but thanks did he deserve who first told his father that he had a son born to him? It was then an ingratitude in no way excusable And hence we also learn that the Prophet had no control over his feelings, but was wholly led away by a blind impulse, which made him to utter very inconsiderate words; for in this sentence there is no piety nor humanity; but as I have said, the Prophet was ungrateful to men as well as to God; and his hyperbolical language also more fully expresses how intemperate his feelings were, *who declared to my father that a male child was born* He seems here, as though he avowedly despised God's favor, for we know that males are preferred to females. But the Prophet mentions here the word male, as though he wished to complain of what he ought to have been thankful for.

And he adds, *Who with joy made him joyful* We see, as it is commonly said, how he mingles heaven and earth; for had it been in his power, when this frenzy possessed his mind, he would have certainly disturbed all the elements. But more grievous and more inordinate is what follows, *Let that man be like the cities which God destroyed without repentance* Why did he imprecate on an innocent man the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah? and then he speaks not of temporal punishment, but devotes the man to endless perdition, for that is the import of the words, *and he repented not;* as though he had said, "May God be angry with him, without shewing any mercy, but manifest himself as wholly implacable, as he dealt with Sodom, which he at once destroyed without leaving it any hope." Had he spoken of an inveterate enemy, he ought to have kept within those bounds prescribed to all God's children; but he had nothing against the man who brought the news to his father. We hence see how he was led away as it were by an insane

impulse. But let us hence learn to restrain, in due time, our feelings, which will pass over all bounds if we indulge them; for they will break out then as it were into fury, as the case was with the Prophet.

He also adds, *Let him hear a cry in the morning, and a tumult at noon-tide* Here he devotes an innocent man to perpetual inquietude. And mention is made of the dawn, for we know that terrors occur during darkness in the night. If anything happens in the day-time, we inquire what it is, and we are not so frightened; but when there is any noise in the night, fear takes full possession of us. There is then something monstrous in what the Prophet expresses here. Hence, also, we more fully learn how very hot was his indignation, that he thus wished perpetual torments to an innocent man. *In the morning,* he says, *let him hear a cry, and at noon a tumult* Had he said, "Let him hear a cry perpetually," it would not have been so grievous. It now follows, —

Jeremiah 20:17-18

17. Because he slew me not from the womb; or that my mother might have been my grave, and her womb to be always great with me.

17. Quare non occidisti me ab utero? et fuisset (hoc est, ut esset) mihi mater mea sepulchrum meum? et in utero ejus conceptus saeculi (id est, perpetuus, vel, uterus ejus fuisset in conceptu perpetuo; et hoec posterior expositio videtur reelins quadrare, ac si diceret, Fuisset uterus, matris meoe sterilis, ita ut non conciperet nisi post soeculum, id est, nunquam.)

18. Wherefore came I forth out of the womb to see labour and sorrow, that my days should be consumed with shame?

18. Quare ex utero egressus sum ad videndum molestiam et dolorem, ut consumantur in opprobrio dies mei?

After having denounced his imprecations on his birth-day, and on the messenger who had wished to convey joy to his father, Jeremiah now expostulates with God. It hence appears how great was his madness; for thus must we speak. But if Jeremiah spared not God, how should he spare a mortal man? There is then no doubt but that he raged furiously against God, for his expostulation is that of a man wholly desperate; he asks, why he was not slain from the womb, as though he did not regard it as a kindness that he came alive into light. But this life, though exposed to many sorrows, ought yet to be counted as an evidence of God's inestimable favor. As the Prophet, then, not only despised this goodness of God, but contended with God himself, because he had been created a man and brought into light, how great was his ingratitude!

He then adds, *My mother might have been my grave;* [18] that is, "This

[18] Our version seems right in rendering the {{ו in this sentence or; and so it ought to be rendered in the previous verse, otherwise there is an inconsistency in representing a man destroyed, and hearing an outcry, etc. The two verses may be thus rendered, --- 16. And let that man be like the cities Which Jehovah overturned and repented not; Or a hearer of an outcry in the morning And of tumult at noon-tide. 17. Why not slay me did he from the womb? Or become to me did my mother my grave, And her womb a perpetual conception? The last words are, literally, ``a conception of perpetuity,'' --- the Vulg. has, ``an eternal conception,'' --- the Syr., ``a perpetual conception.'' Then the next verse is as follows, --- 18. For what purpose has this been? From the womb I came forth To see labor and sorrow, And spent in shame are my days. --- Ed.

light and life I value not; why then did I not die in my mother's womb? and why did she conceive me?" Then he says, *Why came I forth from the womb that I might see trouble and sorrow, and that my days. might be consumed in, reproach?* Here he gives a reason why he was wearied of life; but he could not have been cleared on this account, nor ought he to be so at this day; for what just cause can we have to contend with God? Jeremiah was created to sorrow and trouble: this is the condition of all; why, then, should God be blamed? his days were spent in reproach: there was nothing new in his case; for many who have received an honorable testimony from God had suffered many wrongs and reproaches. Why, then, did he not look to them as examples, that he might bear with patience and resignation what had happened to other holy men? but he seemed as though he wished to appear as it were in public, that he might proclaim his disgrace, not only to his own age, but to every age to the end of the world.

At the same time we must remember the object he had in view; for the Prophet, as we have said, was not seized with this intemperate spirit after he had given thanks to God, and exulted as a conqueror, but before; and in order to amplify the grace of God in delivering him as it were from hell itself, into which he had plunged himself, he mentioned what had passed through his mind. The drift of the whole description seems to be this, — "I was lost, and my mind could conceive nothing but what was bitter, and with a full mouth I vomited forth poison and blasphemies against God." What the Prophet then had here in view, was to render more conspicuous the kindness of God in bringing him to light from so deep an abyss.

A similar mode of speaking is found in the third chapter of Job. But Job had not the reason which, as we have said, Jeremiah had; for Jeremiah was not influenced by any private grief when carried away by all insane impulse to speak against God. Whence, then, was his great grief? even because he saw he was despised by the people, and that the whole of religion was esteemed by them as nothing: in short, he saw that the state of things was quite hopeless. He was, then, inflamed with zeal for God's glory; and he also was extremely grieved at the irreclaimable wickedness of the people; but Job had only a respect to his own sufferings. There was, therefore, a great difference between Job and Jeremiah; and yet we know that both were endowed, as it were, with angelic virtue, for Job is named as one of three just men, who seemed to have been elevated above all mankind; and Jeremiah, if a comparison be made, was in this instance more excusable than Job; and yet we see that they were both inflamed with so unreasonable a grief, that they spared neither God nor man.

Let us then learn to check our feelings, that they may not break out thus unreasonably. Let us at the same time know that God's servants, though they may excel in firmness, are yet not wholly divested of their corruptions. And should it happen at any time to us to feel such emotions within us, let not such a temptation discourage us; but as far as we can and as God

gives us grace, let us strive to resist it, until the firmness of our faith at length gains the ascendency, as we see was the case with Jeremiah. For when overwhelmed with such a confusion of mind as to lie down as it were dead in hell itself, he was yet restored, as we have seen, to such a soundness of mind, that he afterwards courageously executed his own office, and also gloried, according to what we observed yesterday, in the help of God. Let us proceed, —

Jeremiah 21

CHAPTER 21

Jeremiah 21:1-4

1. The word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, when king Zedekiah sent unto him Pashur the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, saying,

1. Sermo qui datus fuit Jeremiae (factus fuit ad Jeremiam) a Jehova, cum misisset ad eum rex Zedekias Phassur filium Malchiah et Zephaniam filiam Maassiah sacerdotem (vel, sacerdotis) dicendo,

2. Enquire, I pray thee, of the LORD for us; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon maketh war against us; if so be that the LORD will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, that he may go up from us.

2. Interroga (inquire) nunc pro nobis (aut, consule pro nobis) Jehovam; quia Nebuchadnezer rex Babylonis praeliatur contra nos, si faciat Jehova nobiscum secundum omnia mirabilia sua, et ascendat a notis.

3. Then said Jeremiah unto them, Thus shall ye say to Zedekiah:

3. Et dixit Jeremias illis, Sic dicetis Zedekiae,

4. Thus saith the LORD God of Israel; Behold, I will turn back the weapons of war that are in your hands, wherewith ye fight against the king of Babylon, and against the Chaldeans, which besiege you without the walls, and I will assemble them into the midst of this city.

4. Sic dicit Jehovah Deus Israel, Ecce ego reduco (alii vertunt, convertam; quidam minus apte, congregabo; bene vertetur, contraham, vel, prohibebo) onmia vasa (id est, instrumenta) bellica (belli) quae sunt in manibus vestris, quibus yes praeliamini (in ipsis, sed abundat) adversus regem Babylonis et Chaldaeos, qui obsident vos ab extra murum (hoc est, foris extra murum,) et colligam ipsos in medium urbis hujus.

Jeremiah relates how he received the king's messengers, who sought from

him an answer, whether he could bring any comfort in a state of things so perplexed and almost hopeless, he then says, that two had been sent to him; one was Pashur, not the priest mentioned in the last chapter, for he was the son of Immer but this was the son of Melchiah; and the other was Zephaniah the priest, the son of Maaseiah. But he shews that the king and his counsellors were disappointed of their hope, for they expected a favor-able answer, as though God would be propitious to Jerusalem; but the Prophet answered as he was commanded by God, that it was all over with the city, the kingdom, and the whole nation.

We shall also see from other passages that Zedekiah was not one of the worst; though he did not really fear God and was led away by false counsels, there was yet in him some regard for religion, so that he did not avowedly despise God as Epicureans do. Many such are found even at this day in the world, who think it enough to cherish a half-buried fear of God, and to retain some little regard for religion; but it is very fading, and disappears on even the least occasion. So it was with Zedekiah; he was as it were neutral, for he neither seriously worshipped God nor yet despised him.

Hence it was, that he sent messengers to Jeremiah. He knew that while God was displeased with them no safety could be hoped for; but he did not understand the way of appeasing God, nor had he any real desire to be reconciled to him; as the case is with hypocrites, who, though they wish God to be kind to them, yet when God's mercy is offered to them, either openly reject it, or are unwilling to embrace it, because they cannot bear to surrender themselves to God. Such was the state of mind in which Zedekiah was; and hence it was, that he asked the Prophet to consult God. But we must also observe that this was an honorable message; and it hence more fully appears that Zedekiah was not one of those furious tyrants, who like the giants seek to fight with God. For by sending two messengers to the Prophet, and employing him as an advocate to seek some favor from God, he proved that religion was not wholly suppressed and extinguished in him.

And hence also it may be seen how bold and courageous was the Prophet; for he was not softened by the honor paid to him, but gave such answer as was calculated to exasperate the king, and to drive him into great rage. But we ought especially to notice, that they did not flatter the Prophet so as to induce him to give a false answer, but wished God to be consulted. It hence appears that they were convinced of Jeremiah's integrity, that he would say nothing rashly or from himself, but would be a faithful interpreter and herald of heavenly oracles. And yet we see, and shall hereafter see in several passages, that the king was very incensed against God's Prophet. But hypocrites, though they are forced to reverence God, are yet carried here and there, and maintain no consistency, especially when they perceive that God is against them; for they are not turned by threatenings. They cannot, therefore, but make tumult, and strive like refractory horses to shake off their rider. Such an instance we find in Zedekiah; for he acknowledged

Jeremiah as God's faithful servant; for he did not say, "Tell a lie for us, or in our favor but, *inquire of God for us.*

He then adds, *If Jehovah will deal with us according to all his wondrous works* [19] We again see that Zedekiah had some sense of religion; but it was very evanescent; for he was not influenced by any real impression, being like hypocrites who wish, as it has been said, to have peace with God, provided it be on their own terms. But as they are unwilling wholly to surrender themselves to God, they take a circuituous course, and seek to allure God to themselves, at least they come not to him except through various windings, and not in a direct way. Hence Zedekiah refers here to God's miraculous works which had been wrought in behalf of the Israelites in all ages; as though he had said, "God has hitherto dealt; in a wonderful manner with his chosen people, and whenever he brought help to our fathers, he manifested wonderful proofs of his power; will he not deal with us at this day in the same manner?" He assumes the principle, that God's covenant remained inviolable; and this was quite true, but the application was false; for Zedekiah and the whole people ought to have kept faith with God. For if they wished God to be propitious to them, why did they not in return worship and serve him as their God? But as they were covenant-breakers, how foolishly and vainly did they allege God's covenant, which they themselves had rendered void? But it is usual with hypocrites to apply to themselves every favor which God shews to his own children; for they falsely assume the name as a covering, and say, that they are members of the Church because God had adopted them. This was the reason why Zedekiah asked whether God would do according to his wonderful works, as though he had said, "Surely God is ever like himself, and we are his people; and as he has so often delivered his Church, and in such various ways, his power has always been wonderfully displayed; why, then, will he not deal with us in the same manner?"

He at last, adds, *that he may ascend from us*, [20] that is, that the King Nebuchadnezzar may raise the siege and leave us free.

Now follows the answer of Jeremiah, *say ye to Zedekiah,* etc.; he did not go to the king himself, but by way of contempt delivered the message to be borne by the messengers. The Prophet no doubt did this designedly, and through the impulse of the Holy Spirit. He did not, indeed, proudly despise his king; but it was necessary for him by his magnanimity to cast down the pride of the king, so that he might know that he had to do with the living God, whom he had very insolently treated. *Say ye to Zedekiah, Thus saith*

[19] The "if" may better be rendered "it may be," {;{אולי it is so rendered by the Vulg., Syr., and the Targ. --- Ed

[20] The Syr. Renders the verb "ascend" as a Hiphil; and more consistently with the passage, "and drive him away from us." With the exception of the Arab., the Versions and the Targ. Render the first verb in the verse, not "inquire," but "ask," or "pray the Lord for us." Then the verse would be as follows: — 2. Pray now for us to Jehovah; for Nebuchadrezzar, the king of Babylon, is warring against us: it may be that Jehovah will deal with us according to all his wondrous works, and make him to depart from us. The verb {,{דרש transitively as here, means to seek: see Psalm 34:5. And to seek the favor of Jehovah, or to pray to him, seems most consistent with the latter part of the verse. Blayney's rendering is, ``Intreat, we pray thee, Jehovah for us;'' and this is the meaning taken by Venema and Gataker. --- Ed

Jehovah, the God of Israel, etc. He adds the words, *the God of Israel,* that Zedekiah might know that the wonderful works, in reliance on which he still thought that their condition was safe, did not belong to him and the people; as though the Prophet had said, "Though God did not help thee and thy people, he would not yet be inconsistent with himself, or depart from his covenant; but he would remain ever the God of Israel, though he destroyed thee and all thy people."

He says, *Behold I,* etc.; it was said before, Nebuchadnezzar is come to make war with us: now he says, "I am God;" as though he had said, "Nebuchadnezzar may be conquered, he may change his counsel, he may leave you through weariness; but know ye that Nebuchadnezzar fights under my authority." *Behold,* he says, I prohibit (for so ought {מסכ} to be rendered) *all the warlike instruments which are in your hands, and with which ye fight against the king of Babylon and against the Chaldeans;* as though he had said, "However furnished ye may be with weapons and forces, and whatever may be necessary to defend the city, I forbid the use of these weapons, that is, I will cause that they will avail you nothing." Some, as I have said, render the word, "I will turn them against you." But the meaning seems more suitable to the etymology of the word, when we say, that the weapons which the Jews had would avail them nothing, because God would prevent them from producing any effect. [21]

He afterwards adds, *the Chaldeans, who fight without the wall against you* He described their state at that time, for the city was besieged by the Chaldeans; there was a wall between them, and the Jews thought that they could repel the attacks of their enemies. But God says, "the Chaldeans are this day shut out by the wall, *but I will gather them,* he says, *into the middle of this city;* that is, I will make a breach, so that the wall may not be a hinderance to prevent, the Chaldeans from occupying the very bosom of the city." It follows, —

Jeremiah 21:5

5. And I myself will fight against you with an outstretched hand and with a strong arm, even in anger, and in fury, and in great wrath.

5. Et praeliabor ego contra vos in manu extenta et brachio robusto, et in ira et furore et excandescentia magna.

He proceeds with the subject; and though he afterwards is more diffuse, he yet confirms here what we have just seen, — even that God was the leader of the war, and that the Chaldeans were, as it were, his hired soldiers, whom he guided by his own hand, and to whom he would give the signal to fight.

I, myself he says, *will fight against you* He put this in opposition to the wonderful works which Zedekiah had mentioned. God, indeed, had formerly been in a wonderful way present with his Church, not only once, but a thou-

[21] The verb {{סב means to turn, to turn aside, to turn round, to change; it seems to mean here to turn to a contrary purpose, to turn from the right use, to divert, to revert, or to reverse, ``Behold, I will reverse the instruments of war which are in your hands; {μετάστρεφω} --- I change,'' that is, to what is opposite, is the Sept.; Blayney reads, ``Behold, I will turn aside,'' etc. --- Ed

sand times; but he says now, "whatever power I have, it shall be exercised now against you; expect, therefore, no aid from me, but know that I am armed, and shall wholly destroy you." He adds, *with an extended hand and a strong arm;* as though he had said, "your fathers found wonderful works done for their safety; but you shall by experience learn how great is my power to destroy you." In short, he means that all God's power would be a cause of terror to the Jews, and that therefore they could not escape, as there is nothing more dreadful than to have God's hand opposed to us. To the same purpose is what follows, *in wrath, and in fury, and in great indignation* [22] God intimates in these words that he would be implacable, and that hence Zedekiah was mistaken when he thought that the end of their evils was nigh at hand.

He might indeed have said briefly, "I will fight with an extended hand and with wrath;" but he mentioned wrath three times in various words. Hence what I have said appears evident, that Zedekiah was deprived of every hope, lest he should deceive himself, as though he would somehow propitiate God, who had already given up the city to final destruction. But we shall see that the Prophet had not ceased from the discharge of his office, and that he had allowed some room for repentance. But he made expressly this answer, for the king could not have been otherwise awakened. We shall see how he explained himself; but this beginning was as it were a thunderclap to lay prostrate the pride of the king and of the people. They had become first torpid in their evils, and then such was their contumacy that they sought to subject God to themselves. As then their stupidity and their obstinacy were so great, the Prophet could not, with any hope of success, have exhorted them to repent and offered them the mercy of God; it was therefore necessary for them to be so smitten as to perceive that they were wholly lost, and that God was so angry with them that they could not be saved by any human means. But we must defer the rest till to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we cease not to provoke thy wrath, and are also so slow to repent, — O grant, that we may at least so profit under thy threatenings and the manifestations of thy judgment, that we may give up ourselves wholly to thee, and hope, also for thy favor which has been for a time hidden from us, until with resigned minds we shall be able confidently to call on thee, and so prove our constancy, that thy name may be glorified in us, so that we may also be glorified in thee through Jesus Christ our Lord. — Amen.

Lecture Seventy-Ninth

[22] There seems to be a gradation in these terms, — "in wrath, and in hot displeasure, and in great foaming indignation." The first word means simply wrath or anger; the second, heated wrath; and the third, foaming wrath, and "great" is added to it. None of the Versions, except the Arab., presents this climax; the Sept. and Syr. have only two, "anger and great wrath;" the Vulg., "fury, indignation, and great wrath;" and the Arab., "wrath, indignation, and the greatest fury." The Targ. has the same with the Vulg. These terms refer evidently to the provocations which had been given by the Jews. Their conduct had been such as to excite wrath, and heated wrath, and even great foaming wrath. — Ed.

Jeremiah 21:6-7

6. And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast: they shall die of a great pestilence.

6. Et percutiam habitatores urbis hujus, tam hominem quam bestliam; peste magna morientur.

7. And afterward, saith the LORD, I will deliver Zedekiah king of Judah, and his servants, and the people, and such as are left in this city from the pestilence, from the sword, and from the famine, into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those that seek their life: and he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; he shall not spare them, neither have pity, nor have mercy.

7 Et post sic (postea) dicit Jehova, Tradam Zedekiam, regem Jehudah, et servos ejus, et populum, et qui residui erunt in urbe hae a peste, a gladio, et a fame, in manum Nebuehadrezer, regis Babylonis, et in manum inimieorum ipsorum, et in manum quaerentium animam ipsorum; et percuitet eos ore gladii; non parcet illis, neque ignoscet, neque miserabitur.

Jeremiah goes on with the same discourse, even that God had resolved to destroy Jerusalem and the people, at least for a time. But he points out here what he intended to do, even that he would consume them by pestilence and famine, as long as they continued in the city; as though he had said, "Though these Chaldeans may not immediately take the city by means of a siege, yet its destruction shall be worse, for famine shall rage within and consume them." We now perceive the design of the Prophet.

But we must keep in mind what I reminded you of yesterday, — that God assumes to himself what might have been ascribed to the Chaldeans, for he makes himself the author of all these calamities; *I will smite,* he says, *the inhabitants of this city, both man and beast; by a great pestilence shall they die* This was the first kind of punishment; before the enemy rushed into the city the pestilence had consumed many of the people. Now there is a circumstance mentioned which shews how dreadful would be their state, for not only men would perish, but even brute animals. It was no wonder that God's vengeance extended to horses, and oxen, and asses; for we know that all these were created for the use of man. Hence when God manifested his wrath as to these animals, His object was to fill men with greater terrors; for they thus saw oxen and asses, though innocent, involved in the same punishment with themselves. For how can we suppose that horses and asses deserved to perish by diseases, or through want of daily food? But God sets forth such a spectacle as this, that he may more effectually touch men; for they thus see that the whole world is exposed to a curse through their sins. They are indeed constrained to know how great their sinfulness is; for on this account it is that the earth becomes dry and barren, that the elements above and below perform not their offices, so that the sterility of the ground deprives animals of their food, and the infection of the air kills them. But on this subject we have spoken elsewhere.

He then adds, *And afterwards,* that is, when the pestilence had in a great measure consumed them; *I will give,* or *deliver*, he says, *Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his servants, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzer* He intimates that though they might suffer with courage their wants, it, would be of no avail to them. It often happens that a siege is raised, when the obstinacy of the besieged is so great, that they overcome famine and thirst, and struggle against extreme want; for they who besiege them are led to think that they contend with furious wild beasts, and so depart from them. But God declares here that the event would be different as to the Jews, for after having been nearly consumed, they would still be delivered up into the power of their enemies. Thus he shows that, their endurance would be useless. It is indeed, a most deplorable thing, that when we have endured many grievous and distressing evils, the enemy should at length gain the *ascendency,* and possess over us the power of life and death. But God shows here that such a calamity awaited the Jews; *I will deliver,* he says, *Zedekiah the king of Judah, etc.* He doubtless intended to show how foolish their confidence was, when they thought that they were safe under the shadow of their king: "The king himself," he says, "shall not exempt himself from danger; what then will it avail you to have a king?" And the king is expressly mentioned, that the Jews might not deceive themselves with the foolish notion, that they had a sufficient safeguard in their king.

He then adds, *And his servants,* that is, his counsellors or courtiers; for servants were those called who were the chief men and ministers of the king, "and his ministers." There was a great deal of pride in these courtiers, and they were very hostile to the Prophets; for being blinded by their own foolish wisdom, they despised what the Prophets taught and all their warnings. For this reason the Prophet says that they would be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.

It is further said, *And the people* The last copulative is to be taken exegetically, *even,* {ואת}-{הנשארים}, *veat enesharim,* "even the residue;" for he refers to none but the people, but intimates what the people would be, even a small number, a remnant. Then the words are to be thus rendered, "even those who shall remain in the city." But Jerusalem, when this discourse was delivered, was in a flourishing state, and had a large number of inhabitants, he therefore shews, that after God diminished and reduced the people to a small number, there would not yet be an end to their evils, but that a worse thing would still happen to them, for their life would be put in the power of their enemies; he therefore says, *even those who shall remain in the city;* and he alludes to the last verse, for he had said that many would perish through want; nor does he refer only to famine, but, also to the sword and to the pestilence, for he says, even those who shall remain *from the pestilence, and from the sword, and from the famine* The famine, as it is usual, produced pestilence; and then when their enemies attacked the city with their warlike instruments, many must have been killed, as they could not repulse their

enemies from the walls without a conflict. Then God shows that the Jews would have to contend with want, pestilence, and the sword, until they were overcome, and the city taken by the Chaldeans.

It is afterwards added, *into the hands of their enemies, into the hand of those who seek their life* This repetition is not superfluous, for God intimates what is more fully and clearly expressed by Isaiah, — that the Chaldeans would not be satisfied with plunder, that they would make no account of silver and gold, for they would burn with rage, and their object would be to shed blood. (Isaiah 13:17.) So the meaning is here, when he mentions those who would *seek their life;* for they would be led by deadly hatred, so that their anger and cruelty would not be appeased until they destroyed them. Thus he shows that it would be a bloody victory, for the Jews would not only be led captives, because their conquerors would not think it worth their while to drag them away as worthless slaves, but their object would be wholly to destroy them.

Hence he says, *He will smite them* There is a change of number, and the reference is made to the king, and yet the whole army is included, *he will smite them with the mouth of the sword, he will not spare, he will not forgive,* (the words are synonymous,) *and will shew no mercy* [23] God thus transferred his own inexorable wrath to the Chaldeans, who were his ministers, as though he had said, "Your enemies will be implacable, they will not be turned to mercy; for I have so commanded, and I will rouse them to execute my judgment." Nor can this be deemed strange, because God had resolved in his implacable wrath to reduce the people to nothing. For we know how great was their perverseness in their sins.

Since then they had so often rejected the mercy of God, they had in a manner closed up the door of pardon. Hence it was that God resolved that the Chaldeans should thus rage against them without any feeling of humanity. It afterwards follows, —

Jeremiah 21:8-9

8. And unto this people thou shalt say, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I set before you the way of life, and the way of death.

8. Et ad populum hunc dices, sic dicit Jehova, Ecce ego propono coram vobis (coram faciebus vestris) viam vitae (vitarum, ad verbum) et viam mortis:

9. He that abideth in this city shall die by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth out, and falleth to the Chaldeans that besiege you, he shall live, and his life shall be unto him for a prey.

9. Qui habitabit in urbe hac morietur gladio et fame et peste; qui autem egressus fuerit et habitaverit (vertunt quidam, qui ceciderit; sed dicemus de

[23] The Versions and the Targum all differ as to these three verbs, and their distinct meaning is not given by any of them. The first is to spare, the second is to relent, and the third is to feel compassion or pity. The last act, sparing, is mentioned first, then the previous one relenting, and in the third place, what occasions relenting, pity, or compassion. The same verbs occur together in chapter 13:14, but in a different order, relent, spare, pity. — Ed.

hoc verbo postea) apud Chaldeos, qui obsident vos, vivet et anima illi erit in spolium.

God here declares that he proposed to the *people the way of life and the way of death*, in order that they might surely know that all who remained in the city would soon meet with death, and that those who willingly surrendered to their enemies would have their life spared. Moses says in another sense that he set before them the way of life and the way of death; he spoke of the Law, which contains promises of God's favor, and threatenings to transgressors. But the Prophet means here another thing, that is, that there was no hope of safety except the Jews submitted their neck to the yoke, and surrendered of themselves to their enemies; for if they pertinaciously defended themselves, God would be their enemy, for he had led the Chaldeans to assail them, and directed their counsels and their forces. He indeed confirms what he had said before, but at the same time he more particularly describes what was to be, that the Jews might lay aside their perverseness, and acknowledge that they could not escape the correction which they deserved.

The import of what is said is, that as the Chaldeans fought under the authority of God, they would be victorious; it was then in vain for the Jews to resist, as they could not escape, unless they overcame God himself, which was impossible. He leaves then but one hope to them, that is, humbly to acknowledge God's just judgment by submitting of themselves to a temporal punishment, and by enduring exile with a resigned mind. This then is the meaning, and it is not different discourse, but the Prophet confirms what he had said before, and at the same time applies God's threatenings to the state of the people, so that they might humble themselves, and not think it of any use to resist God in their obstinacy, as they would at length be constrained to succumb.

Thou shalt say to this people, Thus saith Jehovah, Behold I set before you the way of life and the way of death. Which was the way of death? *Whosoever,* he says, *abides in this city, shall die by the sword, or by famine, or by pestilence* This was incredible to the Jews, and they were no doubt inflamed with rage when they heard that they were to perish in the holy city which God protected; for there he had his sanctuary, and there his rest was. But the Prophet had already dissipated all these delusions; he could, therefore, boldly threaten them, though they still alleged their vain pretences: he had shewed reasons enough why they could hope for nothing less than exile from God, for they had so many times, and so obstinately, and in such various ways provoked him. This, then, he says, is the *way of death,* it is by remaining in the city. And he mentions several kinds of evils, and shews that God was armed not only with a hostile sword, but would also employ famine and pestilence, so that he would kill some with the sword, consume some with famine, and destroy some with pestilence. Hence he shews that they would be so assailed on every side, that it would be in vain to attempt to escape; for when they shunned the sword, pestilence would meet them; and

when they were preserved from the pestilence, the famine would consume them.

He then adds, *But he who went out to the Chaldeans, who besieged the city,* etc., that is, who willingly surrendered himself; for it was a sign of obedience when the Jews with a resigned mind received correction; and it was also an evidence of repentance, for they thus confessed that they were worthy of the heaviest punishment. This is the reason why the Prophet represents it as *the way of life* to go out willingly, and to make a surrender of themselves of their own accord to their enemies. And by saying, *who besiege you,* {הצרים} {עליכם}*, etserim olicam,* he wished to anticipate objections which any one of the people might have alleged, — "How can I dare thus to expose myself? for the Chaldeans besiege us, and it will be all over with me as to my life if I go forth as a suppliant to them." By no means, says the Prophet, for though they carry on a deadly war with the city, yet every one who of his own accord goes forth to them shall be safe, and shall find them ready to shew mercy. God would not have promised this had he not the Chaldeans in his own power, so that he could turn their minds as he pleased.

As to the verb {נפל}, *nuphel,* it means strictly to fall; but I consider that it signifies here to dwell, as in Genesis 25:27, where it is said that Ishmael dwelt in the sight of, or over against his brethren. They who render it "died" touch neither heaven nor earth. Some read, "his lot fell among his brethren;" but this is an unnatural rendering. There is, then, no doubt but that the verb means often to lie down, and hence to dwell; and yet I allow that the Prophet alludes to subjection; for we must remember what must have been their condition when they went over to the Chaldeans; they must have been subjected to great reproach. It was then no small humiliation; but yet we may properly render the verb to dwell. *He,* then, *who went out to the Chaldeans and dwelt with them,* [24] that is, who suffered himself to be led into exile, or who migrated according to their will from his own country to a foreign land — *he,* he says, *shall live,* and *his life shall be for a prey,* that is, he shall save his life, as when any one finds a prey and takes it as his own by stealth; for prey is to be taken here as an accidental gain. Whosoever, then, he says, shall not deem it too grievous a thing to submit to the Chaldeans, shall at least save his life.

In short, God intimates that the wickedness of the people had advanced so far, that it was not right to forgive them. What, then, was to be done by them? to submit with resignation and humility to a temporal punishment, and thus to cease to shut up the door of God's mercy. He, however, teaches them at the same time that no salvation could be hoped for by them until they were chastised. And hence we may learn a useful doctrine, and that is, that whenever we provoke God's wrath by our perverseness, we cannot be exempt from all punishment; and that we ought not to be impatient,

[24] "Shall go to," is the Sept.; "shall fly to," the Vulg.; "shall obey," the Targ.; it is omitted in Syr. Blayney is, "surrendereth himself." The verb, followed by {,אל as here, means to fall away to, or to join. See 2 Kings 25:11. ``But he who goeth out and joins the Chaldeans, who besiege you, shall live,'' etc. --- Ed

especially when he punishes us moderately; and that provided we obtain eternal mercy, we ought submissively to bear paternal corrections. It follows, —

Jeremiah 21:10

10. For I have set my face against this city for evil, and not for good, saith the LORD: it shall be given into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire.

10. Quia faciem meam contra urbem hanc in malum, et non in bonum, dicit Jehova; in manum regis Babylonis tradetur et exuret eam igni.

He again confirms what he had said, that it would be the way of death if the Jews remained fixed in the city, for this would be to struggle against God; for God is said to *set* his *face for evil,* since he had fully determined to punish that nation. To set the face is the same as to be resolute. Then God says that what he had resolved respecting the destruction of Jerusalem could not be changed. Now, what must at length be the issue when any one thinks that he can, against the will of God, escape death? As they who violently stumble against a stone break their legs, and arms, and head, too; so they who furiously stumble against God attain for themselves final ruin. [25]

We hence see why the Prophet added this verse: it was, that the Jews might not in their usual manner foster vain hopes; for to hope for any good was to contend with God himself. *Delivered,* he says, *shall be this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire* He intimates that Nebuchadnezzar would not only conquer the people and triumph over a taken city, but that the city itself was doomed to destruction. It is, indeed, a most grievous thing when a city is wholly demolished: cities are often taken, and the conqueror removes the inhabitants here and there, while it remains still a habitable place; but God declares here that he would act more severely towards the city of Jerusalem, for it was to perish by fire. It follows, —

Jeremiah 21:11-12

11. And touching the house of the king of Judah, say, Hear ye the word of the LORD;

11. Et ad domum (vel, palatium) regis Jehudah, Audite sermonem Jehovae:

12. O house of David, thus saith the LORD, Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

12. Domus David, sic dicit Jehova, judicate mane judicium (sunt quidemt duo verba, sed utrunque significat judicare; sensus antem est, judicare mature, et proferre rectum et oequum judicium; postea adjungit speciem unam,)

[25] The phrase is not, "against this city," but "upon this city;" and such is the rendering of the Sept. and Vulg., though the Syr. has "against." How could his face be set against it, not for good? God is said to set or fix his face on the city, and it was for doing it evil, and not for doing it good. — Ed.

liberate spoliatum e manu oppressoris, ne exeat, tamquam ignis, indignatio mea, et ardeat, et non sit extinguens, a facie malitiae studiorum ipsorum (hoc est, propter malitiam scelerum ipsorum).

Now the Prophet tells us that he was sent to the king and his counsellors. Hitherto he has been addressing the king and the whole people indiscriminately; but here a special message is committed to him to be delivered at the *palace* of the king; and he was to say that judgment was nigh him and his counsellors. But he is not now threatened as before, for there is a condition interposed: he exhorts them to repent, and indirectly promises them pardon, for in vain would he have spoken to them of repentance had he not given them some hopes of pardon and deliverance. He is not yet inconsistent with himself, for though the king was to be driven into exile, he might yet obtain some favor, after having submitted to a paternal correction. Though, then, the Prophet here exhorts the king and his counsellors to repent, he does yet shew that they were not to be wholly free from punishment, and yet he promises some mitigation. [26]

And this passage reminds us that we ought not to rush headlong into despair when some great evil is suspended over us, and when God shews that we cannot wholly escape punishment. For there is nothing more unreasonable than that the fear by which God restores us to himself should be the cause of despair, so that we repent not; for though God's wrath be not wholly removed, yet it is a great thing that it is mitigated, which is an alleviation accompanying the evil itself.

In short, the Prophet intimates that God's wrath might be alleviated, though not wholly pacified, provided the king and his counsellors began to act rightly and justly. But he mentions the *house of David,* not for honor's sake, but, on the contrary, by way of reproach; nor does he refer to David, as some unmeaningly assert, because he ruled justly and was a most excellent and upright king; but the Prophet had regard to God's covenant. For we know that they deceived themselves when they thought that they were to be exempt from trouble through a peculiar privilege, because God had chosen that family, and promised that the kingdom would be perpetual. Thus hypocrites appropriate to their own advantage whatever God has promised; and at the same time they boast, though without faith and repentance, that God is bound to them. Such, then, was the presumption of the king and his counsellors; for they who were David's descendants doubted not but that they were exempt from the common lot of men, and that they were, as they say, sacred beings. Hence the Prophet says, in contempt, *The house of David!* that is, "let these vain boastings now cease, for God will not spare you, though you may a hundred times boast that you are the descendants

[26] The verb "thou shalt say," or "say," at the beginning of verse 8, is to be understood here, "say also to the house," etc. So the Vulg. connects the sentence, and also the Targ. But the Sept., Syr., and the Arab. put the word "house" in the vocative case — "O house of the king of Judah, hear the word of the Lord." More consistent with the original is the former construction. — Ed.

of David." And at the same time he upbraids them with having become wholly degenerate, for God had made a covenant with David on the condition that he served him faithfully; but his posterity were become perfidious and apostates. Therefore the Prophet brought before them the name of David, in order that he might the more reproach them, because they were become wholly unlike their father, having departed from his piety.

Thus saith Jehovah, he adds, *Judge ye judgment* There was no doubt a great liberty taken by the king and his courtiers in committing plunder, for the Prophet would not have here recommended justice to them had they not wholly neglected what was just and right. As, then, there was no care to administer justice, the Prophet bade them to recognize what was due to God and to his people. But it was a most grievous trial to all the godly to see that the sacred house, in which the living image of God ought to have shone forth brightly, was become a house of spoils, where robbers dwelt, who with impunity plundered all around them. When, therefore, the state of things is in such a disorder that the very judges, whom God has set over his Church, are like robbers, let us know that such a thing happened formerly; nor is there a doubt but that God thus took vengeance on the impiety and wickedness of the people, for he would have never suffered that house to be so contaminated and so filled with so many crimes, had not the people been unworthy of a good and faithful king and of upright counsellors. Let us, then, know that the Prophet exhorted the king and his counsellors to execute justice, because they had forgotten their office, and were become like rapacious wolves. [27]

He specifies one act, *Free ye the spoiled from the hand of his oppressor* Some read, "from the hand of the fraudulent," as though {עשק}, *oshek,* should mean to oppress by calumny and malice, or by fraudulent means; but it is to be taken otherwise here. Some distinguish between the two words {עשק}, *oshek,* and {גזל}, *gesal,* and say that the first means to retain a deposit or wages, or anything that belongs to another, and that the latter signifies to take a thing by force, to plunder. But this difference, as it appears, is not observed by the Prophet, for he says, "Free ye the plundered or the spoiled." From whose hand? from "the hand of the oppressor." As, then, these two words correspond, I doubt not but that {גזל}, *gesal,* means both to take by force and to plunder; and that though {עשק}, *oshek,* means often fraudulently to oppress, yet not always. However this may be, God intimates that neither the king nor his counsellors had any care for the poor, so as to re-

[27] The correct rendering is, "The right defend ye in the morning." The common meaning of {{דון is to defend, to vindicate, to plead for, or contend for: it means, also, to rule with authority. It is rendered often in our version to judge, while it ought to be to defend. See Genesis 30:6; Psalm 1:4; Psalm 135:14. ``In the morning'' may be taken literally or figuratively. The morning was the time observed by good judges to decide matters of judgment: in corrupt times the judges or princes spent the morning in drinking. See Ecclesiastes 10:16. Thus the judges are here required to reassume the ancient practice of deciding causes in the morning. See Exodus 18:13. The phrase, ``in the morning,'' means also to do a thing, promptly, fully, and diligently. The very same words are used in Psalm 101:8, and rendered in our version ``early,'' only the word for morning is in the plural number --- ``in the mornings,'' literally. Then, if taken figuratively, the phrase means --- promptly, carefully, diligently --- ``Defend carefully the right.'' The version of Blayney is singular, but inadmissible --- ``Judge ye, searching out right.'' There is no instance of the verb {דון} being used intransitively, and ``in the morning'' is given by all the Versions and the Targ. --- Ed

press violence, and robbery, and plunder. Then the very judges themselves were the associates of robbers, for they allowed them with impunity to rob and plunder without affording any aid to helpless men when they were thus wickedly harassed. There is, however, no doubt but that God would have them to perform their duties towards all, both rich and poor, without exception; but as injustice in this particular was especially seen, this is the reason why by stating a part for the whole he specified only one thing. [28]

He then adds, *Lest my indignation go forth like fire, and burn, and there be none to extinguish it* Here the Prophet intimates, that except the king and his courtiers repented, it was all over with them. There is then a contrast to be understood here between that paternal correction of which he had spoken, and the destruction of which the Prophet now speaks. God's indignation had been already kindled, nor could it be immediately extinguished; and though they had to suffer, yet the issue would have been happy and according to their wishes: but he here declares that there would be an irreconcilable war with God, except they labored to return to his favor. He adds, *On account of the wickedness of their doings* There is here a change of person, except we read {כם}, *cam, "you;"* but this sort of change often occurs in Scripture. The Prophet, after having addressed them, says now, "on account of the wickedness of their doings," as though having finished his discourse, he spoke of them as being absent, or as though God, after having given orders to his Prophet, then added, "I denounce this on them, because they have so deserved."

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we cease not, by new crimes, daily to kindle thy wrath, we may not proceed to obstinacy or contempt; and since it is good for us to be chastised by thine hand, grant that we may resignedly submit to thy scourges, and allow thee to act the part of a Father towards us, in restoring us to the right way, and never cease to hope in thee, even when thou seemest to be angry with us; but may our hope regard that issue which thou promisest, even that evils themselves shall be an aid to our salvation, until having gone through all the miseries of the present life, we shall come into that blessed rest which thine only-begotten Son has procured for us. — Amen.

Lecture Eightieth

Jeremiah 21:13-14

13. Behold, I am against thee, O inhabitant of the valley, and rock of in the plain, saith the LORD; which say, Who shall come down against us? or who shall enter into our habitations?

13. Ecce ego contra to, quae habitas in valle, petra in planitie (vel, patrae planitiei, alii vertunt) dicit Jehova; qui dicitis, Quis descendet contra nos?

[28] This sentence is as follows, — "And rescue the plundered from the hand of the violent," or him who uses violence. The Vulg. alone has "calumniator" for the last word, which is wholly improper; "who wrongs him" is the Sept.; "who oppresses him" is the Syr. and Arab. The word means to oppress by force or violence. — Ed.

et quis ingrediatur habitacula nostra?

l4. But I will punish you according to the fruit of your doings, saith the LORD: and I will kindle a fire in the forest thereof, and it shall devour all things round about it.

14. Et visitabo super vos secundum fructum studiorum vestrorum, dicit Jehova; et accendam ignem in sylva ejus, et consumet quiequid est in circuitu ejus.

Though the whole nation was corrupt in the time of the Prophet, yet Jerusalem was the head and seat of all evils, especially as there was there more licentiousness; and then they thought that the Prophets had no liberty there, as though the citizens were, by a peculiar privilege, exempt from all reproof; and, lastly, the very situation of the city gave them courage, for when they regarded the height of their walls, their towers, and fortresses, they thought themselves beyond the reach of danger. Hence was the security which the Prophet now condemns; and, therefore, he calls it *the inhabitant of the valley*

Jerusalem, we know, was situated on small hills: the Mount Sion had two tops; and then there were hills contiguous, especially towards Lebanon; there was, however, a plain on every side. And then if we except Mount Sion, Jerusalem was in a valley; for it was surrounded, we know, by mountains. There were mountains around it, as it is said in Psalm 125:2. Now, its very situation gave confidence to the citizens, as access to it was difficult. They, therefore, thought that enemies could not come into that valley, which kept them inclosed, as in a fortified place. This is the reason why the Prophet called not the city by its own name, but said that it *dwelt in the valley;* and afterwards he called it a *rock in the plain;* for {ישר}, *isher,* is straight, and hence {מישור}, *mishur,* means a level ground. The whole region was then a continued plain as far as the mountains. Jerusalem itself had also, as we have said, its small hills; it was therefore, as it were, a *rock in a Plain* [29]

We now see for what purpose the Prophet used this circumlocution, even because the Jews gloried in the position of their city, as though it was impregnable; and also, because the vicinity of the mountains, as well as the plain, gave them great advantages. And we know how disposed men are

[29] Of all explanations of this passage, this is the most satisfactory. Mount Sion was surrounded by a valley, and that valley by contiguous mountains. The city, therefore, was a valley with a rock or a mountain in the midst, called here the rock of the level ground. The sentence may, indeed, be thus rendered, "The inhabitant of the valley of the rock of the level ground." "The valley of the rock" means, in this case, the valley around the rock or the mountain; then the valley is farther designated as the level ground. The Versions vary; that of Sept. is, "who inhabitest the valley of Sor, the plain;" the Vulg., "the inhabitress of the solid valley and of the plain;" the Syr., "who dwellest in valleys, who hast a large plain;" and the Targ., "who dwellest in strength, in fortified cities." The nearest to the original is the Sept. version; which has been followed by Venema, who thought that there was a valley called Sor in Jerusalem, which, from its situation, was the most secure part of the city: hence the word "descend," in the following sentence. Blayney's version is, "O thou inhabitant of the levelled hollow of a rock." He considered that Mount Sion is meant, the residence of the house of David, and so called, because the top was levelled. Then he rendered the following sentence, "Who shall make a breach on us?" But the difficulty is to understand "the levelled hollow," and how to make the original to bear such a rendering. Doubtless, the version of Calvin or that of Venema, which is not very different, is the best. — Ed.

to take to a false security when there is apparently no danger; but on the contrary, they think of various defences and aids from which they expect to derive help. It is, therefore, this false boasting that the Prophet condemns, when he calls Jerusalem the *inhabitant of the valley,* and then says, that it was a *rock in the plain*

What follows makes this more clear, *Who say, Who shall come down against us? and, Who shall enter into our habitations?* The verb {יחת}, *ichet,* some take in the sense of tearing, "Who shall make a breach on us?" They derive the word from {חתת}, *chetat;* but it is rather from {נחת}, *nechat, to* descend; for the first meaning would be too strained. The Prophet speaks according to the opinion of the people, who thought themselves sufficiently fortified against all the attacks of their enemies. It may have been, indeed, that they did not speak thus openly; but the Prophet had regard to the hidden thoughts of their hearts, when he ascribed to them this boasting, — that they dwelt in an impregnable place, as the access to it was formidable; for they spoke boldly, "Who shall descend to us? [30] who will enter our houses?" as though they had their nest in the clouds. They intimated that their state would be safe, because their enemies would not dare to come nigh them, or would be disgracefully repelled if they dared, as it would be enough for them to close their gates.

But God, on the contrary, says, *Behold I will* come *to thee,* or *against thee,* and *will visit* thee. There is, indeed, a change of number; for he says, *I will visit you,* for he had begun by saying, "Ye who say," {האמרים}, *eamrim. I will visit upon you,* he says, *the fruit of your doings;* that is,

"I will deal with you according to what you have done, as your works deserve." Merit is to be taken for reward. Then God threatens that he would render to the Jews what they merited, because they had not ceased to provoke his wrath.

He adds, lastly, *I will kindle a fire in its forest* Some take "forest" metaphorically for the neighboring towns; but this seems foreign to the Prophet's meaning. I do not, indeed, deny but that there is a metaphor in the words; but then the word forest is not to be applied to towns and villages, but to the buildings of the city itself, according to a mode of speaking elsewhere used by the Prophets. As their houses were built of a large quantity of wood, of tall and most choice trees, the Prophet compares this mass of wood to a forest. We may, however, give a simpler explanation, and I know not whether it be more suitable that the Prophet points out Lebanon. He then means by the *forest* of the city the trees of Lebanon, which we know were particularly fine, for their loftiness were everywhere known; and we know also that they were very large. As, then, a part

[30] The Sept. and Arab. are, "Who will alarm us?" the Vulg., "Who will smite us?" Syr., "Who can come against us?" and the Targ., "Who will descend against us?" The verb {חתת is intransitive, and if it be here in Hiphil, it will not admit of the preposition {על} which comes here after it. This sufficiently proves that it is {נחת} to come down, to descend, which requires this very preposition. See Psalm 38:2. This being clearly the case, the view of Blayney, as to ``the levelled hollow of a rock,'' must be wrong, for to ``descend'' into Mount Sion, would be no suitable expression. --- Ed

of their false glory was Mount Lebanon, the Prophet distinctly intimates that it would serve as a help to burn the city itself; for when God burned Jerusalem, he would take from the vicinity materials for the purpose. [31]

Now, as we understand the meaning of the Prophet, let us learn how to apply this passage. We have said elsewhere that nothing is more hateful to God than false confidence; when men, relying on their own resources, promise to themselves a happy and a safe condition, they become torpid in their own security. Thus it comes, that they despise God, and never flee to him; they scorn his judgments, and at length are carried away by a mad impulse to every kind of insolence. This is the reason why the Prophets so often and so sharply reprove secure men, for they become presumptuous towards God when they are touched by no regard for him, and with no fear of him. They then not only dishonor God by transferring the hope of their safety to mere means or such helps as they foolishly depend on, but they also think that they are not under the authority of God. Hence it is, that they promise themselves impunity, and thus become wholly hardened in their sins. Now follows —

[31] "The Word 'forest' is often metaphorically taken for a city in the prophetical writings, because its stately buildings, or its principal inhabitants, resemble tall cedars standing in their several ranks. See Jeremiah 22:7; Isaiah 37:24; Ezekiel 20:46; Zecheriah. 11:1." — Lowth.

Jeremiah 22

CHAPTER 22

Jeremiah 22:1-3

1. Thus saith the LORD; Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word,

1. Sic dicit Jehova, Descende in domum regis Jehudah, et loquere illic ser-monem hunc,

2. And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the throne of David, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates:

2. Et dices, Audi sermonem Jehova, rex Jehudah, qui sedes super solium Davidis, tu et servi tui, et populus tuus qui ingredimini per portas has:

3. Thus saith the LORD, Execute ye judgment and righteousness, and deliver the spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor: and do no wrong, do no violence to the stranger, the fatherless, nor the widow, neither shed innocent blood in this place.

3. Sic dicit Jehova, Facite judicium et justitiam, et eripite spoliatum e manu oppressoris; peregrinum, pupilum, et viduam ne fraudetis (Hieronymus hoc verbum ubique vertit, contristari, vel, tristitia afficere; significat autem potius inferre violentiam, aut fraudulenter nocere;) ne violentiam exerceatis (alii vertunt, {רמחת ,{לא} et sanguinem innocentem ne fundatis in loco isto.

The Prophet is again bidden to reprove the king and his counsellors; but the exhortation is at the same time extended to the whole people. It was necessary to begin with the head, that the common people might know that it was not a matter to be trifled with, as God would not spare, no, not even the king himself, and his courtiers; for a greater terror seized the lower orders, when they saw the highest laid prostrate. That what is here taught might then penetrate more effectually into the hearts of all, the Prophet is bid to address the king himself and his courtiers: he

is afterwards bidden to include also the whole body of the people. And hence it appears, that there was some hope of favor yet remaining, provided the king and the whole people received the admonitions of the Prophet; provided their repentance and conversion were sincere, God was still ready to forgive them.

We must at the same time observe, as I have already said, that they could not escape the calamity that was at hand; but exile would have been much milder, and also their return would have been more certain, and they would have found in various ways that they had not been rejected by God, though for a time chastised. As then we now say, that a hope of pardon was set before them, this is not to be so understood as that they could avert the destruction of the city; for it had once for all been determined by God to drive the people into a temporary exile, and also to put all end for a time to their sacrifices; for this dreadful desolation was to be a proof that the people had been extremely ungrateful to God, and especially that their obstinacy could not be endured in having so long despised the Prophets and the commands of God. However the hope of mitigation as to their punishment was given them, provided they were touched by a right feeling, so as to endeavor to return into favor with God. But as Jeremiah effected nothing by so many admonitions, they were rendered more inexcusable.

We now see the design of what is here said, even that the Jews, having been so often proved guilty, might cease to complain that they suffered anything undeservedly; for they had been often admonished, yea, almost in numberless instances, and God had offered mercy, provided they were reclaimable. I come now to the words ---

Thus saith Jehovah, Go down [32] to the house of the king We see that the Prophet was endued with so great a courage that the dignity of the king's name did not daunt him, so as to prevent him to perform what was commanded him. We have seen elsewhere similar instances; but whenever such cases occur, they deserve to be noticed. First, the servants of God ought boldly to discharge their office, and not to flatter the great and the rich, nor remit anything of their own authority when they meet with dignity and greatness. Secondly, let those who seem to be more eminent than others learn, that whatever eminence they may possess cannot avail them, but that they ought to submit to prophetic instruction. We have before seen that the Prophet was sent to reprove and rebuke even the highest, and to shew no respect of persons. (Jeremiah 1:10.) So now, here he shews that he had, as it were, the whole world under his feet, for in executing his office, he reproved the king himself and all his princes.

But he speaks of the king as sitting on the throne of David; but not, as I have already said, for the sake of honor, but for the purpose of enhancing his guilt; for he occupied a sacred throne, of which he was wholly unworthy. For though God is said to sit in the midst of the gods, because by him kings rule, we yet know that the throne of David was more eminent than any other; for it was a priestly kingdom and a

[32] Or "descend;" it appears that Jeremiah was in the Temple when he had this commission. And it would be better to render the first words, "Thus said Jehovah," as it is a narrative of what had taken place. In Jeremiah 18:1, it is said the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, and then he was commanded to go down to the potter's house; which intimates that he was at the time in the Temple, officiating probably in his course as a priest. — Ed.

type of that celestial kingdom which was afterwards fully revealed in Christ. As, then, the kings of Judah, the descendants of David, were types of Christ, less tolerable was their impiety, when, unmindful of their vocation, they had departed from the piety of their father David and became wholly degenerated. So the Prophet, by mentioning the house of Israel and the house of Jacob, no doubt condemned the Jews, because they had become unlike the holy patriarch. We now, then, understand the object of the Prophet when he says, ``Hear the word of Jehovah, thou king of Judah, who sittest on the throne of David.''

But that his reproof might have its just weight, the Prophet carefully shews that he brought nothing but what had been committed to him from above; this is the reason why he repeats, thou shalt say, ``Thus saith Jehovah, Go down, speak, and say.'' From the king he comes to the courtiers, and from them to the whole people. Thou, he says, and thy servants; by the king's servants the Scripture means, all those ministers who were his counsellors, who were appointed to administer justice and who exercised authority. But we must notice, that at last he addresses the whole people. We hence see that what he taught belonged in common to all, though he began with the king and his counsellors, that the common people might not think that they would be unpunished if they despised the doctrine to which even kings were to submit.

He says, first, Do judgment and justice This belonged especially to the king and his judges and governors; for private individuals, we know, had no power to protect their property; for though every one ought to resist wrongs and evil doings, yet this was the special duty of the judges whom God had armed with the sword for this purpose. To do judgment, means to render to every one according to his right; but when the two words, judgment and justice, are connected together, by justice we are to understand equity, so that every one has his own right; and by judgment is to be understood the execution of due punishment; for it is not enough for the judge to decide what is right, except he restrains the wicked when they audaciously resist. To do judgment, then, is to defend the weak and the innocent, as it were, with an armed hand. [33]

He then adds, Rescue the spoiled from the hand of the oppressor He repeats what we observed in the last chapter; and here under one thing he includes the duty of judges, even that they are ever to oppose what is wrong and to check the audacity of the wicked, for they can never be induced willingly to conduct themselves with moderation and quietness. As, then, they are to be restrained by force, he says, ``Rescue the spoiled from the hand of the oppressor.'' Of the word {גזול}, gesul, we have spoken before; but by this form of speaking God intimates that it is not enough for the judge to abstain from tyranny and cruelty, and not to stimulate the wicked nor favor them, except he also acknowledges that he has been appointed by God for this end --- to rescue the spoiled from the hand of the oppressor, and not to hesitate

[33] The verb here is different from that in Jeremiah 21:12, though rendered in our version the same — "execute." It is {,עשה to do, to act, but is used in a wide sense, like facio in Latin. To do judgment is to judge or condemn, that is, the guilty; to do justice is to justify or acquit, that is, the innocent. Perhaps the best rendering would be, ``Administer judgment and justice;'' the former to the guilty, and the latter to the innocent. Blayney's version can by no means be approved, ``Do right and justice,'' as the distinctive character of the two acts is not expressed. ``Do judgment and justice,'' are all the Versions and the Targum. --- Ed.

to face hatred and danger in the discharge of his office.

The Prophet now adds other things which he had not mentioned in the preceding chapter; defraud not, [34] he says, the stranger and the orphan and the widow It is what is often said in Scripture, that it is not right to defraud any one; for God would exempt all from wrong, and not only strangers, orphans, and widows; but as orphans have no knowledge or wisdom, they are exposed, as it were, to plunder; and also widows, because they are in themselves helpless; and strangers, because they have no friends to undertake their cause; hence God, in an especial mannel, requires a regard to be had to strangers, orphans, and widows. There is also another reason; for when their right is rendered to strangers, orphans, and widows, equity no doubt shines forth more conspicuously. When any one brings friends with him, and employs them in the defense of his cause, the judge is thereby influenced; and he who is a native will have his relations and neighbors to support his cause; and he who is rich and possessing power will also influence the judge, so that he dares not do anything notoriously wrong; but when the stranger, or the orphan, or the widow comes before the judge, he can with impunity oppress them all. Hence if he judges rightly, it is no doubt a conspicuous proof of his integrity and uprightness. This, then, is the reason why God everywhere enumerates these cases when he speaks of right and equitable judgments. He further adds, Exercise no violence, nor shed innocent blood in this place These things also were matters belonging to the judges. But it was a horribly monstrous thing for the throne of David to have been so defiled as to have become, as it were, a den of robbers. Wherever there is any pretense to justice, there ought to be there some fear or shame; but as we have said, that tribunal was in a peculiar manner sacred to God. As, then, the king and his counsellors were become like robbers, and as they so occupied the throne of David that all impiety prevailed, and they hesitated not to plunder on every side, as though they lived in a house of plunder; this was, as I have said, a sad and shameful spectacle. [35]

But we ought the more carefully to notice this passage, that we may learn to strengthen ourselves against bad examples, lest the impiety of men should overturn our faith; when we see in God's Church things in such a disorder, that those who glory in the name of God are become like robbers, we must beware lest we become, on this account, alienated from true religion. We must, indeed, detest such monsters, but we must take care lest God's word, through men's wickedness, should lose its

[34] So it is rendered by Blayney; by the Vulg. and Targ., “Make not sad;” by the Sept., “Tyrannize not over;” and by the, Syr., “Wrong not.” The verb means to press down, to depress, and hence to oppress. With this the next verb is connected by {ו in many copies, and by all the Versions except the Arab., and by the Targum; and it means to do wrong by force or violence, outrageously to injure, or to deal unjustly with, to plunder. They were not to press them down by denying them their rights, nor violently to take their things away from them, or to plunder them. We may render the passage as Gataker does, ``And the stranger, the orphan, and the widow oppress not, wrong not,'' or plunder not. A similar passage is in Jeremiah 7:6. The word rendered there ``oppress'' is different, ,{עשק} and more general in its meaning, including the two ideas here --- oppression by denying them their rights, and by plundering them. --- Ed

[35] There is first in this passage a general direction, “Administer ye judgment and justice;” and then there is a specification which refers first to justice and then to judgment, the order, as is commonly the case, being reversed. It was an act of “justice” to rescue the plundered from the hands of the plunderer. Then they were forbidden to administer wrong, “judgment,” so as to depress and plunder the stranger, the orphan, and the widow, and to shed innocent blood. See Psalm 94:6. It shews a bad state of society when the wicked and the guilty are not punished; but it is still worse when the helpless are oppressed, and the innocent are condemned. — Ed.

value in our esteem. We ought, then, to remember the admonition of Christ, to hear the Scribes and Pharisees who sat in Moses' seat. (Matthew 23:2.) Thus it behoved the Jews to venerate that royal throne, on which God had inscribed certain marks of his glory. Though they saw that it was polluted by the crimes and evil deeds of men, yet they ought to have retained some regard for it on account of that expression, ``This is my rest for ever.''

But we yet see that the king was sharply and severely reproved, as he deserved. Hence most foolishly does the Pope at the present day seek to exempt himself from all reproof, because he occupies the apostolic throne. [36] Were we to grant what is claimed, (though that is frivolous and childish,) that the Roman throne is apostolic, (which I think has never been occupied by Peter,) surely the throne of David was much more venerable than the chair of Peter? and yet the descendants of David who succeeded him, being types and representatives of Christ, were not on that account, as we here see, exempt from reproof.

It might, however, be asked, why the Prophet said that he was sent to the whole people, when his doctrine was addressed only to the king and the public judges? for it belonged not to the people or to private individuals. But I have said already that it was easy for the common people to gather how God's judgment ought to have been dreaded, for they had heard that punishment was denounced even on the house of David, which was yet considered sacred. When, therefore, they saw that those were summoned before God's tribunal who were, in a manner, not subject to laws, what were they to think but that every one of them ought to have thought of himself, and to examine his own life? for they must at length be called to give an account, since the king himself and his counsellors had been summoned to do so. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 22:4-5

4. For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people.

4. Quid si faciendo feceritis (alii vertunt, quin potius faciendo faciatis) ser-monem hunc (hoc est, obediatis sermoni huic,) et ingrediemini per portas domus hujus, reges sedentes pro Davide (vel, Davidi) super solium ejus, insidentes currui et equis, ipse, rex, et servi ejus et populus ejus.

5. But if ye will not hear these words, I swear by myself, saith the LORD, that this house shall become a desolation.

5. Quod si non obedieritis sermonibus istis, in me (hoc est, per me) juravi, dicit Jehova, quod in solitudinem (aut, vastitatem) erit domus haec.

The Prophet expresses more clearly what I have already stated, that if the Jews from the heart repented, there was yet a place for mercy; for he promises them that God would be reconcilable, if they sought to be reconciled to him; he allures them to

[36] Poor Peter never had any throne, therefore the Pope's throne cannot be apostolic. The Pope's throne is a heathen throne, both materially and spiritually. The seat itself is a chair of some heathen hero or deity, and the power claimed to be exercised was never claimed nor possessed by Peter. The Pope is quite as much an impostor as Mahomet, only his blasphemy is greater and more detestable. — Ed.

repentance by words of kindness. We may, indeed, read {כיאם}, kiam, as one word, and render it, ``But rather;'' but I follow others who give this version, For if by doing ye will do this word, then ye shall enter in, etc.; and thus they turn the copulative into an adverb of time, which is often the case. [37] Still the other meaning is not unsuitable, when the future verb, {תעשו}, toshu, is taken in a hortative sense; for we know that the future tense in Hebrew is often to be understood as an imperative. As to the general meaning, there is not much difference; for what the Prophet designed to shew was this, that God would be reconciled to the Jews, if they were not wholly disobedient. ``Only,'' he says, ``obey my word, and your safety shall be secured.'' Not that impunity was to be expected, as I have said before, but, as they would have found, their reconciliation to God would not have been in vain, for their punishment would have been mitigated; in that case their exile would have been rendered more endurable, for God would have doubtless made their adversaries kind to them; in short, mercy would have been shewn to them in many ways. Moreover, the Prophet shews that he called them not in vain to repent; for he sets before them God's favor in mitigating their punishment.

And he adds, Ye shall enter through the gates of this house, both your kings and their counsellors; but the number is afterwards changed, he, that is, every king. [38] The Prophet, seems, at the first view, to have retracted what he had said respecting exile; but the two things are to be connected together, that there was some hope remaining, if the Jews accepted the favor of God, and then that the punishment, once decreed, was to be borne by them. These two things do not disagree. For God had resolved to drive the Jews into exile; but all Judea would not doubtless have been reduced to solitude, as that happened through their irreclaimable obstinacy, according to what we read at the end of this Book; for they might have otherwise dwelt still in their own country. This is one thing; and then their condition after their exile would have been better and far more happy. But even at that time, the crown was trodden under foot, and all the dignity and power of the family of David were nearly abolished.

When, therefore, the Prophet says, ``Enter shall kings in chariots and on horses,'' and also ``the people and he and his counsellors, through the gates of this city;'' he does not mean that they would so escape as that God would not chastise them for their sins, as he had declared, but that there would still be some form of a kingdom, and that exile would be short, and also that there would be at length a restoration, so that the descendants of David would return to their former state, and that the city itself would be restored so as to abound in wealth as in all other blessings. Such is the promise. The Prophet further adds what would otherwise take place, If they will not hear, this place shall become a desolation. But this threatening shall be

[37] The Vulg., the Syr., and the Targum omit the {ו before ``enter:'' but it has often the meaning of then, especially when preceded, as here, by the conditional particle if. --- Ed

[38] The verse may be rendered thus, — 4. For if doing ye shall do this word, Then come through the gates of this house Shall kings, sitting for David on his throne, Who shall ride in a chariot and on horses, He, and his servant, and his people. The “sitting” belongs to the kings, but “riding” to the king, his servant, and his people. As “he” is in the singular number, so “the servant” is, though both are pluralized by the Sept., the Vulg., and the Arab., and indeed, the “servant” by the Syr. And the Targ. But the Hebrew is as rendered above, as to the word “chariot,” and “servant;” it is the idiom of the language. — Ed.

considered tomorrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast been pleased to erect the throne of thy Son among us, we may suffer ourselves to be ruled by him, and not falsely boast that we are his people, but really prove that we truly and from the heart confess him as our King, that he may also so defend us through the whole course of life against all the assaults of our enemies, that we, ever relying on thine aid, and possessing our souls in patience, may at length be translated into that blessed glory and rest, which he has purchased for us by his own blood: --- Amen.

Lecture Eighty-First

We explained yesterday the declaration of the Prophet, --- that the kingdom would again be restored by the Lord, if the king and his servants and the whole people repented. He now introduces a commination, --- that if they heard not, it was all over with the palace and the city. But the word house, or palace is often repeated; for though the defenses of the city gave courage to the people, yet what made them especially proud was the confidence they felt that the kingdom had been promised to be for ever. Hence, they thought, that the royal dignity could not possibly fall as long as the sun and moon continued in the heavens. (Psalm 89:38.) This false confidence is what the Prophet now meets, and he says, If ye will not hear these words, etc. He changes the number: he had said before this word, {הדבר} {את} {הזה}, at edeber eze; but he now says these words, {הדברים} {את}, at edeberim. But the singular number includes the whole of his doctrine; yet he now uses the plural number, because he had exhorted them to change their life. [39]

And that they might not think that they were for no good reason terrified, he declares that God had sworn by himself We indeed know that when God makes an oath, either when he promises anything, or when he denounces punishment on sinners, it is done on account of men's sloth and dullness. For our hearts through unbelief will hardly receive a simple truth, unless God removes the impediments; and this is the design of making an oath, when God does not only speak, but in order to render us more certain of our salvation, he confirms his promise by introducing his own name as a pledge. The reason is similar as to threatenings; for so great is the false security of sinners, that they are deaf until God, as it were, with force penetrates into their hearts. Hence he says, that God made an oath by himself; for it seemed incredible to the Jews, that the family which had been set apart by God from the world, would ever perish. It now follows:

Jeremiah 22:6

6. For thus saith the LORD unto the king's house of Judah; Thou art Gilead unto me, and the head of Lebanon: yet surely I will make thee a wilderness, and cities which are not inhabited.

6. Quoniam dicit Jehova super domum regis Jehudah, Guilead, tu mihi caput Libani, si non posuero to desertum, tanquam urbes quae non habitantur.

He confirms the preceding declaration, and explains more at large what had been

[39] "These words" include the "word" of message contained in the second verse, and the "word" of precept in the third verse; and "this word" or thing, at the beginning of the fourth verse, is the latter — the word of precept. — Ed.

stated sufficiently clear; for the false boasting of the Jews could hardly be restrained, as they still thought that the kingdom in the family of David would be permanent and exempt from any danger of a change.

But interpreters differ as to the meaning of the words. I will not repeat their views, nor is it necessary: I will only state what seems to me to be the real meaning. All others indeed give a different explanation; but the Prophet, I doubt not, means the same thing as we have observed in Jeremiah 7:12; where he says,

``Go to Shiloh, and see what is the state of that place, for the ark of the covenant had a long time dwelt there.''

Though, then, they thought that place sacred, yet it was reduced to desolation; and thus it must have become a dreadful spectacle to the whole people. For the same reason now, as it seems to me, the Prophet compares Lebanon to Mount Gilead; for what some say, that Gilead was the chief city of the ten tribes, has nothing in it. But we must remember the state of things at that time; the kingdom of Israel was wholly demolished when our Prophet spoke these words. Judea had indeed been much reduced by many calamities; but still some kind of a kingdom remained. Then by Mount Gilead the Prophet doubtless meant, by stating a part for the whole, the kingdom of Israel, but for a purpose different from that assigned by interpreters, even because the whole land of Israel was then laid waste; for all the inhabitants had been led into exile, and all the spoils had been removed, and nothing had escaped the rapacity and cruelty of their enemies.

Since, then, the land of Israel had been reduced unto desolation, God says now, that Jerusalem and the kingdom of Judah would not be of greater value in his sight than the whole country of the ten tribes had been, which was doubtless larger in extent and in wealth. And this meaning may be easily gathered from the words of the passage; he does not say, ``Thou art like Gilead the head of Lebanon;'' but, Gilead to me art thou the head of Lebanon And he calls Jerusalem Lebanon, because it was, as it were, the queen of that land; for by Mount Lebanon he designated whatever was precious in that country, for the reason we mentioned yesterday. As to Gilead, I do not consider that the Prophet refers especially to the city, but by stating a part for the whole, he includes the whole country, and for this reason, because Mount Gilead was full of many fruitful trees, and particularly of the balsam and the rosin tree, and of many odoriferous herbs and aromatics, which at this day are from thence brought to different parts of the world. And hence we found it asked in Jeremiah 8:22,

``Is there no rosin in Gilead?
is there no medicine found there to heal the Church?''

Why was mention made then of Mount Gilead? even because there grew the best aromatics, and especially the balsam tree, and also many odoriferous trees and most precious fruits.

The meaning then is, ``What dost thou think thyself to be? or, for what reason dost thou trust so much in thyself? I did not spare Mount Gilead and that extensive country which was much superior to thee; what means then this foolish presumption, that thou persuadest thyself that all danger is far off? Thou shalt be to me as Gilead. Think of my judgment on Mount Gilead, and of the dreadful desolation of the land

of Israel; the same which you may now see there shall happen to thee.'' We now perceive in what sense the Prophet says, that before God the head of Lebanon, that is, Jerusalem itself, which ruled over Lebanon, would become like Gilead [40]

He then adds, If I make thee not a desert God again makes an oath; for it is, we know, an elliptical mode of expression, when the particle {אם}, am, is only used, for an imprecation is to be understood, --- ``Let me not be thought a God;'' or, ``Let my power be deemed nothing;'' or, ``Let me not be hereafter counted true and faithful.'' However this may be, God makes an oath, that the city would become a desert, as those cities which are not inhabited Thus the whole context appears consistent, --- that Jerusalem would be at length like the land of Israel, for he would no more spare Lebanon than Mount Gilead. It afterwards follows:

Jeremiah 22:7

7. And I will prepare destroyers against thee, every one with his weapons: and they shall cut down thy choice cedars, and cast them into the fire.

7. Et praeparabo (vertunt alii, sanctificabo, ut etiam {קדש} hoc significat, praeparabo igitur) adversum to perditores, (aut, vastatores; {שחת} significat perdere, et redigere in nihilum, et corrumpere, unde nomen {משחתים}, quod hic ponitur,) virum et arma ejus (aut, instrumenta bellica, vasa transferunt,) et exscindent electionem cedrorum tuarum (hoc est, electissimas quasque cedros tuas,) et conjicient in ignem.

He expresses the manner, for he had only said before, that the ruin of the city Jerusalem was nigh at hand; he adds, that destroyers would come and those well armed with warlike instruments, who would cut down all the choicest cedars and cast them into the fire But he reminds them, that those destroyers would not come of themselves or through an impulse of their own, but through the secret operation of God; for if the Jews had thought that they had to do only with the Chaldeans, there would have been nothing to call forth the exercise of a religious principle; but the Prophet distinctly declares, that the Chaldeans would be the ministers of God, for they would be roused and led by him, according to what is often taught by the Prophets.

In short, these two things ought to be noticed, --- first, that God had in readiness many ways by which he could punish the Jews. For the contempt of the ungodly arises, because they dream that God is unarmed and has not always the execution, as they say, ready at hand. Hence the Prophet shews that the Chaldeans would be ready as soon as God hissed for them, or gave them a sign. This is one thing. Secondly, it ought to be observed, that he reminds them that the Chaldeans would be the scourge of God, that the Jews might not think that they contended with mortals, but might know that they were summoned to render an account of their life, because they had too long been rebellious against God and his Prophets. This is what we must

[40] That "the top (or head) of Lebanon," means Jerusalem, or the city of David, the residence of the royal family, is evident from the seventh verse, "they shall cast down thy choice cedars." This point being settled, there can be hardly a doubt respecting the correctness of Calvin's view. All the Versions give this rendering, "Gilead, thou art to me the head of Lebanon;" the meaning of which does not appear. The Targum is a paraphrase not more intelligible. It would be better to use the future tense, as that is used at the end of the verse, — Gilead shalt thou be to me, O top of Lebanon! Surely I will make thee a wilderness, Like cities not inhabited. It was to be dealt with by him as Gilead had been, which was now wholly depopulated. — Ed

understand by the word prepare [41]

Now as to the choice cedars, the Prophet again alludes to Mount Lebanon and to the forest of Jerusalem, which was mentioned yesterday. The word forest may, however, be applied to the buildings; for the Jews built their chambers for the most part of cedar wood, as it is well known; we may then apply this to their splendid and sumptuous houses; but we may also take it without a figure and apply it to the trees of Mount Lebanon. But the chief ornament of the country were the noble trees on that Mount; hence, by cedars, the Prophet no doubt designated whatever was splendid at Jerusalem and in the country around it. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 22:8-9

8. And many nations shall pass by this city, and they shall say every man to his neighbour, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this great city?

8. Et transibunt gentes multae per urbem hanc, et dicent quisque socio suo (vir ad socium suum, ad verbum,) cur fecit Jehova in hunc modum urbi huic magnae?

9. Then they shall answer, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD their God, and worshipped other gods, and served them.

9. Et dicent, Quia dereliquierunt foedus Jehovae Dei sui, et sese inclinarunt coram diis alienis, et coluerunt eos.

The Prophet shews in these words how blind the Jews were as to their own ruin, in disregarding in so refractory a manner the judgment of God. The words no doubt embrace two contrasts; he compares mortal men with God, and those many nations with him alone. The Jews could not bear God as their judge, and were still refractory and strove by their perverseness to overcome him. Then the Prophet says, that as they would not endure to be judged by God, judges would come who would pronounce on them a free impartial sentence; and who were they to be? the heathens. And then, as the Jews would not obey the one true God, the Prophet sets many nations in contrast with the one true God.

We hence see the full import of these words, Pass shall many nations through this city; [42] that is, God has hitherto adorned this city with many privileges, so that it became like a miracle to foreigners, for so conspicuous was the dignity of this city, that it attracted the notice of all, and its fame was known far and wide. Now, he says, this city shall be deprived of all its ornaments, when God shall depart from it. Pass, then, he says, shall man. nations through this city, and they will inquire, every one of his friend, Why hath Jehovah done thus to this city? Jeremiah, no doubt, indirectly condemns, not only the sloth, but also the insensibility which had so demented the Jews, that they never duly reflected on God's judgment, nor were ever touched by

[41] The verb is {קדש,} to sanctify, or rather to separate or to set apart for a holy purpose, to consecrate. It is rendered by the Septuagint, ``I will bring;'' by the Vulgate, ``I will sanctify;'' by the, Syriac, ``I will prepare:'' but by Blayney, ``I will commission.'' It intimates a setting apart or selecting for a holy purpose, such as the execution of the just judgment of God. Perhaps the best rendering would be, ``I will consecrate for thee.'' The next words are ``destroyers, each man and his instrument,'' rendered by the Septuagint, ``a destroying man and his hatchet;'' by the Vulgate, ``a slaying man and his weapons;'' by the Syriac, ``wasters, each with a hatchet in his hand;'' and by the Arabic, ``a destroying man with his hatchet.'' The word {כלי,} does not mean specifically a weapon of war, but generally an instrument of any kind; and ``hatchet'' is the most suitable term for it here. We might then give this version, --- 7. And I will consecrate for thee destroys, Every man and his hatchet; And they shall cut down thy choisest cedars, And shall cast them into the fire. --- Ed

[42] So the Versions, "through," and not, "by," as in our version; it is "nigh" in the Targ. The preposition is {על,} upon, over, most commonly. It may mean the passing over the city when in ruins. --- Ed

the curses of the Law. He then shews that there would be more understanding and wisdom in the Gentiles, for on seeing Jerusalem overthrown and wholly demolished, they would know that this had not happened by chance, but was an evidence of vengeance from heaven. We thus see that he upbraided the Jews with their own stupidity, as they did not consider the judgment of God; but he ascribed to the nations wisdom and the spirit of inquiry; for they would ask, ``Why has Jehovah done thus to this city?''

``The nations,'' he says, ``will understand what ye do not comprehend, even that this city will exhibit an example of dreadful vengeance, and this will be the subject of their inquiry; but while God now of his own free will foretell this to you, ye close your ears; surely there would be no need of much inquiry in a matter so clear, were you not deaf and blind, and indeed obstinate, for God of his own accord warns you beforehand. What, then, can this be, that God forewarns you and ye refuse to hear him, except that the devil bewitches you?''

And he says, this great city; for its ruin was more remarkable on account of its greatness. When a small town is destroyed, hardly any account is made of the event; but when a city falls, which was everywhere celebrated for its largeness, and also for the extraordinary benefits conferred on it by God, it excites the wonder of all, as though it had fallen from the clouds.

He afterwards adds, that there would be not only a spirit of inquiry among the nations, but that every one would become spontaneously a judge of the whole people: they shall answer, he says, because they have forsaken the covenant of Jehovah their God Now, when Jeremiah declares that all the nations would become the judges of the people, he no doubt intended to condemn the false confidence in which they proudly indulged. At the same time, he says, ``they have forsaken the covenant of Jehovah their God,'' in order that he might take away the plea of ignorance. For they had not only deprived the eternal God of his own right and authority, but they had become doubly wicked, because God had made himself familiarly known to them. As, then, true religion had been fully revealed to them in the Law, hence their perverseness and wicked and base ingratitude appeared, for they had rejected God thus made known to them, and they bowed down before foreign gods and served them. I only touch here on these points, for they have been elsewhere explained. It follows,

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Jeremiah 22:10

10. Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country.

10. Ne fleatis (vel, ne lugeatis) super mortuum, et ne condoleatis ei; flete flendo super eum qui migrat, qui non revertetur amplius, et videbit (hoc est, ut videt) terram nativitatis suae.

They explain this verse of Jehoiakim and Jeconiah, but I consider it rather a general declaration, for the Prophet wished briefly to shew how miserable would be the condition of the people, as it would be better and more desirable at once to die than to protract life in continual languor. Of the kings he wilt afterwards speak, but reason compels us to extend these words to the whole people.

When a people flee away, being not able to resist their enemies, they may look for a restoration. In that case all dread death more than exile and all other calamities which are endured in this life, for they who remain alive may somehow emerge from their ills and troubles, or at least they may have them alleviated; but death cuts off all hopes. But the Prophet says here that death would be better than exile; and why? Because it would have been better at once to die than to protract a life of misery, weariness, and reproach, and at last to be destroyed. By saying, then, Weep ye not for the dead, nor bewail him, [43] it is the same as though he had said, ``If the destruction of this city be lamented, much more ought they to be lamented who shall remain alive than those who shall die, for death will be as it were a rest, it will be a harbor to end all evils; but life will be nothing else than a continual succession of miseries.'' We hence conclude that this ought not to be confined to the two kings, but viewed as declared generally of the whole people. [44]

It follows, For he shall return no more, that he may see the land of his nativity He shews that exile would be a sort of infection that would gradually consume the miserable Jews. Thus death would have been far better for them than to be in this manner long tormented and to have no relaxation. He then takes away the hope of a return, that he might shew that their exile would be as it were a dying languor, corroding them as a worm, so that to die a hundred times would have been more desirable than to remain in such a hard and miserable bondage. It now follows:

Jeremiah 22:11-12

11. For thus saith the LORD touching Shallum the son of Josiah king of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which went forth out of this place; He shall not return thither any more:

11. Quia sic dicit Jehova ad Sallum (vel, super Sallum) filium Josliae, regis Jehudah, qui regnat pro Josia patre suo, quando ,{רשא}) est quidem relativum, sed non dubito quin, sumatur hic pro adverbio temporis; et ideo obscuerant sensum interpretes, dum vertunt, qui egressus est, et coguntur deinde mutare sensum verbi; sed hoc optime fluit et soepe occipitur pro quando) egressus fuerit ex hoc loco, non revertetur amplius:

12. But he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more.

12. Quoniam in loco ad quem transtulerint ipsum, illic morietur, et terram hanc non videbit amplius.

[43] Literally, "nor nod for him." They were not to shake the head for him in sign of sorrow. There was a shaking of the head in scorn or derision as well as in condolence or sympathy. See Jeremiah 18:16. — Ed.

[44] The Versions and the Targum seem to favor this view of Calvin, as they render the participle, "going away," in the present tense, as in our version. The verse, then, is as follows, — Weep ye not for the dead, nor bewail him; Weep, weep for him who goeth away; For he will not return any more, And see the land of his nativity. The repetition of the verb "weep" is emphatical. Our version, "weep sore," is the Arab. The Sept. and the Targ. take it as an instance of what often occurs in Hebrew, a participle joined to a verb to enhance its force; but it is not so here, the two verbs are in the imperative mood. But it may be that there is here, as many think, a direct allusion to Josiah, who was dead, and was much lamented, and to Shallum, who was taken captive and carried into Egypt, where he died. In that case we ought to render the second line thus, — Weep, weep for him who has gone away. The Hebrew participle may often be rendered in the past tense; and so it is rendered here by Gataker, Venema, and Blayney. — Ed.

What he had before said generally he now applies distinctly and especially to the person of the king, that the people in general might know that they could not escape that punishment from which even the king would not be exempt. They, no doubt, when they heard that such a hard and bitter lot would happen to a king, regarded it as a thing incredible; but Jeremiah intended to shew in his person that what we have just seen was nigh them all, that is, that it would be better for them at once to die than to pine away for a long time.

We must at the same time notice, that what these two verses contain respecting the king is not said as though it applied to him alone, but rather that every one might apply it to himself what the Prophet said of the king alone.

As to the word Shallum, it is thought that Jehoiakim was so called, who had also the name of Jeconiah, and who had of his own accord given up the kingdom and died in exile. But as he is called the son of Josiah, a doubt has arisen. But if we duly consider what sacred history relates, the probable conjecture is, that he was not his son but his grandson, for the chosen successor of his father was Jehoiakim, called also Eliakim. Yet Matthew calls him the son of Josiah, and that he was born to him together with his brethren. (Matthew 1:11.) But we know that it was a common thing with the Hebrews to call descendants sons, especially when the family of David was spoken of; that the order of succession might be preserved, those who next followed their predecessors were called sons. Thus, according to this custom, Elialdm might have been deemed his son, who was really his brother. As, then, he was the successor of Josiah, he is called his son. [45]

There is yet no doubt but that God shews here that a pious king would not be a patronizer either to his own son, or to his grandson, or to others; for hypocrites are wont to form a defense for themselves from the holiness of their fathers. And as king Josiah had faithfully served God, his sons thought that God was in a manner bound to themselves, as though all this had not proceeded from the mere bounty of God, that Josiah had been so sincerely religious. But hypocrites, as I have just said, seek ever to render God bound to them. Hence the Prophet checks this false confidence, and

[45] Most commentators agree that Shallum was another name for Jehoahaz, who succeeded his father Josiah. See 2 Kings 23:30; and 2 Chronicles 36:1. He reigned only three months, and was succeeded by his elder brother Jehoiakim. Compare 2 Chronicles 36:2, with Jeremiah 22:5. The only difficulty arises from 1 Chronicles 3:15, where we have the sons of Josiah arranged in this order, — Johanan, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, and Shallum. Johanan no doubt died young, and he could not be Jehoahaz, for he is said to be the first-born; and Jehoahaz, as it appears from 2 Chronicles 36:2 and 5, was younger than Jehoiakim, and older by many years than Zedekiah. The only solution of the difficulty seems to be that there is, as Blayney, Horsley, and others thought, a typographical mistake in 1 Chronicles 3:15, that Shallum ought to be before Zedekiah, instead of being after him. His two brothers had two names as well as Shallum. There is a mistake of the same kind (that of transcribers at an early period, as there are no different readings) in 2 Chronicles 36:9, where Jehoiachin is said to have been eight years old when he began to reign, instead of eighteen, as we find it stated in 2 Kings 24:8. And this age alone comports with the language of Jeremiah in this chapter, for he would not have denounced such a judgment on a child eight years of age. As to Matthew 1:11, the true reading no doubt is, "And Josiah begat Jehoiakim, and Jehoiakim begat Jeconiah," etc., as found in some copies, though not of great authority. Some, with Calvin, think Shallum to be Jeconiah, or Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, and not Shallum the son of Josiah. The objection to this is, that the Prophet here proceeds from Shallum to Jehoiakim, and then to his son Jeconiah. And from what he says of Jehoiakim, it appears that he delivered this prophecy in his reign, except we think, as some do, that the Prophet relates here in the reign of Zedekiah what he had previously prophesied. But the probability is, as Blayney and others think, that this prophecy was delivered in the reign of Jehoiakim. — Ed.

declares that though Josiah was approved of God, yet his memory would not be of such an account as to shield his posterity from punishment. God, indeed, promises in his Law to be merciful to the thousandth generation, even to them who love him, (Exodus 20:6) but the ungodly very absurdly lay hold on this, as though they held God bound to them; for they thus imagine that they can deprive him of his power, and judgment, and authority over the world. The meaning then is, that Shallum in vain promised safety to himself because he had descended from the holy king Josiah, who had been a patron of eminent piety, for this could not be the means of lessening his punishment, inasmuch as he had degenerated from his father, whom he ought to have imitated, knowing that he was approved by God. And this also was the reason for the repetition, for he not only calls him the son of Josiah, but also adds, that he reigned instead of his father Josiah. Though, then, he succeeded so pious a king, he yet became degenerated and departed from the example of his father.

When he shall have gone forth from this place, he shall not return here any more [46] As, then, the king was precluded from returning, what would become of the common people and the dregs of society? Could their condition be better? How then could the Jews dare flatter themselves when they perceived so dreadful an evidence of God's wrath in the king himself, on whom depended their safety? A confirmation follows, For he shall die in the place to which they shall have led him away He intimates that he was to be by force carried away; he doubtless did not surrender himself until he saw that he was under the necessity of yielding. Then the Prophet in effect says that he would be a miserable exile, driven into banishment against his own will. It is then added, that he would see no more the land of his nativity, so that his lot would be nothing better than that of any one of the common people. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 22:13

13. Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work;

13. Ileus qui aedificat domum suam in non justitia, (hoc est, injuste,) et coenacula sua in non judicio (hoc est, sine rectitudine et aequitate;) proximum suum servire facit gratis, et opus ejus non reddit ei (vel, quod ille operatus fuerit non reddit ei; (vel, quod ille operatus fuerit non reddit ei; quidam enim volunt esse verbum, alii nomen, sed idem manebit sensus).

The Prophet begins here to shew that it could not be otherwise but that the king's palace as well as Jerusalem must be destroyed, for their wickedness had arrived to the highest pitch; but he now, as it will appear presently, reprehends the father of Jeconiah.

He then says that the city was full of robberies, and especially the palace of the king. Yet I do not think that the Prophet speaks only of the king, but also of the courtiers and chief men. We must also bear in mind what I said yesterday, that the common people were not absolved while the king was condemned. But as dignity and honor among the people belonged both to the king and the princes, the Prophet

[46] There is no doubt but {אשר is sometimes an adverb of time, when; but all the Versions and the Targum render it here who, ``who has gone forth,'' etc. Shallum, whoever he was, had no doubt been led captive, as it is said in the next verse; for the verb, which Calvin renders in the second future, is in the past tense, and is so rendered by all the Versions. --- Ed

exposes them publicly, that, it might be made evident how deplorable the state of things was throughout the whole community. We must at the same time add, that the chief among them were first summoned to judgment, not only because every one had privately offended, but because they had by their bad examples corrupted the whole body of the people; and also, because they had taken more liberty, as they feared nothing. We indeed know that the rich exercise tyranny, because they deem themselves exempt from all laws. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet here denounces, in a special manner, a curse on the king and the chief men.

He says, that they built unjustly; his words are, with no justice and with no judgment, by which he designates cruelty, frauds, and robberies; he, in short, includes under these words all kinds of iniquity. The way in which these things were done is stated; they wronged their neighbors, by demanding and extorting labors without rewarding them. Here, indeed, the Prophet only refers to one kind of injustice; but it may hence be easily concluded, how unjustly and wickedly they ruled who were then in authority; for they employed their neighbors, as though they were slaves, in building houses and palaces, for they denied them their wages. But nothing can be more cruel than to deprive the poor of the fruit of their labor, who from their labor derive their daily support. It is, indeed, commanded in the Law, that the wages of the laborer should not sleep with us, (Leviticus 19:13) for that would be the same as to kill him. [47] There is also another indignity; when a robber kills a man, his object is the spoil; but he who extorts labor from a poor man, and sucks, so to speak, his blood, afterwards sends him away naked and needy; this is more atrocious than by violence to kill him. We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet. But as he continues the same subject, I shall defer any further remarks till to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou continuest both by chastising us, and by kindly alluring us to thyself, to deal with us in such a way as to find out whether we are healable, --- O grant, that we may not he hardened either against thy threatenings or thy promises, but follow in a teachable spirit what thou shewest is pleasing to thee, and make progress in holy living, and become daily more watchful and diligent, until we shall at length reach the goal which is set before us, and receive the reward of our faith in thy celestial kingdom, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Eighty-Second

In the last Lecture we began to explain the reproof given by the Prophet to King Jehoiakim for his cruelty and oppression; for in building his splendid palaces, he constrained the people to labor for nothing. This was the crime which the Prophet

[47] This verse is not correctly rendered by Calvin nor by any of the early versions. The two last clauses are made by them all in a great measure tantological, while they are perfectly distinct in their meaning. I render the verse thus, — Wo to him who builds his house by means of injustice, And his chambers by means of wrong judgment: Of his neighbor he makes a slave for no reason, And for his work he gives nothing to him. The verb {עבר when followed by ,{ב} means to enslave, or to make a slave. See Jeremiah 25:14. We hence see the force of the word, {חנם} gratuitously, for no reason, because the Jews might under certain circumstances be reduced to a state of slavery; but Jehoiakim did this when there was no cause. This was the ``wrong judgment'' And then he gave them no support, nothing for their work; this was the ``injustice.'' He reduced them to slavery, and did not maintain them. The real import of the passage is completely lost in the loose rendering of the Versions; but the Targ. rightly expresses the meaning of the third line, ``To slavery he reduces for no cause his neighbor.'' --- Ed

pointed out when he said, He! he builds unjustly, and his chambers by iniquity; literally, ``not in judgement.''

As Jehoiakim might have objected and said, that this was lawful for him, for kings think that the whole world has been created for their sake, the Prophet called his attention to the common rights of men, for all the Israelites were his relations; as though he had said, ``Though thou excellest in dignity, yet thou art one of the race of Abraham, and taken from the midst of thy brethren; there is, therefore, no reason for thee to take so much liberty as though they were to be thy vassals.'' We hence see the design of the Prophet, when he condemned the cruelty of King Jehoiakim, who in building magnificent palaces treated the people arbitrarily and unjustly, and extorted more labor than what was right. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 22:14

14. That saith, I will build me a wide house and large chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion.

14. Qui dicit, AEdificabo mihi domum amplam (mensuram, ad verbum, subaudiunt quidam Interpretes, magnarum; sed illud frigidum est, simpliciter enim domus mensurarum tantundem valet ac domus spatiosa,) et coenacula dilatationum (ad verbum, vel, respirationum, aut perflationum, nam {הור} significat tam respirare quam dilatare; unde deducitur {הור} quod significat spiritum et ventum,) et perforat sibi fenestras, et tecta (vel, cooperta) est domus cedro et uncta minio.

Some render the last words, ``and painted with red;'' but vermilion is a kind of red. They, indeed, mention three kinds of red, --- deep red, brownish, and the third mixed with various colors; but vermilion is a brighter color. As to the main point there is no difficulty; the Prophet reproves the ambition and pride of King Jehoiakim, that he was not content with the moderation of his fathers, but indulged in extravagant display, and built for himself a palace as it were in the clouds, as though he did not wish to have a dwelling on the earth. Splendor in houses cannot in itself be condemned; but, as it can hardly be, nay, as it seldom happens, but that such insatiable ambition proceeds from pride, hence the Prophets vehemently denounced sumptuous houses; and they pronounced a curse on such displays, because they had a regard to the motive and the end. Such was the design of the Prophet in this passage.

He therefore thus introduces King Jehoiakim, who says, I will build for myself a large house and chambers of respirations That he said this proved the foolish ambition with which Jehoiakim had been inebriated, so that he regarded as nothing whatever was splendid before in Jerusalem. There were palaces, we know, very sumptuous there; and we also know that the king of Judah lived in great splendor. For though the palaces of Solomon were not then standing in their original grandeur, yet what remained was abundantly sufficient to satisfy a man who was not filled with pride. It hence appears that a fondness for excess prevailed in Jehoiakim, for he despised the royal palace, and whatever remained after the death of Solomon. For God, we know, had blessed with prosperity Hezekiah, and Josiah, and other kings; but they had continued within proper bounds. Since, then, such haughtiness had crept into the heart of Jehoiakim, it is evident, that he was filled with vain pride, nay, was drunk with folly. This was the reason why the Prophet severely reproved him

for saying, ``I will build for myself a large house and chambers of respirations,'' or of perflations. [48]

He then adds, and he perforates for himself windows [49] It was a proof of luxury, when men began to indulge in superfluities. In old times the windows were small; for use only was regarded by frugal men; but afterwards a sort of madness possessed the minds of many, so that they sought to be suspended as it were in the air. And hence they began to have wider windows. The thing in itself, as I have said, is not what God condemns; but we must ever remember, as I have reminded you, that men never go to excesses in external things, except when their hearts are infected with pride, so that they do not regard what is useful, what is becoming, but are carried away by fondness for excess.

It is then added, and it is covered with cedar, that is, the house is covered with cedar boards. For in my judgment the Prophet means here the wainscotting, when he says that the house was covered with cedar; as though he had said, that King Jehoiakim esteemed the squared and polished stones as nothing, unless a covering was added of cedar boards to ornament the walls. [50] And for the same purpose was the painting with vermilion; for justly might paintings be deemed excessive superfluities. As, then, it was a part of luxury to adorn the walls with various paintings, as though men wished to change the simple nature of things, the Prophet here is indignant against King Jehoiakim. Nor is it to be doubted, but that God had regard also to the circumstances of the times; for God had already warned him and all the Jews respecting their future calamities. This, then, was in a manner to treat with mockery the threatenings of God. And we know how intolerable was this regarded by him; for he thus declares by Isaiah,

``Live do I, never shall this iniquity be blotted out,'' *

*(Isaiah 22:14)

for when he had exhorted them to put on sackcloth and ashes, they said, ``Let us eat and drink, tomorrow we shall die.'' Similar, then, was the perverseness of King Jehoiakim; for he ought to have seen the coming calamity which was set as it were

[48] The word is {,{מרוחים rendered ``fanned --- {ῥιπιστὰ},'' by the Sept., and ``spacious'' by the other Versions and the Targ. The rendering may be ``chambers of ventilations,'' meaning ``airy chambers.'' Parkhurst considers it a Huphal participle, and renders it ``airy.'' But Blayney objects to this, as it is in a different gender from ``chambers;'' but it may be viewed as in construction; for in Hebrew two nouns are often used for a noun and a participle, or an adjective. --- Ed

[49] The Vulg., the Syr., and Targ., read, "And he opens for himself windows." The verb is {,{קרע to rend, to divide, and also to distend, to enlarge, to dilate. See Jeremiah 4:30. The line may be rendered, --- And he makes large his windows. --- Ed.

[50] Calvin is quite right in applying the latter part to the house generally, and not to the chambers, as it is done by the Sept. and the Arab.; and guided by them, Houbigant proposed emendations of the Text. The arrangement of the verse is according to the common practice of the Prophets, — 14. Who says, "I will build me a spacious house, And airy upper apartments:" And he makes large his windows; And covered it is with cedar, And painted with vermilion. There are two things mentioned, — house and apartments. Of the latter he speaks first, as it is usually the case, that he made large windows in them; and then he speaks of the house in general, that it was covered (not ceiled) with cedar, as the Temple was, (1 Kings 6:15,) and painted with vermilion. Here we see an instance how emendations have been proposed through ignorance as to the Hebrew style. The Syriac version makes the sense more distinct, though it be not literal, and is as follows, — Who says, "I will build me large houses, And spacious chambers:" For these he opens windows; Those he covers with cedars, And adorns with paintings. "Vermilion," {,{ששר rendered, ``{μίλτῳ} --- ochre,'' or ruddle, by the Sept.; ``sinopide --- a red stone,'' by the Vulg. and Targ. Parkhurst quotes Pliny, who says that {μίλτος} was found in silver mines, and was a sort of reddish sand, and used as a paint. Something of this kind was what is here mentioned, though it is not known now specifically what it was, nor is it of much consequence. It occurs only here, and in Ezekiel 23:14. --- Ed

before his eyes; but he, like one infatuated, increased the royal splendor, so that the wealth of David and of Solomon appeared as nothing compared with what he had expended. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 22:15

15. Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him?

15. An regnabis, quia tu permisces se in cedro? (hoc est, quia to involvis cedro? pater tuus annon comedit et bibit et fecit (hoc est, cum faceret) judicium et justitiam? Tunc bene fuit ei.

The Prophet here derides the foolish confidence of King Jehoiakim, because he set up empty things against his enemies instead of strong defences. Kings are wont to indulge themselves when there is quietness and security; that is, when they fear nothing; when no danger appears, they then give way to their own gratifications; and this is commonly the case with all; for we see that kings especially indulge in excesses, when there is no war, when no one gives them trouble, and no one threatens them; but Jehoiakim, had he the least particle of wisdom, might have known that he had many dangers to dread. Now, when he applied all his thoughts to the painting of his walls, and to the splendor of his palace, to its wainscotting and other trifles, must he not have been insane, and not of a sound mind?

It is this madness that Jeremiah now condemns when he says, Shalt thou reign, because thou surroundest thyself with cedar board? [51] that is, ``Can this confirm thy kingdom to thee? or, shalt thou be more happy on this account, because thou art surrounded by cedars?'' The meaning of the Prophet may be more fully learnt from the remaining part of the verse; for it immediately follows, Thy father, did he not eat and drink when he did judgment and justice?

Some so understand the passage, as though the Prophet meant to obviate an objection; for Jehoiakim might have referred to the example of his father Josiah, who had not been a sordid man, but had displayed some royal dignity and grandeur through the whole course of his life. Some interpreters, then, think that the Prophet answers here what Jehoiakim might, have objected: ``What! did not my father also make a royal display?'' Thus they explain the words, as though the Prophet made at first a concession, but that by adding a correction, he shewed that the excuse of Jehoiakim was frivolous: ``I allow that thy father was royally adorned, but he executed judgment and justice; why dost thou not imitate thy father in his virtues? God forgave what was superfluous or excessive, for through his great indulgence he bears with many things in kings; but thou art far different from thy father, for thou extortest labor from thy poor subjects, and buildest thy palaces by means of

[51] The general sense is given, but not a literal rendering. The last verb is variously rendered; "because thou betakest thyself to cedar," is the Vulg.; "wilt thou delight thyself in cedars?" the Syr.; the Targ. is a loose paraphrase, and the Sept. and Arab. wholly depart from our present text, "because thou art stimulated by Ahaz thy father." Then what follows is widely different, but wholly inconsistent with the original. The verb is the Hithpael of {,{חמר to burn, to be hot; and it means to be hot or warm with anger, exertion, grief, or delight. In the second sense it is used in Jeremiah 12:5; but here in the last sense, ``because thou art inflamed with cedar,'' or greatly delightest thyself in cedar; and this meaning is countenanced both by the Vulg. and Syr. Blayney takes the third sense --- ``hot with grief,'' and gives this version, which is approved by Horsley, though its meaning is not very evident, --- Shalt thou reign because thou frettest thyself in cedar? Venema is more to the point, --- Shalt thou reign, because thou art in great heat for cedar? --- Ed.

extortion and plunder. There is, therefore, no reason for thee to seek for thyself a covering from thy father, for thou art wholly fallen away from his integrity.''

Others elicit an entirely different meaning, --- that Josiah had prolonged his life, and conciliated the favor of God by ruling with justice. So, then, they connect the words thus: ``Did not thy father eat and drink,'' that is, ``did he not live happily, because God had blessed him? Inquire the cause, and you will find it to be this --- he faithfully discharged his duties, for he executed judgment and justice. As, then, thou seest that the equity and moderation which thy father had practiced, was the cause of his happy life, why dost not thou also imitate him?''

But the Prophet seems to me to mean simply this, ``Thy father doubtless lived happily, and nothing was wanting to him while he executed judgment and justice.'' For thus appears better the contrast between the tyranny of Jehoiakim, and the uprightness of his father Josiah; as though he had said, ``Thou deemest now thy state better than that of thy father, because thou surpassest him in luxury and splendor.

As then thou exultest in vain things, thou seemest to thyself to be happier than thy father: but thy father was contented with his lot; nay, if his condition be duly regarded, God honored him with every abundance and variety of blessings; he did eat and drink.''

By eating and drinking I understand nothing else, but that he lived cheerfully, enjoyed prosperity, spent a peaceable life. Thy father; he says, did eat and drink; that is, he had nothing to desire, and his condition was an evidence of God's favor when he expected judgment and justice And not unsuitable to this view is what follows, Then it was well with him [52]

We hence see that the foolish ambition of Jehoiakim is here laughed to scorn; for he seemed not to think himself a king unless he conducted himself like a madman. Such is the case with kings at this day; they are ashamed to appear humane, and devise means only to exercise tyranny; and they also contrive how they may depart as far as possible from the common usage and practice of men. As then kings are so ingenious in their own follies, which seem to be like veils, lest anything humane should be perceived in them, the Prophet justly inveighs here against Jehoiakim; ``It was well,'' he says, ``with thy father; and yet he acted kindly and courteously towards his people; nor had he such haughtiness as to despise the common habits of men. Since then he was happy, if thou regardcst what belongs to real happiness, why dost thou please thyself so much? What hast thou that is better or more excellent than what he had!''

We now perceive what the object of the Prophet was to shew, that it is the only true glory and the chief honor of kings, when they discharge their duties, and that the image of God shines forth in them, when they execute judgment and justice; and that when they ambitiously seek through a blind zeal to be the slaves of pride, it is a vain attempt, and contributes nothing towards that happy life which they foolishly

[52] The whole verse would read better thus, — 15. Shalt thou reign, because thou art enamored with cedar? Thy father — did he not eat and drink? When he administered judgment and justice, Then it was well with him. To eat and to drink, as Calvin, observes, means a happy life; his father enjoyed life, though he took no delight in cedars; but his happiness arose from governing justly his people. The Syr. connects the two last lines as above, — He executed judgment and justice, I therefore did him good. — Ed.

imagine. To the same purpose he adds, ---

Jeremiah 22:16

16. He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the LORD.

16. Judicium judicavit pauperis et egeni, tunc bene; an non cognoscere me, inquit Jehova?

He more fully expresses what he had said, that Josiah lived usefully, and was honored and esteemed, for royal majesty shone forth in him. He then repeats in other words what he had said, but he did this for the sake of explanation. [53]

He undertook, he says, the cause, or the quarrel, of the poor and needy There is here a part stated for the whole; for when any one deals kindly with the poor, he may yet plunder the wealth of the rich, which cannot be deemed right; but as the case most commonly is, that those who rule neglect the poor and helpless, the Prophet includes under one thing the whole duty of rulers, and says that King Josiah was upright, just, and equitable, that he not only abstained from wrongs, but also assisted the innocent whom he saw oppressed, and of his own accord interposed to prevent any to molest them. He then under one thing comprehends everything that belongs to the office of a just and upright judge. For it is the first thing for judges to abstain from all rapacity and violence; and the second thing is to extend a hand to the poor, and to bring them aid, whenever they see them exposed to the wrongs of others. He then judged the judgment, or undertook the cause, of the poor and needy; and it is added, Then well; that is, as I have explained, ``This was the happiness of thy father Josiah, so that he was not despised by the people, nor had he any desire for anything more.''

It then follows, Was not this to know me, saith Jehovah? [54] The Prophet shews again whence proceeded the liberty which King Jehoiakim took in luxury and superfluous display, as well as in plunder, cruelty, and oppression, even because he had cast away every care and concern for religion; for where a real knowledge of God exists, men must necessarily have regard to uprightness and moderation. He then who thus acts cruelly towards his neighbors, clearly shews that every thought of religion and every care for it is rooted out of his heart. In short, the Prophet means that Jehoiakim was not only unjust towards men, but was also guilty of impiety; for except he had become a profane despiser of God, he would not have thus unjustly oppressed his neighbors.

But this passage deserves to be noticed, as it shews that piety leads men to all

[53] Venema considers that there is here no repetition, but takes this verse as addressed to Jehoiakim, and gives this version, — By judging judge the afflicted and poor, Then it will be well with thee: Is not this the knowledge of me, saith Jehovah? But the words will not admit of this rendering. The verb is in the past tense, followed by a noun derived from the same verb, a thing not unusual in Hebrew. Literally the verse is, — He defended the defense (the cause) of the needy and poor, Then well it was with him: Was not that to know me, saith Jehovah? The pronoun {,{הוא is not this, but that, when used as a demonstrative pronoun. See Genesis 2:19. We may indeed render the last line thus, --- Was not that the knowledge of me, saith Jehovah? That is, Was it not the fruit or the effect of that knowledge? --- Ed.

[54] The Vulg. is, “Was it not so, because he knew me, saith Jehovah?” the Syr., “He who doeth such things knoweth me, saith the Lord;” and the Targ., “Is not that the knowledge which I desire, saith the Lord?” The Vulg. is the most correct. “They are said to know God,” says Grotius, “who shew by their deeds that they know what pleases Him.” — Ed.

the duties of love. Where God then is known, kindness to man also appears. So also on the other hand we may conclude, that all regard for God is extinguished, and all fear of him is abolished, when men wilfully do wrong to one another, and when they seek to oppress or defraud one another. There is therefore no doubt but that gross impiety will be found where the offices of love are neglected. For when Jeremiah commended the piety of Josiah on this account, because he executed judgment and justice, he doubtless condemned Jehoiakim, as though he had said, that he was an abandoned and irreclaimable apostate; for had he retained a spark of religion, he would have acted more justly and humanely towards his people. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 22:17

17. But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it.

17. Quia non oculus tuus et cor tuum nisi ad cupidatatem tuam, et ad sanguinem innoxium fundendum, et ad rapacitatem, et ad oppressionem, ad faciendum (hoc est, ut exequaris.

Here the Prophet expresses more clearly how much Jehoiakim differed from Josiah his father. He indeed shews that he was wholly unlike him, because Josiah had endeavored to observe what was equitable, while he set all his thoughts on fraud, plunder, and cruelty; for by the eye and the heart he means all the faculties of his soul and body. One of the main senses of the body, as it is well known, is the sight. Hence the Prophet includes here whatever is external and internal in men, when he says, thine eye, that is, all thy bodily senses are set on covetousness, and also thine heart, that is, all thy thoughts, feelings, designs, meditations, and purposes are employed in the same way. He intimates, in short, that Jehoiakim was corrupt both in body and mind, so that having cast aside every fear of God, he abandoned himself to avarice as well as to plunder and all acts of oppression. Thine eye, he says, and thy heart is not, except on covetousness

The verb {בצע}, betso, means to covet; hence the noun signifies not only avarice, but also any sinful lust. He adds cruelty, for it, cannot be but that all are bloody who give loose reins to their lusts. He mentions in the third place rapacity, or violent seizure; for {עשק}, oshek, means to take by force what belongs to another; hence the noun signifies rapacity. What follows in the last place is oppression, or disquietude. As {רוץ}, ruts, means to run, Jerome renders it ``the course of thy work,'' as though {ל}, lamed, prefixed to {עשות}, oshut, were not one of the serviles, {ם}, {ל}, {כ}, {ב}, beth, caph, lamed, mem, but this cannot be admitted. The clear meaning of the Prophet indeed is, that Jehoiakim was not only intent on taking possession on what belonged to others, but that he also oppressed and distressed all he could. It is lastly added, to do; the verb to do is to be applied to what has gone before, that Jehoiakim employed all his thoughts, and was wholly engaged in evil deeds, that he not only contrived acts of cruelty and of avariciousness in his mind, but also carried

fully into execution what he had contrived. [55] It follows, ---

Jeremiah 22:18-19

18. Therefore thus saith the LORD concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory!

18. Propterea sic dicit Jehova ad Joakim (vel, de, {אל}, capitur pro de, ergo de Joakim) filio Josiae regis Jehudah, Non lugebunt eum, Heus frater mi! et heus soror! non lugebunt eum, Heus domine! heus gloria ejus!

19. He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

19. Sepultura asini sepelietur, ad trahendum, et projiciendum ad extra ad portas (ad verbum hoc est, longe extra portas) Jerosolymae.

The Prophet having inveighed against Jehoiakim, now shews what kind of punishment from God awaited him; he would have otherwise despised the Prophet's reproof; but when he heard that a reward was prepared for him, he must have been roused. Inasmuch then as he was seized with a foolish and even a sottish lust for glory, so that he cast aside every care for uprightness, the Prophet declares that disgrace was prepared for him; and hence he compares him after his death to an ass.

Therefore thus saith Jehovah to King Jehoiakim, or concerning King Jehoiakim, [56] the son of Josiah the king, etc. He is not called the son of Josiah for honor's sake, but for the purpose of touching him to the quick, because he had degenerated from the piety of his father. But as he hoped that the religion of Josiah would be to him a sort of covering, the Prophet derides and checks this vain confidence. ``Thou gloriest in being the son of King Josiah, but thy holy father will avail thee nothing, for thou seemest avowedly to shew that thou art wholly different from him. Though then thou art, descended from Josiah, and though God has raised thee to the royal throne, yet there is no reason for thee to be confident as to thy safety; for these benefits of God will not preserve thee from that ignominious treatment which thou deservest.''

He says first, They shall not bewail him, Ah my brother! Ah sister! The Prophet mentions by way of imitation the words of the mourners. That people, we know, were very vehement in expressing their sorrow. And this ought to be borne in mind, because some being persuaded that nothing is related by the Prophets but what ought to be taken as an example, do therefore think that these modes of lamentation were approved by God. But we have before seen what the Prophet said in Jeremiah 22:4,

``Enter through these gates shall the kings
of Judah and their princes in chariots,''

yet we know that kings had been forbidden to make such ostentations; but God did not scrupulously refer to what was lawful or right in speaking of royal splendor;

[55] The most literal version of this verse is the following, — For on nothing are thine eyes and thine heart, Except on thy gain, And on innocent blood, that it may be shed, And on oppression and on violence, That they may be done. "That it may be shed," is literally, "for being shed," it is a passive participle; and such is the case as to the last verb. — Ed.

[56] It is "to" in the Sept. and Vulg., and "concerning" in the Syr., Arab., and Targ. The latter is most adopted by commentators. — Ed.

so also when he spoke of funeral rites. We ought not then to make a law of what the Prophet says, as though it were right and proper to bewail the dead with howling. There is indeed no doubt, but these excesses which the Prophet mentions were not only foolish, but also wholly condemnable; for we often vie with one another in our lamentations; and when men intemperately express their grief in funerals, they excite themselves into a sort of madness in crying and bewailing, and then when they compose themselves and simulate grief, they act a part as in a theater. But the Prophet here speaks only according to the common practice of the age, when he says, ``They shall not bewail him,'' etc.; that is, he states what was usually done, when one embraced another, when a sister said, ``Ah, my brother!'' and when a brother said, ``Ah, my sister!'' or, when the people said, ``Ah, lord, O king, where is thy glory! where is thy honor! where thy crown! where thy scepter! where thy throne!`` Very foolish then were the lamentations which the Prophet mentions here. But as I have already said, it is enough for us to know, that he refers to these rites, then commonly practiced, without expressing his approbation of them.

They shall not, he says, bewail King Jehoiakim; they shall not say at his funeral, Ah, my brother! Ah, sister! And, Ah, lord! Ah, his glory! [57] There shall be no such thing; and why? because he shall be buried with the burial of an ass We have before said, that it was justly deemed one of God's curses when a carcass was cast away unburied; for God would have burial a proof to distinguish us from brute animals even after death, as we in life excel them, and as our condition is much nobler than that of the brute creation. Burial is also a pledge as it were of immortality; for when man's body is laid hid in the earth, it is, as it were, a mirror of a future life. Since then burial is an evidence of God's grace and favor towards mankind, it is on the other hand a sign of a curse, when burial is denied.

But it has been elsewhere said, that temporal punishments ought not always to be viewed alike; for God has suffered sometimes his faithful servants to be unburied, according to what we read in Psalm 79:2, 3, that their bodies were cast forth in the fields, that they were exposed to be eaten by the beasts of the earth and by the birds of heaven. Those spoken of were the true and sincere worshippers of God. But we know that the good and the bad have temporal punishments in common; and this is true as to famine and nakedness, pestilence and war. The destruction of the city Jerusalem was a just punishment on the wicked; and yet Daniel and Jeremiah were driven into exile together with the wicked, and suffered great hardships; and, in short, they were so mixed with the ungodly, that their external condition was in nothing different. So, then, the state of things in the world is often in such disorder, that we cannot distinguish between the good and the bad by outward circumstances.

[57] The original is not “his,” but “her glory.” The lamentation is such as was used for kings, when there was also a condolence expressed for the queens. Ah, my brother! and, Ah, lord! was a lamentation for the king when dead, (Jeremiah 34:5;) and, Ah, sister! and, Ah, her glory! was sympathy for the surviving queen. Her glory had departed with her husband. This is Blayney’s view. The Versions and the Targum are all different, and not one of them renders the original correctly. The verse may be thus rendered, — 18. Therefore thus saith Jehovah of Jehoiakim, The son of Josiah, the king of Judah — They shall not lament for him — “Ah, my brother, and, Ah, sister. They shall not lament for him — “Ah, Lord! and, Ah, her glory!” To render the {{ disjunctively ``or,'' as in our version, seems not suitable. The lamentation and the condolence are to be connected together. The ``Ah'' might be rendered ``Alas;'' and so it is in many places. See 1 Kings 13:30. --- Ed

But still it is right ever to hold this truth, that when burial is denied to a man, it is a sign of God's curse.

Hence, the Prophet says now, He shall be buried with the burial of an ass He mentions the ass because it is a mean animal; he might have named a horse or an ox, but as the ass is a meaner and more contemptible animal, it is the same thing as though he had said, ``Jehoiakim shall be cast away with the dogs.'' This prophecy no doubt grievously wounded not only the mind of the king himself, but also that of the whole people; for as yet his throne stood, and all highly regarded the family of David, and thought the kingdom sacred, as it was under the guardianship and protection of God. But the Prophet hesitated not to denounce what was afterwards confirmed by the event; for Jehoiakim was buried with the burial of an ass, as he was cast forth far beyond the gates of Jerusalem. Here the Prophet amplifies the disgrace by which the King Jehoiakim would be branded, for he might have been left dead in a journey; but he expresses what is more grievous than the casting forth; Drawn out, he says, and cast forth, etc.; that is, Jehoiakim shall not only be cast forth, but also drawn as an ass or a dog, lest his foetor should infect the city; as though he was unworthy not only of a grave, but also of being seen by men. [58]

And this is to be especially noticed, for we hence conclude how great his perverseness was in despising the threatenings of God, since the Prophet could not otherwise storm the mind of the king, and terrify the people, than by exaggerating the indignity that was to happen to him. For if there had been any teachable spirit in the king and the people, the Prophet would have been content with making a simple statement, ``Jehoiakim shall not be buried;'' that is, God will punish him even when dead; the curse of God will not only be upon him while living, but he will also take vengeance on him after his death. He was not content with this kind of statement; but he shall be buried, he says, as an ass, and shall be cast far off; and further still, his carcass shall be drawn or dragged; so that it was to be an eternal mark of infamy and disgrace.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as it has pleased thee to perpetuate the memory of the dreadful vengeance which thou hast executed on the descendants of David, so that we may learn by their evils carefully to walk before thee, --- O grant, that the forgetfulness of this example may never possess us, but that we may assiduously meditate on what is set before us, in order that we may thus endeavor to advance and promote the glory of thy name through the whole course of our life, so that we may at length be made partakers of thy celestial glory, which thou hast prepared for us, and which thine only-begotten Son has obtained for us by his own blood. ---

[58] The verb, or rather participle, rendered “drawn,” means to be dragged along, and not carried. See 2 Samuel 17:13. He was to be dragged out of the city and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem. It is said in 2 Chronicles 36:6, that Nebuchadnezzar “bound him in fetters, to carry him to Babylon.” The probability is (for we have no express account) that he died while in fetters at Jerusalem, before he was removed, and that Nebuchadnezzar, from indignation at his rebellion, had him dragged as a dead ass out of the city and exposed as food for rapacious birds and beasts. We find it said in 2 Kings 24:6, that “Jehoiakim slept with his fathers;” but this only means that he died, or that he died a natural death and was not killed; for we find this phrase used, when burial is afterwards mentioned. See 2 Chronicles 12:16; 16:13, l4. — Ed.

Amen.

Lecture Eighty-Third

Jeremiah 22:20

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

20. Ascende in Libanum, et clama, et in Basan ede vocem tuam, et clama a lateribus, quia contriti sunt omnes amatores tui.

Jeremiah triumphs over the Jews, and derides their presumption in thinking that they would be safe, though God was against them. He then shews that they were deceived in promising to themselves impunity; but he bids them to ascend Mount Lebanon, and to cry aloud on Mount Bashan, that they might know that there would be no aid for them when God's judgment came. But the whole verse is ironical; for they would in vain cry and howl. Indeed, the Prophet thus treated them, because he saw that they were wholly irreclaimable. They were not worthy then that he should give them counsel, or faithfully warn them. He was therefore under the necessity ironically to deride their madness in promising safety to themselves, while they were continuing to provoke God's vengeance against themselves.

But at the same time he accommodates what he says to their intentions; for there is no doubt but that they ever cast their eyes either on Egypt or on Assyria for any aid they might want. Hence he says, Ascend Mount Lebanon, and cry, and then cry on Mount Bashan, and cry all around, (for by sides he means all parts;) but thou shall gain nothing, he says, for consumed are all thy lovers [59] We learn from the end of the verse that the Prophet said, Ascend, and cry, by way of derision. By lovers he means the Egyptians and the Assyrians, and other neighboring nations; for the Jews, when they feared any danger, were wont to flee to their neighbors, and God was in the meantime neglected by them; and for this reason they were called lovers. God had espoused the people as his own, and hence he often called them his wife, and he speaks here in the feminine gender; and thus the people are compared to a wife, and God assumes the character of a husband. When, therefore, the people, according to their self-will and humor, wandered here and there, this levity was called adultery; for the simplicity of faith is our spiritual chastity; for as a wife who regards her husband alone, keeps conjugal fidelity and chaste conduct, so when we continue to cleave to God alone, we are, in a spiritual sense, chaste as he requires us to be; but when we seek our safety from this and that quarter, we violate the fidelity which we owe to God. As soon, then, as we cast our thoughts here and there, it is to act like a woman who seeks vagrant and unlawful connections.

We now see the reason why the Prophet compares the Egyptians and Assyrians to lovers, for he intimates that the people of Israel did in this manner commit adultery, as it has been stated in other places. It follows, ---

[59] "All around," {,{מעברים is rendered ``beyond the sea'' by the Sept.; ``to those who pass by,'' by the Vulg.; ``from the farther shores of the sea, by the Syr.; ``at the fords,'' by the Targ.; ``beyond the fords,'' that is, of the Nile, by Grotius and Piscator; and ``from the borders,'' by Blayney. But the most suitable rendering here is what has been adopted by Gataker and Venema, ``from Abarim,'' a mountain in the confines of Moab. See Numbers 27:12. There are here two mountains previously mentioned, lying to the north; and here is another to the east. Jerusalem (for that is here addressed) is commanded, by way of taunt, to ascend these mountains to cry for aid and to utter its lamentation; for all its lovers from these quarters were destroyed; the king of Babylon had subdued them. --- Ed

Jeremiah 22:21

21. I spake unto thee in thy prosperity; but thou saidst, I will not hear. This hath been thy manner from thy youth, that thou obeyest not my voice.

21. Loquutus sum tecum in pace tua (vel, quiete, vel, foelicitate tua,) dixisti, Non audiam; haec via tua (id est, ratio, vel, consuetudo) a pueritia tua, quod non audieris vocem meam.

Here God shews that the people were worthy of the reward he had mentioned, even to mourn and to seek aid on every side without finding any. It, indeed, often happens that the excessive severity of a husband alienates his wife from his society; and when a husband, through want of thought, attends to other things and neglects his domestic affairs, and thus his wife goes astray; or when he connives at things when he sees his wife exposed to dangerous allurements and flatteries, the fault is in part to be ascribed to him. But God shews here that he had performed the duties of a good and faithful husband, and also that it was not his fault that the people did not perform their part.

I spoke to thee, he says; that is, thou canst not say that thou hast gone astray through ignorance; for they who are proved guilty are wont to flee to this kind of excuse, --- ``I did not think; had I been warned, I would have attended to good advice; but on slippery ground it is easy to fall, especially when no one stretches forth his hand to give any help.'' But God takes away here every pretext of this kind, and says, that he had spoken; as though he had said, ``I warned thee in time; thou hast not then sinned through ignorance or want of thought.'' In short, God condemns here the perverseness of the people, that they knowingly and wilfully abandoned themselves to every kind of wickedness. Now this passage deserves special notice; for we see that it is a twofold crime, when God in due time speaks to us and calls us to the right way, and we refuse to hear; for our wickedness is inexcusable when we suffer not ourselves to be corrected by him.

I spoke to thee, he adds, in thy tranquillity By this circumstance also their crime is aggravated; for God not only by his Prophets made known to his people what was right, but had also, by his blessing, conciliated them to himself. For when a husband counsels his wife, and is at the same time austere or peevish, his wife will disregard whatever she may hear, for her mind will be preoccupied with dislike; but when a husband treats his wife kindly, and proves by his benevolence the love he entertains for her, and at the same time shews prudence in his conduct towards her, she must necessarily be of a very bad disposition if she is not moved by such advice, kindness, and benevolence on the part of her husband. Now, God shews here that he had sent Prophets in order to keep his people in the faithful discharge of their duties, and that he had also been kind and bountiful to them, that thereby they might be sweetly drawn to obey him. Therefore, by the word ``tranquillity,'' the Prophet sets forth God's kindness and bounty towards his people. [60]

[60] The word for tranquillity is in the plural number, “tranquillities,” meaning tranquil, or quiet times or seasons. It is rendered “fall,” very unaccountably, by the Sept.; “abundance,” by the Vulg.; “affluence,” by the Syr.; “when thou didst sit tranquil,” by the Targ. But the word clearly means a tranquil, quiet, or peaceable state. Blayney rightly renders the expression, “in the times of thy tranquillity.” — Ed.

It is, indeed, true what Moses says, that men are like mettlesome and wanton horses when they become fat. (Deuteronomy 32:15.) So fatness and tranquillity have such effect as to render us more refractory. Yet this cannot avail for an excuse when God kindly invites us, and connects with his doctrine kind and paternal benevolence, and confirms it by the effects when we are teachable and yield him willing obedience. Thus the Prophet closed the mouths of the Jews, for they would have sought probably to make this objection, --- that vengeance was too vehemently denounced on them, and that God suddenly assailed them; but he shews that when in tranquillity and prosperity they might have acknowledged God's paternal kindness, they had yet been rebellious and had abused the indulgence of God.

I spoke to thee, he says, in thy tranquillity, and thou didst say, I will not hear It is not, indeed, probable that the Jews had spoken so insolently as to say openly and in such plain words, that they would not be obedient; but the Prophet regards their life and not their words. Though, then, the Jews did not express these words, --- that they would not obey God; yet such language might have been clearly inferred from their conduct, for they were so perverse as not to render obedience to God and to his counsels.

He adds, in the third place, that it had been the custom of the people from their childhood not to hear the voice of God. It is the height of impiety when we are not only refractory for one day or a short time, but when we pursue wickedness continually. God in the meantime intimates that he had from the beginning been solicitous for the safety of his people, but in vain. It sometimes happens that he who has become hardened in his vices, begins to be taught after the thirtieth or fortieth: year, but he is not very pliable; for men become hard by long usage; we see that old men are less teachable than the young; and why? because age in a manner makes them sturdy, so that they cannot bear to be turned and ruled. But God shews here, that such was the wickedness of his people, that they had been rebellious from their childhood; as though he had said, ``Thou canst not make this excuse, that thou hast been for a long time without a teacher that thou hast been without any wisdom and understanding, and that on this account thou hast become hardened in evils; no, because I have found thee wholly unteachable from thy very childhood; it was thy custom, or manner, not to hear my voice,'' or, ``This has been thy custom, that thou didst not hear my voice;'' literally, ``because thou didst not hear my voice;'' but it ought to be rendered as above, for {כי}, is not here a connective, but all expletive or an exegetical particle. [61] It follows, ---

Jeremiah 22:22

22. The wind shall eat up all thy pastors, and thy lovers shall go into captivity: surely then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded for all thy wickedness.

22. Omnes pastores tuos depascet ventus, et amatores tui in exilium migrabunt; certe tunc pudefies et erubesces ab omni malitia tua (hoc est, propter cunctam mali-

[61] The {כי is omitted in the Sept., and the clause is given as in apposition with the former, which seems to be the meaning; ``the way'' was not to hear God's voice. Blayney, very unsuitably, connects the last line with the following verse. I render the verse thus, --- 21. I spoke to thee in thy quiet times; Thou didst say, ``I will not hear:'' This has been thy way from thy childhood; For thou didst not hear my voice. It has been usual with many to render ``hear,'' ``obey;'' but not rightly. The complaint against the people was, that they would not ``hear'' the voice of God, much less obey it. The answer here was that they would not ``hear.'' The complaint, or the charge against them is the same, and the verb ought to be so rendered. --- Ed.

tiam tuam.)

As the main fault was in the chief men, therefore God shews, that there would be no defense found in their prudence and wealth, when things came to an extremity: and it was a usual thing for the common people, when reproved, to refer to their rulers as their shield: nor is there a doubt but that the Jews made this objection to God's Prophets, --- ``What do you mean? that God has suffered us to be unhappily governed by bad princes? then he has exposed us as a prey to wolves: now if he punishes us, it seems an unjust thing for us to suffer for the fault of others.'' At the same time, they who thus spoke were secure and despised God, because they thought that their safety was secured by their chief men.

Hence, the Prophet here shakes off from the Jews this vain confidence, Thy pastors, he says, the wind shall eat up By pastors he understands the king and his counsellors, as well as the priests and the prophets. The word eat up, means that all would be consumed by the wind. Sometimes, indeed, men are said to feed on the wind, that is, when they entertain vain confidences. So the wind means in other places vain hopes, as they say; but it is in another sense that the Prophet speaks, when he says that pastors would be eaten up by the wind, that is, that they would vanish away like the smoke. Thus God shews that their presumption, and frauds, and false imaginations, were nothing but smoke and emptiness. [62]

He then speaks of their lovers, --- that they would migrate into exile: for the Jews thought at first, that they would be impregnable as long as the throne of David stood; and then we know that the common people were easily deceived by external splendor, when they saw that the priests as well as the prophets and the king's counsellors were endued with craftiness, and swelling with great pride; and hence they disregarded what the prophets threatened. Now, the second ground of confidence was their alliance with the Egyptians, the Assyrians, and other neighboring nations. Therefore God, after having said, that all their pastors would be destroyed, adds, that the Egyptians and others would be driven into captivity.

He afterwards says, Surely, thou shalt then be ashamed, and shalt blush for all thy wickedness; [63] that is, ``Thou shalt at length know that thou art justly punished for thy sins, when God shall denude thee of all aids, and make it evident that

[62] The wind sometimes means what is empty; and in this sense the Sept., the Vulg., and the Arab. take it here, “All thy pastors the wind shall feed;” but the Syr. and the Targ. take the “wind” as meaning a blasting or a stormy wind: “All thy pastors the wind shall feed on,” or eat up, is the Syr.; and the Targ. gives this paraphrase, “All thy pastors shall be scattered unto every wind.” The verb, no doubt, means to feed, and to feed on, or eat up, or consume, but not to scatter or disperse. Therefore the meaning here is, either that the pastors would have nothing but what was empty to support them, or that they would be consumed as by a blast. The first is most consonant to the tenor of the passage; for the aid of their lovers is previously referred to; but they would find this aid to be “wind,” and then it is added, that these lovers as well as themselves would be driven into captivity. There is a striking paronomasia in the words. The word for pastors is derived from the verb to feed. We may give this version, “All thy feeders shall the wind feed.” The feeders had fed the people with winds, with empty expectations, and they, in their turn, would have nothing but wind, what was empty, to live upon or to support them. — Ed.

[63] Our version is better as to the two verbs here used, “ashamed and confounded.” The latter is stronger than the former. The Vulg. and the Targ. invert the order, “confounded and ashamed.” The Sept. and Arab. have “ashamed and dishonored,” or despised. The first verb means simply to be ashamed, and the other to turn aside as it were from a sense of shame, as one not able to look on others. — Ed.

everything that now gives thee confidence is altogether empty and vain.'' And he mentions all wickedness; for the Jews had not sinned only in one thing, but had added evils to evils, so that they had provoked God's vengeance by an immense heap of wickedness. Their acknowledgment, however, would not be that which availed to repentance, but extorted; for the reprobate, willing or unwilling, are often constrained to acknowledge their shame. It follows ---

Jeremiah 22:23

23. O inhabitant of Lebanon, that makest thy nest in the cedars, how gracious shalt thou be when pangs come upon thee, the pain as of a woman in travail!

23. Sedisti (hoc est, sedem tibi posuisti) in Libano, nidulata es in cedris, quomodo gratiosa fuisti (alii, vertunt, precata es) in veniendo tibi dolores, dolorem quasi parturientis (ad verbum, sed sensus est, quomodo gratiosa eris, ubi venerint tibi dolores, dolor quasi foeminae parturientis.)

The Prophet confirms the same thing in other words; and hence it appears how difficult it is to shake off from men their false confidence, when they give themselves up to earthly things. As soon, then, as false confidence strikes its roots into the hearts of men, they cannot be moved either by any threatenings or by any dangers; even though death itself were hanging over them, they yet remain unconcerned: and hence Isaiah upbraids them and says, That they had made a covenant with death. (Isaiah 28:15.) This was the reason why the Prophet here multiplied words and used greater vehemence; it was for the purpose of correcting that perverseness which prevailed among the Jews; for they thought themselves beyond the reach of those darts which God's hands would throw.

He therefore says, that they had set their seat on Lebanon, and made their nest among the cedars Some interpreters understand this figuratively of the cedar houses in which they dwelt; that is, that they ornamented their houses or palaces, as we have seen, with boards of cedar. But I take the words more simply, --- That they considered Lebanon as an impregnable stronghold, and that he compares them to birds which choose the highest cedars to make their nests in. The meaning is, that the Jews were so blinded by their pride, that they thought that they had Lebanon as a safe refuge, and also that they imagined that they had nests as it were in its cedars. But there is no doubt but that the Prophet, in mentioning this one particular, meant to include all those false and vain confidences with which the Jews were inebriated. But he speaks by way of concession, as though he had said, that the Jews were not terrified by God's threatenings, because they cast their eyes on Lebanon and on its lofty cedars.

But how gracious, he says, wilt thou be; that is, what grace wilt thou find, when sorrows shall come upon thee, the pain as of one in travail [64] The Prophet expresses

[64] The former part of this passage is differently rendered by all the early versions: the Sept., "thou wilt groan;" the Vulg., "how thou hast groaned;" the Syr., "how much wilt thou groan." The reading adopted was {,{נחנת from ,{נהה} instead of ,{נחנת} for the {י} is not found in many copies, nor in the Keri, nor in connection with the two participles at the beginning of the verse. The Targ. has ``what wilt thou do.'' Most of modern expounders take the text as we have it, and there are no different readings. Then the whole verse would read as follows, --- 23. Inhabitress of Lebanon! nestler in the cedars! How graceful (or favored) shalt thou be, When come on thee shall throes, A pain like that of childbearing! The gender is feminine, and either Jerusalem or the house or family of David is meant. The word for ``throes'' means girding pains or pangs. The verse is the language of irony. The people were so hardened, that nothing else would have touched them. --- Ed.

here what often occurs in Scripture, that when the ungodly say, ``Peace and safety,'' sudden ruin comes on them. (1 Thessalonians 5:3.) He then does not allow that the Jews gained anything by thinking that they would have a quiet station on Lebanon, and by having their nests in the cedars, for God would bring on them sudden pains like those of women, who, while laughing and full of mirth, are in a moment seized with the pangs of childbearing. Jeremiah now says, that a similar thing would happen to the Jews. I touch but lightly on this point, while yet it is worthy of long and careful meditation. Let us then know, that nothing is more intolerable to God than when we promise to ourselves a quiet rest while he proclaims war against us, and while we, as it were designedly, daily provoke him. It follows ---

Jeremiah 22:24

24 As I live, saith the LORD, though Coniah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence;

24. Vivo ego, dicit Jehova, quod si esset Coniahu filius Joakim regis Jehudah annulus signatorius super manum dexteram meam (hoc est, in many dextera mea,) ego inde to evallam (mutatio est personae.)

God here makes an oath that he had resolved to punish Jeconiah, who was also called Jehoiachim. And he says, That though he sat on the throne of David, he would yet be a miserable exile. We have, indeed, seen elsewhere, that the Jews were so fascinated as to think that, God was bound to them; and at the same time they allowed themselves every liberty in sinning, under the pretense that God had promised that the kingdom of David would remain as long as the sun and moon continued in the heavens, (Psalm 89:37) but they did not consider that there was a mutual compact in God's covenant; for he required them to be faithful on their part: nor did they consider that many were Abraham's children according to the flesh, who were not his lawful children before God. As to the king himself, he never thought it possible that he should be driven into exile, because he was David's successor and ordained by God.

This, then, is the reason why God now declares, Even though that Coniah were as a sealing ring on my finger, I would yet pluck it off thence However exalted then was Jeconiah, God shews that his dignity would be only for a time, and would soon fade away; for he would be at length thrust from his throne, and his condition wholly changed. The word Coniah is, no doubt, in a mutilated form, instead of Jehoiachin. The Prophet then calls him Coniah by way of contempt, as though he did not think him worthy of the complete name, but expresses it in two instead of four syllables. So the Prophet, though Jeconiah was then the king, yet calls him Coniah. [65]

Now, this passage teaches us, that we ought not to be in such a way proud of God's favors, as to forget what we are, but ever to remember that we are dependent on him, and that we ought diligently to pray to him at all times; for security breeds contempt; hence it is; that God strips us of the ornaments with which we have been clothed; and it is a just reward for our ingratitude. Let all, then, who excel others know, that

[65] The early Versions throughout this passage give his name as Jeconiah; but the Targ., Coniah, according to the Hebrew. The Rabbins give various reasons for the change, and others too, which are frivolous. The reason given by Calvin and adopted by Gataker, Lowth, and others, is confirmed by the contemptuous language used in the 28th verse. — Ed.

what has been given may at any time be taken away, except good conscience be as it were the guard to preserve God's gifts and benefits, so that they may not at any time fall away or be lost. It follows ---

Jeremiah 22:25

25. And I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans.

25. Et ponam to (tradam to) in manum quierentium animam tuam, et in manum eorum a quorum facie formidas (metuis) et in manum Nebuchadrezzar regis Babylonii et in manum Cladaeorum.

This verse is connected with the last, and more fully explains what had been briefly said. The plucking off of the sealing ring from God's finger took place when Jeconiah was deprived of his glory and his kingdom, and made subject; to the king of Babylon. [66] Though the king spared his life, as sacred history testifies, (2 Kings 25:7; 2 Chronicles 36:6; Jeremiah 52:11,) yet when he surrendered himself to him, he trembled as though he saw the sword ready to cut off his head; for he expected no mercy, and his fear made him to go out of the city, and to surrender himself to his inveterate enemy. The import of the whole is, that King Jeconiah would come to extremities, for he would be forced to give up himself helpless and unarmed into the hands of his cruel enemies.

But he repeats the commination, and enlarges on the subject; I will deliver thee, he says, into the hand of those who seek thy life, and then, into the hand of those whose face thou dreadest, and, in the third place, into the hand of Nebuchadnezer, (Nabuchadnezer, king of Babylon, is called here and in other places, Nebuchadrezer,) and lastly, into the hand of the Chaldeans. Thus the Prophet recounts, as it were in order, several kinds of death, that Jeconiah might know how dreadful God's judgment would be. He adds ---

Jeremiah 22:26

26. And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die.

26. Et projiciam to et matrem tuam quae genuit to in terram alienam, in qua non estis geniti, et illic moriemini.

Here, again, the Prophet confirms what he had said of the severe vengeance which God would take on Jeconiah. And though he was in his thirty-seventh year brought out of prison, and admitted unto the royal table, among other princes, he yet died in exile; and perhaps it would have been better for him to continue in prison till his death than to have been corrupted by allurements when he became one of the princes, for he thus defiled himself. However this may have been, he died in exile together with his mother Nehusta.

The Prophet then enhanced the grievousness of his punishment by saying, I will cause thee to migrate, or cast thee out, [67] and thy mother who bare thee. It is

[66] There is here a striking contrast: God would pluck off Jeconiah, were he like a signet on his right hand, and would deliver him into the hand of his enemies. From being as it were on the divine hand, he would be given up into the hand of those who sought his life. — Ed.

[67] The word is strong; it means to toss, to hurl, violently to cast forth, to throw with force,

added, for the sake of indignity, that the mother of the king would be led captive with him; for the female sex is often spared, and she was also advanced in years. But God executed upon her his judgment, because she was his associate in impiety: ``I will remove you,'' he says, ``into foreign lands, in which ye were not born, and there ye shall die.''

Jeremiah 22:27

27. But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return.

27. Et in terram ad quam ipsi levant animum suum, ut revertantur illuc, non revertentur illuc.

The Prophet again changes the person, and yet not inelegantly, for he speaks here as one indignant, and after having addressed a few words to King Jeconiah, he turns aside from him and declares what God would do. Thus, when we think one hardly worthy to be addressed, we change our discourse; and after having spoken a few words to him, we take another mode of speaking. In the same manner, the Prophet spoke very indignantly when he addressed Jehoiakim, and then he declared how God would deal with him: he passed by him as though he was deaf or unworthy of being noticed. We thus see the design of the Prophet in the change he makes in this passage.

Into the land, he says, to which they raise up their mind that they may return, there they shall not return He had said before that both the king and his mother would die in a foreign land, and he now confirms the same thing; for the foolish notion, that the king of Babylon would be at length propitious to them, could not but with great difficulty be eradicated from their minds: nor is there a doubt but that such thoughts as these were entertained, --- ``When Nebuchadnezzar shall see us coming suppliantly to him, he will be turned to mercy, for what more does he require? He does not mean to fix here his royal palace; it; will satisfy him to have the people tributary to him; and when he shall find that I am a man of no courage, he will prefer having me a king, rather than to appoint a new one.'' Such, then, was the reasoning which the king had with his courtiers. Hence this vain persuasion is what the Prophet now demolishes: They raise up their mind to the land, that is, they think of a free return at length into their own country; for to raise up the mind is to apply the mind or thought to any thing. They raise up, then, their mind to the land, that is, the land of Judah; but they shall never return thither, whatever they may promise to themselves. [68]

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou promisest to us rest nowhere except in thy celestial kingdom, we may never suffer ourselves, while travelling on the earth, to

as one throws a missile weapon. See 1 Samuel 28:11. The “mittam“ of the Vulg. is too weak; the “{ἀποῤῥίψω}'' of the Sept. is more suitable. --- Ed

[68] The phrase, “to raise or lift up the mind,” or the soul, is to set the heart on a thing. The Vulg. has adopted the Hebrew idiom, “to which they lift up their soul.” The Sept. leaves out “return,” and have only, “which they wish in their souls.” Our version retains the true idea, though it be not literal, “whereunto they desire to return;” literally, “where they are lifting up their soul to return there:” the two adverbs of place are given, the relative adverb and the pronoun adverb, if we may so call them. It is the same sort of idiom as when a relative and a pronoun are used, one before and the other after the verb, as in Jeremiah 22:25, “whom thou fearest (or dreadest) their face,” rightly rendered in our version, “whose face thou fearest:” but the Welsh is literally the Hebrew; the idiom is exactly the same. — Ed.

be allured and driven here and there; but may we in the meantime call on thee with resigned minds, and thus carry on our warfare, that; how much soever thou mayest he pleased by various contests to try and prove us, we may still continue to be thy faithful soldiers, until we shall enjoy that rest which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Eighty-Fourth

Jeremiah 22:28

28 Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not?

28. An simulachrum contemptum, contritum, vir iste Coniah? an vas, in quo non est oblectatio? ut quid disjecti sunt ipse et semen ejus et projecti super terram quam non noverunt?

As the Prophet was hardly able to convince the Jews of what he had foretold, he confirms the same thing; but he speaks here as of what was incredible. He assumes the character of one greatly wondering, that others might cease to wonder. He then asks, whether it was possible that Jeconiah should be driven into exile and there miserably perish? We now see the design of the Prophet, that as the Jews thought that the kingdom would be perpetual, it was necessary to shake off such a notion, so that they might know that God had not in vain threatened what we have already noticed. But there is in these questions a kind of irony, for the Prophet might have made a positive assertion in plain words; but from regard to others, he hesitates through wonder, or seems to doubt as of a thing that was monstrous.

Is he a statue? he says; some translate ``a vessel;'' but it seems to be taken here, as in other places, in its proper sense, a statue. Is, then, this man Coniah a despised and a broken statue? for {פוץ}, puts, is both to fail and to break. [69] We have said that a part of his name was left out by way of contempt; still, as the Jews were so blinded by the royal dignity that they could not believe the prophecy, he asks respecting it as of a thing incredible. Is he a vessel? etc., he adds. The Hebrew word {כלי}, cali, we know, is taken for any kind of vessel; for the ancients called all kinds of furniture vessels. He asks, then, Is he a contemptible vessel? Is he a vessel in which there is no delight? He had before said that he was a despised statue. Why are they cast forth, he and his seed, and thrown into a land which they have not known? that is, into a remote land? [70] And we know that it is a hard lot when one is driven far away from his own country. There is, then, no doubt but that the Prophet

[69] The verb means to loose, to set free; and it is here in a passive sense, to be loosed or set free. It seems to refer to the setting free the idol or statue from its fastenings; therefore, "broken down" would be its best rendering. — Ed.

[70] It is singular that all the early versions soften down the strong terms used in this verse; not one of them give a faithful translation. The Sept., the Syr., and the Arab. give hardly the half of the verse, and what they give is divested of the tone and spirit of the original. The Vulg. leaves out the word "idol" or statue, and puts "an earthen vessel" in its place. The whole verse I render as follows, — 28. A contemptible, broken down idol! Is this the man Coniah? Is he a vessel in which there is no delight? Why are they cast out, he and his seed, And sent into a land which they have not known? There is the relative which understood after "vessel" in the third line. The Welsh, which in this kind of idiom is exactly the same with the Hebrew, admits of the same sort of ellipsis, — Ai llester yw heb hoffder ynddo? Which is verbally the Hebrew, "Is he a vessel without delight in it?" The "casting out" was from the land of Canaan, and the "sending" was into the unknown land. — Ed.

enhances the grievousness of the evil when he speaks of an unknown country: for Zedekiah, who was put on the throne, was his uncle; and of his posterity the first was Salathiel, born in exile. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 22:29-30

29. O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD.

29. Terra, terra, terra, audi sermonem Jehovae,

30. Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

30. Sic dicit Jehova, Scribite virum hunc orbum (vel, solitarium) virum, cui prospere non erit in diebus suis; quia prospere non habebit quisquam ex semine ejus sedens super solium Davidis et dominans adhuc in Jehudah.

The Prophet more fully confirms what I have lately referred to; and the repetition was not superfluous in exclaiming ``earth'' three times, for as the hardness of iron is overcome by the repeated strokes of the hammer, so the Prophet repeated the word ``earth,'' that he might subdue that perverseness in which the Jews had so hardened themselves that no threats of God moved them. He did not adopt this vehemence, as rhetoricians do who aim to appear eloquent; but it was necessity that constrained him thus to assail that refractory people, who would have otherwise turned a deaf ear to what we have observed and read. By this preface, then, the Prophet especially shews that he spoke of God's dreadful judgment, and also reminded the Jews of the certainty of this prophecy, though they were persuaded that the kingdom would never fall. Hence in this repetition we see that there is an implied reproof, as though he had said that they were indeed deaf, but that it was to no purpose, for they would be constrained to see the fulfillment of what they did not then believe. Earth, earth, earth, hear, he says. [71]

Then he adds, Thus saith Jehovah, Write ye this man solitary, or childless. Some think that these words were addressed to angels or to prophets; but I regard not such a notion as well founded: this mode of speaking seems rather to me to have been taken from common practice, for decrees which were to continue in force for a long time were usually written. When an edict was proclaimed, and was to be in force only for a few days, it was not commonly recorded in the public monuments; but when a law was enacted, which was to be binding on posterity, it was written in the public tablets. Then the Prophet intimates that this judgment of God could not be rendered void, nor would be momentary like decrees which in a few days are disregarded and soon forgotten, but that it would be certain and permanent. Write ye, then, this man childless This bereavement is set in opposition to the promise of God, that there would be perpetual successors to David on his throne as long as the sun and moon were in the heavens. (Psalm 89:37.) And the Prophet shews here that

[71] It does not appear whether Calvin meant the earth generally or the land of Judea. But the latter most probably is what is intended. The version, then, ought to be, “Land, land, land!” The Sept. and the Arab. have “land” only twice, but the other versions have it three times as in Hebrew. The paraphrase of the Targ. is singular, “From their own land they have made them to migrate to another land; land of Israel! hear the words of the Lord.” “Land” means often the inhabitants; and what follows proves that it has this meaning here; for it is added, “Write ye,” etc. — Ed.

this promise as to Jeconiah would not be fulfilled. [72]

And he adds, Write ye this man as one who will not prosper in his days; nay, (for {כי}, seems to me to be emphatic here,) no one of his seed shall prosper; and then he adds an explanation, sitting on the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah.

Now, it is no wonder that the Jews regarded this judgment of God with abhorrence, as though it was something monstrous, for God seemed to them to be inconsistent with himself, for he had testified that his covenant would never be rendered void, and had appealed to the sun and moon as witnesses. Hence, when the posterity of David failed, at least when his throne was subverted, and no one appeared as his successor, the truth of the promise seemed to have failed, which was very strange. But it was possible for God, who doeth wonders, to execute such punishment on Jeconiah and on such as were like him, and yet in a secret and incomprehensible manner to bring things about, so that the covenant which he had made should not wholly fail. The grace of God, then, was hidden for a time, but never extinguished; for at length a rod did grow up from the stem of Jesse, as it is said by Isaiah.

However, the words seem to imply otherwise, for Jeconiah is said to be solitary, and then unprosperous; and lastly, the Prophet declares that no one of his seed would sit on the royal throne. But we must bear in mind that these words are to be confined to a temporary punishment, and extend only to the coming of Christ, though the posterity of David, as we shall hereafter see, did begin to arise in Zerubbabel, but this was only an obscure and a small prelude. We must, therefore, come to the time of Christ if we would reconcile these two things which seem repugnant, --- that Jeconiah became childless, and that a successor from the seed of David never failed; it was so, because this childlessness was only for a time; and this interruption of God's grace was something like death; but in course of time it appeared that God was mindful of his covenant, even at a time when he seemed to have forgotten it. And this prophecy, therefore, ought; to be connected with that of Ezekiel,

``Remove ye, remove, remove the crown until he comes whose it is.''
(Ezekiel 21:26, 27.)

There, also, Ezekiel repeats the word ``remove'' three times, as though he had said that there would be no kingdom of David, not only for a few months or years, but through a series of many ages.

There is no wonder, then, that the Prophet declares here that Jeconiah would be

[72] The word rendered “childless”“ properly means “wholly stripped,” or destitute, or “quite naked.” It is rendered “banished” by the Sept., but “childless” by the Vulg., the Syr., and the Targ. He was “childless” as a king, having had no son as a successor on the throne of David; but he had children, see 1 Chronicles 3:17, 18. And that this is the meaning appears evident from the end of the verse. Scott thinks that Zedekiah, the uncle of Jeconiah, is the person spoken of in these two last verses. He considers that the contents of this chapter were repeated in Zedekiah’s reign as a warning to him. But this view is not consistent with the general tenor of the chapter. See especially Jeremiah 22:13, 14, 15, 17, 18, and 19; these shew evidently that the prophecy was delivered in the time, probably in the latter time of Jehoiakim; then the Prophet proceeds, in Jeremiah 22:24 to the end of the chapter, prophetically to describe the late of his son Jeconiah. And having said that he would be childless as a king, that none of his seed would sit on the throne of David, he introduces in the next chapter, which is connected with this, the “righteous branch,” the Messiah, the King of Zion. The proper division of the chapter is at the ninth verse. According to this view there is a perfect consistency, — Jeconiah was the last reigning prince in the right line (Zedekiah, his uncle, was not in the right line) on the throne of David, as a temporal sovereign; then he, of whom David was a type, came, not to sit and to rule on the visible throne of David, but on that which it represented. — Ed.

childless, for such a sad calamity for so many ages, as the throne of David trodden under foot with scorn and contempt, might have overwhelmed the faithful with despair. This, then, was the reason why he said that he would be childless, and also that his whole posterity would be under a curse. But we must bear in mind that exception, which is expressed by another Prophet,

``until he comes whose the crown is.'' (Ezekiel 21:27)

For it was reserved for the head of Christ, though for a long time it had been exposed to dishonor and to the reproaches of all nations.

Now it is useful to know this, for we are taught that God is ever so consistent with himself, that his covenant, which he has made with Christ and with all his members, never fails, and that yet he punishes hypocrites even unto death. If any one, during a long period, had sought for the Church in the world, there was none in appearance; yet God shewed that he was faithful to his promises, for suddenly there arose a people regenerated by the Gospel, so that his covenant was not dead, but as it were for a time buried. The truth of God, then, was proved by the event; and yet he took a dreadful vengeance on the ingratitude of men when he thus blinded the whole world, now follows ---

Jeremiah 23

CHAPTER 23

Jeremiah 23:1-3

1. Woe be unto the pastors that destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! saith the LORD.

1. Vae Pastoribus qui perdunt et dissipant gregem pascuorum meorum! dicit Jehova.

2. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of Israel against the pastors that feed my people; Ye have scattered my flock, and driven them away, and have not visited them: behold, I will visit upon you the evil of your doings, saith the LORD.

2. Propterea sic dicit Jehova, Deus Israel, super Pastores pascentes populum meum, Vos dissipastis gregem meum et dispulistis, et non visitastis eos (vel, oves meas;) Ecce ego visitans (hoc est, visitabo) super vos malitiam actionum vestrarum, dicit Jehova:

3. And I will gather the remnant of my flock out of all countries whither I have driven them, and will bring them again to their folds; and they shall be fruitful and increase.

3. Ego autem colligam residuum ovium mearum ex omnibus terris, ad quas expulero eas, et reverti faciam eas ad caulas suas, et fructificabunt et multiplicabuntur.

Here the Prophet promises the restoration of the Church; but he reminds hypocrites that there was no reason for them on that account to flatter themselves, especially the king, his councillors, and the priests. Then this prophecy is a mixture of promises and threatenings, for God promises that he would be propitious to the miserable Jews, after having chastised them, so that the seed of Abraham might not be entirely cut off: he yet deprives hypocrites of vain confidence, so that they might not falsely apply to themselves the hope of salvation, from which they had excluded themselves by their impiety. And this is what ought to be noticed, for as soon as God's mercy is offered, hypocrites apply to themselves whatever God promises, and

become more and more insolent, as though they held him bound to them; for impunity leads them to take more liberty to sin. Hence it is that they boast that they are safe, for they consider themselves to be the people of God. The Prophet, therefore, teaches here that whatever God promises belongs to his elect, that it does not appertain indiscriminately to all, nor ought to be extended to hypocrites who falsely pretend his name, but that it peculiarly belongs to the elect, though they may be small in number, and though they may be despised.

He says first, Wo to the pastors who destroy, [73] etc. Here are contrary things --- a pastor and a destroyer! But he concedes to them the name which was honorable; and yet he derides their false boasting, for they thought that they could hide their crimes under this shade, falsely claimed. Though then he calls them pastors, he yet removes the mask, and thus shews that they in vain boasted while they assumed the name of pastors. ``Ye are pastors,'' he says, ````and ye are destroyers! who dissipate or scatter the flock of my pastures.'' [74]

Here God shews the reason why he was so grievously displeased with these pastors; for by exercising tyranny over the people, they not only injured men, but also injured and dishonored God, who had received under his own protection his chosen people. It is indeed true that they deserved such a scattering; for we have already seen in many places, that the people could by no means be excused when they were deceived by wicked and unfaithful leaders; for in this way was rendered to them all their past reward for having provoked God's wrath against themselves, from the least to the greatest. But the impiety of wicked pastors was not on this account excusable; for they ought to have considered for what purpose this burden was laid on them, and also by whom they had been appointed. God then intimates that great injury was done to him, when the people were thus so ignominiously scattered. He was himself the chief pastor; he had put as it were in his own place the king and his counsellors and also the priests. Justly then does he now condemn them, because they had destroyed the flock of God, according to what is said in another place,

``That they had destroyed his vineyard.''
(Jeremiah 12:10; Isaiah 5:3)

In short, when God calls the Jews the flock of his pastures, he does not regard what they deserved, or what they were, but he, on the contrary, sets forth the favor bestowed on the seed of Abraham. He has respect then here to his gratuitous adoption, though the Jews had rendered themselves unworthy of such a benefit.

He afterwards adds, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, to the pastors who feed my people In the same sense he calls them now his people, as he had called them before the flock of his pastures. They had alienated themselves from God, and he had already by his own decree repudiated them; and God might in one respect have deemed them aliens; and yet in respect of the covenant he acknowledged them as his own; and hence he calls them his people He now then confirms what we have already noticed, that these pastors were not only thieves and robbers, but also

[73] It is an exclamation in the Sept. and Syr.; “Oh! the Pastors,” etc., but a denunciation in the Vulg. and the Targ., “Wo to the Pastors,” etc. The original may be rendered in either way; the latter is the most suitable here. — Ed.

[74] The word is singular in Hebrew, “pasture,” or feeding. — Ed

sacrilegious; for they not only had exercised cruelty towards the flock, but as far as they could injured and dishonored God himself, who had undertaken the care of that people.

But there is here a twofold concession, he calls them pastors, and they are said to feed the people. He had said before that they destroyed and scattered the flock, and now he says that they fed them; but in what sense we well know, for by this kind of irony he meant to reprove them; they boasted that they were pastors, and they thought that their crimes would by such a covering be buried in the sight of God, as in the sight of men. In a similar manner when we speak in the present day of the Pope and his mitred bishops and filthy clergy, we use expressions which are commonly employed. But Antichrist is everything but a father, and we know how far they are from being really bishops who assume the title; and as to the clergy, the name is sacred, but they are very far from being God's heritage. We indeed make no account of these empty titles. But it is a great aggravation of their guilt, that they being devils, should assume angelic names, that they being wolves and robbers, and sacrilegious, should falsely pretend God's name, and recommend themselves by spurious titles, as though they were pastors, bishops, abbots, and prelates, and what not.

So then our Prophet calls those whom he condemns, by way of taunt, pastors, and says that they fed, that is, were called for this end, to do this work. But he afterwards adds, My flock have ye scattered, and driven away, and not visited [75] Surely it was not to feed, to have no care for the sheep. To visit is to be extended here to every part of the duty of overseeing, as though he had said, that the flock had been by them neglected, betrayed, and deserted. We hence see that they had wholly neglected their pastoral office. But the other two things are still worse, for they had scattered and driven away the flock. Their sloth in neglecting the flock was not to be tolerated; but it was still more intolerable when they exercised so much cruelty as to scatter the flock as though they were deadly enemies; and yet these are the things for which Jeremiah condemns them. We hence see that there was an implied taunt, when he conceded to them the office of feeding.

He then denounces judgment on them, I will visit upon you the wickedness of your doings Here God declares that he would punish the pastors, to whom was justly ascribed the scattering of the people. For though no one was exempt from blame, as

[75] The meaning seems to be that they had caused the flock to be scattered and driven away through their bad conduct, because they did not take care of them, as the last verb means. The two first verbs are indeed in Hiphil, and may be rendered causatively thus, — Ye have caused my sheep to be scattered, And have caused them to be driven away; And ye have not cared for them. The last verb is not in Hiphil, and states the reason why the sheep had been dispersed. It means to oversee, to take care of, to attend to. The dispersion was owing to the neglect of the pastors in taking care of the sheep. The scattering or dispersion was their exile; which God states in the third verse was his act as a punishment for their wickedness, but the cause of dispersion was the conduct of the pastors. We see here an instance of the order in which ideas are often stated by the Prophets. Scattering, though mentioned first, is the last act, the most ostensible; the driving out of the land was the previous act, and the first in order, though the last stated, was the neglect of the pastors in taking an oversight of them. It is to begin with the effect and to go back to the cause. "You have caused them to be scattered to all lands, you have made them to be driven out of their own land, and you have neglected to take care of them." These are the three points of accusation, but stated in an inverted order. There are constant instances of this kind of arrangement. — Ed.

it has been before stated; yet the main fault belonged to these pastors. This then is the reason why God declares that he would take vengeance; for he would not have his flock scattered with impunity.

It then follows, And I will gather my flock. As they had driven the people away, so God promises that it would be his care to gather them. And yet he ascribes to himself what he had imputed to them --- that he had driven away his flock, but in a different sense; the pastors had scattered the flock, not only by their sloth, but also by their cruelty, for they became rapacious wolves; but God had punished the people, for they all had fully deserved such a scattering. We hence see that the ungodly execute God's judgment; but they are not on this account excusable as though they were God's ministers, for they have nothing less in view. Nor can God be involved in their sin, while he thus employs them to execute his purpose. In short, the scattering of the people was a just punishment from God, for they had all departed from the faith, they had broken the sacred bond of the covenant, by which God had bound them to himself. It was also the fault of the pastors, because they avariciously and cruelly tyrannized over them. The pastors, as I have said, were not only the priests, but also the king and his counsellors.

I will gather, he says, not the flock, but the remnant of the sheep God intimates here that he would be so merciful as to receive unto favor, not all indiscriminately, but a small number, constituting the elect. And hence Paul carefully distinguished between the people and the remnant of grace, or the gratuitous remnant; for Christ appeared by his coming to have abolished the covenant by which God had adopted the children of Abraham, but Paul does not admit this. Now, if any one objects and says that the greater part of the people had been cut off, this he allows; but he says that the covenant remains valid in the remnant, and produces also examples, such as that of which we now speak. God then has ever been the preserver of his Church; and thus his gratuitous adoption, by which he had chosen the seed of Abraham, never fails. But this adoption is effectual only as to the remnant.

As to the word remnant, the fewness of those whom God had resolved to gather is not only intimated, but also the vengeance, which as to time had gone before; for God seemed to have destroyed the Jews when they were driven away into various lands, as they had no name remaining, the kingdom and the priesthood were abolished. It was therefore a certain kind of death, as I have before said; but God here declares that there would be some remnant, according to what is said in Isaiah 10:22, that God saved a few as it were from the consumption; for he refers there to the very few that remained alive, when they thought that all was over with the whole people, that there was no hope of restoration.

I will gather, he says, the residue of my sheep from all the lands to which I shall have driven them He again confirms what I have stated, that there would be no place for mercy until he had cleansed his Church from its many filthy pollutions. The scattering then of the people into various lands was the purgation of the Church, according to what God says, that he would separate the refuse and the chaff from the wheat in chastising his people; for as the chaff and the refuse are blown here and there when the wheat is winnowed, and the wheat only remains and is afterwards

laid up in the granary; so when God drove his people away into various lands, he then purged his Church. If any one objects and says, ``Then the remnant were dealt with like the refuse;'' it is true as to the individuals, but God refers here to himself, when he calls them his own, sheep, who were yet unworthy of such an honor.

He then adds, that he would bring them back to their folds, [76] that they might be fruitful, that is, bring forth and increase, and be multiplied By folds he no doubt means the land of Canaan; for there was then no wealth in the world which the Jews would have preferred to the inheritance promised to them; the whole world was to them an exile. For God had chosen that land in which they dwelt, and had consecrated it to himself, and he gave it to them as an earnest or a pledge of the eternal inheritance. Rightly then does he now call that land folds, for they lived there under his guardianship and protection. The temple was as it were the pastoral staff; they knew that God dwelt there, that being protected by his power they might continue in safety. Since then there was safety for them under God's protection in the land of Canaan, he calls it their fold. Then he says, that they may be fruitful, and be multiplied; for among other blessings their increase was not the least. He afterwards adds, ---

Jeremiah 23:4

4. And I will set up shepherds over them which shall feed them: and they shall fear no more, nor be dismayed, neither shall they be lacking, saith the LORD.

4. Et excitabo super eos pastores, et pascent eos (hoc est, qui pascant,) et non timebunt amplius, et non pavebunt, et non deficient, dicit Jehova.

He confirms the promise, for he would give them faithful and true pastors, who would perform their office as it behoved them; for it would not be enough that the sheep should be restored to their folds, except they were fed. We indeed know that a sheep is a silly animal, and therefore has need of a shepherd to rule and guide it. God then intimates by these words, that after he had collected his flock into the fold it would be the object of his constant care; for he would appoint pastors, who would discharge their office in a far different way from wolves and sacrilegious robbers. He then adds a promise as to their security, which we shall consider tomorrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou didst formerly take such heavy vengeance on the impiety of thine ancient people, that thou didst not spare even kings, who were representatives of Christ, nor their counsellors, --- O grant, that we at this day may continue in obedience to thy word, and not so kindle thy vengeance against us by our ingratitude, as to provoke thee to punish us with that sad and dreadful desolation which thou formerly didst not in vain denounce on thy people; but may thy Church become more and more fruitful, so that we may know that thou art really gracious to us; and may we thus in quietness give thee thanks, and suffer ourselves to be ruled by thee, even by the hand of thine only-begotten Son, until we shall be gathered from our scattering in this world into that eternal rest which he has obtained

[76] "To their own pasture," is the Sept. and Arab.; "to their own country," the Vulg.; "to their own fold," the Syr.; "to their own places," the Targ. The Hebrew is, "to their own folds;" the word is plural, and means generally "habitations," either for men, or cattle, or beasts. As sheep are mentioned, "folds" no doubt is the proper word. — Ed.

for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture Eighty-Fifth

We said in our yesterday's Lecture, that when the Lord promised to give pastors, he pointed out by this mode of speaking the continuance of his favor; as though he had said, that he would not only be the Redeemer of his people, but would also take care of the safety of those whom he delivered from exile. The two things are indeed necessary, for it would have profited them nothing to have the hand of God stretched forth once in their behalf, except he continued his favors to them to the end. The sum of the whole, then, is this, that the Jews, after being restored to their own country, would be under God's protection, so that their safety would be secured, and be permanent and not momentary.

By adding, they shall not fear, nor dread, nor fail, [77] or be lessened, he intimates that the Jews would be in a tranquil state under the pastors whom he would set over them. And we know that the duty of a true pastor consists of two parts; for it is not enough for him to rule and guide the sheep, except He also defends them against all violence, the incursions of robbers and wolves. Now, this tranquillity is set in contrast with the disquietude with which the Jews had been for a long time harassed; for we know that they had been tossed with great anxieties, owing to the continual incursions of their enemies. As, then, they were trembling continually when they heard rumors of war, God promises them here a better condition, as we shall hereafter see more clearly. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 23:5-6

5. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

5. Ecce dies veniunt, dicit Jehova, et suscitabo Davidi germen justum; et regnabit rex, et prudenter (vel, prospere) aget: faciet judicium et justitiam in terra.

6. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

6. Diebus ejus servabitur Jehudah, et Israel habitabit in fiducia (hoc est, tranquille: et hoc nomen, quo vocabunt eum, Jehova justitia nostra.

The Prophet confirms what he had before said of the renewal of the Church; for it would not have been in itself sufficiently strong to say ``I have promised pastors who shall faithfully perform their duty,'' except the only true Pastor had been set before them, on whom God's covenant was founded, and from whom was to be expected the accomplishment of the promises which were hoped for. And it was usual with all the prophets, whenever they gave the people the hope of salvation, to bring forward the coming of the Messiah, for in him have God's promises always been, yea, and amen. (2 Corinthians 1:20.) This, indeed, appears now, under the Gospel, more clear

[77] This verb is omitted by the Sept. and Arab., and rendered, “no one of their number shall be sought,” by the Vulg.; “nor wander,” by the Syr.; “nor be moved,” by the Targ. Our version has followed that of Montanus, “neither shall they be lacking.” Venema and Gataker render it, “nor shall they be missing;” and Blayney, “nor shall they be visited,” that is, with judgment. But the verb is used in the sense of being wanting or missing, see Numbers 31:49; 1 Samuel 25:7; 15:21; and this is the meaning most suitable to this passage, — And I will set over them pastors, And they will feed them; And they shall fear no more, nor be terrified, Nor be missing, saith Jehovah. — Ed.

than formerly; but the faith of the Fathers could not have been complete except they directed their thoughts to the Messiah. As, then, neither the love of God could have been made certain to the Fathers, nor the testimony of his kindness and paternal favor be confirmed without Christ, this is the reason why the prophets were wont to set Christ before their eyes whenever they sought to inspire the miserable with a good hope, who otherwise must have been overwhelmed with sorrow and driven into despair.

What, therefore, so often occurs in the prophets is deserving of special notice, so that we may know that God's promises will become ineffectual to us, or be suspended, or even vanish away, except we raise all our thoughts to Christ, and seek in him what would not be otherwise certain and sure to us.

According to this principle the Prophet now says, that the days would come in which God would raise up to David a righteous branch He had spoken generally of pastors; but the Jews might have still been in doubt, and hesitated to believe that any such thing could be hoped for; hence God calls here their attention to the Messiah; as though he had said, that no hope of salvation could be entertained except through the Mediator who had been promised to them, and that therefore they were not sufficiently wise except they turned their minds to him. Moreover, as the accomplishment of salvation was to be expected through the Mediator, God shews that the promise, that he would give them pastors, ought not to be doubted. Hence it appears that I rightly stated at the beginning, that the former doctrine is confirmed by this passage in which God promises the coming of the Mediator. And the demonstrative particle, behold, as we have elsewhere seen, is intended to shew certainty; and it was necessary for the Jews to be thus confirmed, because the time had not as yet arrived, and we know that their faith must have been grievously shaken by so many and so long trials, had they not some support. God, then, seems to point out the event as by the finger, though it was as yet very remote. He does not intimate a short time, but he thus speaks for the sake of making the thing certain, so that they might not faint through a long expectation. Come, then, he says, shall the days in which he will raise up to David a righteous branch

Though the preposition {ל}, lamed, is often redundant, yet in this place it seems to me that God has a reference to the covenant which he had made with David. And the Prophet did this designedly, because the Jews were unworthy of being at all regarded by God; but he here promises that he would be faithful to that covenant which he had once made with David, because David himself was also faithful and embraced with true faith the promise made to him. God then, as though he would have nothing to do with that perverse and irreclaimable people, but with his servant David, says, ``I will raise up to David a righteous branch;'' as though he had said, ``Though ye were even a hundred times unworthy of having a Deliverer, yet the memory of David shall ever remain complete with me, as he was perfect and faithful in keeping my covenant.'' Now, it cannot be doubted but that the Prophet speaks here of Christ.

The Jews, in order to obscure this prophecy, will have this to be applied to all the descendants of David; and thus they imagine an earthly kingdom, such as it was

under Solomon and others. But such a thing cannot certainly be gathered from the words of the Prophet; for he does not speak here of many kings, but of one only. The word ``branch,'' I allow, may be taken in a collective sense; but what is afterwards said? A king shall reign They may also pervert this, for the word ``king'' is often taken for successors in a kingdom. This is indeed true; but we ought to consider the whole context. It is said, in his days Hence it appears evident that some particular king is intended, and that the words ought not to be applied to many. And the last clause is a further confirmation, This shall be his name, by which they shall call him, Jehovah our righteousness Here also the Jews pervert the words, for they make God the nominative case to the verb, as though the words were, ``Jehovah shall call him our righteousness;'' but this is contrary to all reason, for all must see that it is a forced and strained version. Thus these miserable men betray their own perverseness; for they pervert, without any shame, all the testimonies in favor of Christ; and they think it enough to elude whatever presses hard on them.

We must now, then, understand that this passage cannot be explained of any but of Christ only. The design of the Holy Spirit we have already explained; God had from the beginning introduced this pledge whenever he intended to confirm faith in his promises; for without Christ God cannot be a Father and a Savior to men; nor could he have been reconciled to the Jews, because they had departed from him. How, indeed, could they have been received into favor without expiation? and how could they have hoped that God would become a Father to them, except they were reconciled to him? Hence without Christ they could not rely on the promises of salvation. Rightly, then, have I said, that this passage ought to be confined to the person of Christ.

And we know of a certainty that he alone was a righteous branch; for though Hezekiah and Josiah were lawful successors, yet when we think of others, we must say, that they were monsters. Doubtless, with the exception of three or four, they were all spurious and covenant-breakers; yea, I say, spurious, for they had nothing in common with David, whom they ought to have taken as an example of piety. Since, then, they were wholly unlike their father David, they could not have been called righteous branches. They were, indeed, perfidious and apostates, for they had departed from God and his law. We hence see that there is here an implied contrast between Christ and all those spurious children who yet had descended from David, though wholly unworthy of such an honor on account of their impiety. Therefore as these kings had roused God's wrath against the people, and had been the cause of their exile, the Prophet says now, that there would be at length a righteous branch; [78] that is, that though those did all they could to subvert God's covenant by their wicked deeds, there would come at length the true and the only Son, who is elsewhere called the first-born in the whole world, (Psalm 89:27,) and that he would be a righteous branch.

And this ought to be carefully noticed; for neither Hezekiah nor Josiah, nor any like them, when viewed in themselves, were worthy of this sacred distinction,

[78] The Sept. and Arab. give, "a righteous sun-rising — {ἀνατολὴν} {δίκαιαν};'' the Vulg., ``a righteous branch;'' the Syr., ``a ray of righteousness.'' The Vulg. is alone correct, as there can be no doubt as to the original words. --- Ed

``I will make him the first-born in the earth;'' and further,

``My Son art thou.'' (Psalm 2:7.)

This could not have been said of any mortal man, viewed in himself. And then it is said,

``I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son;''

and the Apostle tells us, that this cannot be applied even to angels. (Hebrews 1:5.) As, then, this dignity is higher than angels' glory, it is certain that none of David's successors were worthy of such an honor. Hence Christ is justly called a righteous Branch. At the same time, the Prophet, as I have already reminded you, seems to set the perfect integrity of Christ in opposition to the impiety of those who under a false pretense had exercised authority, as though they were of that sacred race of whom it had been said, ``I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son.''

It follows, --- And reign shall a king This also has not been added without reason, shortly after Jeconiah had been driven into exile, and also the whole royal family had been exposed to every kind of reproach. The crown, indeed, was cast on the ground, as it has already appeared, and was trodden under feet. There was, therefore, no hope of a future kingdom when the seed of Abraham had become, as it were, extinct. This is the reason why God promises what we now hear of the restoration of the throne; and we may easily infer from what all the prophets have said, that the salvation of the people was dependent on the person of their king; and whenever God bade the people to entertain hope, he set a king before their eyes. A king was to be their head under God's government. We now see the design of the Prophet in saying, that a king would reign

Some think that a king is to be understood as in opposition to a tyrant, because many kings had departed from their duty, and committed robbery under that specious authority. I have no doubt but that the word king was expressed, lest the people should doubt the fulfillment of this prophecy; for if it had been only said, ``I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign,'' they might, indeed, have entertained some hope, but it would have been small, and not full and complete. We, indeed, know that Zerubbabel and others excelled in some things, and were highly regarded for David's sake; but there was then no kingdom. God therefore intended here expressly to testify that there would be the high privilege of a kingdom, that there might be nothing wanting to the Jews, as the power of Christ would not be inferior to the power of David. Reign, then, shall a king; that is, he shall reign gloriously, so that there would not be merely some remnants of pristine dignity, but that a king would flourish, become strong, and attain perfection, such as it was under David and Solomon, and much more excellent. [79]

It follows, --- And shall act prudently, and shall do judgment and justice in the land; or, ``he shall prosper,'' for {שכל}, shecal, means both; yet the Prophet seems

[79] We cannot express the words in our language without changing the terms as follows, “And a ruler shall rule,” or, “a reigner shall reign.” Bochart says that this double use of the same word, as a substantive and a verb, imports in Hebrew what is enhancive, according to what Calvin says here. The king was to be a king indeed, with full power and dignity, and with a large extent of empire. The Welsh will express the words literally, — A breniniaetha brenin. And so it is rendered in Greek, — {Καὶ} {βασιλεύσει} {βασιλεὺς} --- Ed.

here to speak of right judgment rather than of success, for the two clauses ought to be read together, ``he shall act prudently,'' and ``he shall do judgment and justice.'' It seems then that he means this in short, --- that Christ would be endued with the spirit of wisdom as well as of uprightness and equity, so that he would possess all the qualifications, and fulfill all the duties of a good and perfect king. [80]

And in the first place, wisdom or prudence is necessary; for probity alone would not be sufficient in a king. In private individuals indeed it is of no small value; but probity in a king, without wisdom, will avail but little, hence, the Prophet here commends Christ for his good discernment, and then mentions his zeal for equity and justice. It is indeed true that Christ's excellences are not sufficiently set forth by expressions such as these; but the similitude is taken from men; for the first endowment of a king is wisdom, and then integrity in the second place. And we know that Christ is often compared to earthly kings, or set forth to us under the image of an earthly king, in which we may see him; for God accommodates himself to our ignorance. As, then, we cannot comprehend the unspeakable justice of Christ or his wisdom, hence God, that he may by degrees lead us to the knowledge of Christ, shadows him forth to us under these figures or types. Though, then, what is said here does not come up to the perfection of Christ, yet the comparison ought not to be deemed improper; for God speaks to us according to the measure of our capacities, and could not at once in a few words fully express what Christ is. But we must bear in mind that from earthly kings we must ascend to Christ; for though he is compared to them, yet there is no equality; after having contemplated in the type what our minds can comprehend, we ought to ascend farther and much higher.

Hence, the difference between the righteousness of Christ and the righteousness of kings ought to be here noticed. They who rule well can in no other way administer righteousness and judgment than by being careful to render to every one his own, and that by checking the audacity of the wicked, and by defending the good and the innocent; this only is what can be expected from earthly kings. But Christ is far different; for he is not only wise so as to know what is right and best, but he also endues his own people with wisdom and knowledge; he executes judgment and righteousness, not only because he defends the innocent, aids them who are oppressed, gives help to the miserable, and restrains the wicked; but he doeth righteousness, because he regenerates us by his Spirit, and he also doeth judgment, because he bridles, as it were, the devil. We now then understand the design of what I said, that we ought to mark the transcendency of Christ over earthly kings, and also the analogy; for there is some likeness and some difference: the difference between Christ and other kings is very great, and yet there is a likeness in some things; and earthly kings are set forth to us as figures and types of him.

It then follows, that Judah shall be saved in the days of this king. By days we are not to understand the life only of Christ, which he lived in this world, but that perpetuity of which Isaiah speaks, when in wonder he asks,

[80] The verb {{שכל first means to be wise or prudent, and in Hiphil, as here, to understand, to act wisely or prudently; and secondly, as the natural effect of wisdom, it means sometimes to prosper. But the first sense is given to it here by all the Versions: ``and shall understand,'' is the Septuagint; ``and shall be wise,'' the Vulgate; ``and shall act prudently,'' the Syriac. Our version is the Targum, Blayney gives the same idea with Calvin, ``and shall act wisely;'' which is no doubt the correct one. --- Ed

``His age who shall declare?'' (Isaiah 53:8;)

for he died once, that he might live to God, according to what Paul says. (Romans 6:10.) It was then but a short beginning of life when Christ was manifested in the world, and held converse with men; but his life is to continue for ever. It is then the same thing as though the Prophet had said, that when Christ came and descended from the Father, the Church would be saved.

If it be now asked, ``How long shall it be saved?'' the answer is, ``As long as the King himself shall continue; and there is no end to his kingdom.'' It follows then that the salvation of the Church will be for ever. This is the import of the whole.

Now, though the Prophet speaks of the deliverance of the people, there is yet no doubt but that he especially sets forth what properly belongs to the kingdom of Christ. He is set over us as a king, that he might be our Savior; and his salvation, though it extends to our bodies, ought yet to be viewed as properly belonging to our souls; for the kingdom of Christ is spiritual, and so is everything connected with it. Hence, when the Prophet says that saved would be Judah, it is the same thing as though he promised that the happiness of the Church would be real and solid under Christ.

He adds, Israel shall dwell in confidence; for in a happy life the first thing is, that we possess tranquil and quiet minds; for tranquillity has not been without reason commended by the ancients. When all things which men covet are heaped together, and what they think necessary for happiness, they yet cannot be otherwise than miserable if their minds are not in a right state. It is not then without cause that tranquillity is added, when mention is made of salvation. And experience itself teaches us, that we have no salvation, unless we, relying on Christ the Mediator, have peace with God, as Paul also mentions it as the fruit of faith, and shews that we cannot otherwise but be always miserable: we have peace, he says, with God. (Romans 5:1.) He hence also concludes that our very miseries are a help to our salvation; for afflictions prove patience, patience exercises hope, and hope never makes us ashamed; and the proof of this is added, because God thus really shews that he is present with us.

We hence see how fitly the Prophet connects tranquillity of mind with happiness. Moreover it is certain that we do not yet enjoy either salvation or peace, such as are here promised; but let us learn by faith what salvation is, and also what is rest even in the midst of the agitations to which we are continually exposed; for we recumb on God when we cast our anchor in heaven. Since, then, the Prophet says here that Judah would be saved and that Israel would be in a tranquil state, let us know that he includes the whole kingdom of Christ from the beginning to the end, and that therefore it is no wonder that he speaks of that perfect happiness, the first fruits of which now only appear.

He then adds, And this is the name by which they shall call him, Jehovah our Righteousness By these words the Prophet shews more clearly that he speaks not generally of David's posterity, however excellent they may have been, but of the Mediator, who had been promised, and on whom depended the salvation of the

people; for he says that this would be his name, Jehovah our Righteousness [81]

Those Jews, who seem more modest than others, and dare not, through a dogged pertinacity, to corrupt this passage, do yet elude the application of this title to Christ, though it be suitable to him; for they say that the name is given to him, because he is the minister of God's justice, as though it was said, that whenever this king appeared all would acknowledge God's justice as shining forth in him. And they adduce other similar passages, as when Moses calls the altar, ``Jehovah my banner,'' or my protection. (Exodus 17:15.) But there is no likeness whatever between an altar and Christ. For the same purpose they refer to another passage, where it is said,

``And this is the name by which they shall call Jerusalem,
Jehovah our peace.'' (Ezekiel 48:35)

Now Moses meant nothing else than that the altar was a monument of God's protection; and Ezekiel only teaches, that the Church would be as it were a mirror in which God's mercy would be seen, as it would shine forth then, as it were, visibly. But this cannot for the same reason be applied to Christ; he is set forth here as a Redeemer, and a name is given to him, --- what name? the name of God. But the Jews object and say, that he was God's minister, and that it might therefore be in a sense applied to him, though he was no more than a man.

But all who without strife and prejudice judge of things, can easily see that this name is suitably applied to Christ, as he is God; and the Son of David belongs to him as he is man. The Son of David and Jehovah is one and the same Redeemer. Why is he called the Son of David? even because it was necessary that he should be born of that family. Why then is he called Jehovah? we hence conclude that there is something in him more excellent than what is human; and he is called Jehovah, because he is the only-begotten Son of God, of one and the same essence, glory, eternity, and divinity with the Father.

It hence appears evident to all who judge impartially and considerately, that Christ is set forth here in his twofold character, so that the Prophet brings before us both the glory of his divinity and the reality of his humanity. And we know how necessary it was that Christ should come forth as God and man; for salvation cannot be expected in any other way than from God; and Christ must confer salvation on us, and not only be its minister. And then, as he is God, he justifies us, regenerates us, illuminates us into a hope of eternal life; to conquer sin and death is doubtless what only can be effected by divine power. Hence Christ, except he was God, could not have performed what we had to expect from him. It was also necessary that he should become man, that he might unite us to himself; for we have no access to God, except we become the friends of Christ; and how can we be so made, except by a brotherly union? It was not then without the strongest reason, that the Prophet here sets Christ before us both as a true man and the Son of David, and also as God or Jehovah, for he is the only-begotten Son of God, and ever the same in wisdom and glory with the Father, as John testifies in Jeremiah 17:5, 11.

We now then perceive the simple and real meaning of this passage, even that God would restore his Church, because what he had promised respecting a Redeemer

[81] See the Preface to this volume.

stood firm and inviolable. Then he adds what this Redeemer would be and what was to be expected from him; he declares that he would be the true God and yet the Son of David; and he also bids us to expect righteousness from him, and everything necessary to a full and perfect happiness.

But by saying, God our righteousness, the Prophet still more fully shews that righteousness is not in Christ as though it were only his own, but that we have it in common with him, for he has nothing separate from us. God, indeed, must ever be deemed just, though iniquity prevailed through the whole world; and men, were they all wicked, could do nothing to impugn or mar the righteousness of God. But yet God is not our righteousness as he is righteous in himself, or as having his own peculiar righteousness; and as he is our judge, his own righteousness is adverse to us. But Christ's righteousness is of another kind: it is ours, because Christ is righteous not for himself, but possesses a righteousness which he communicates to us. We hence see that the true character of Christ is here set forth, not that he would come to manifest divine justice, but to bring righteousness, which would avail to the salvation of men, For if we regard God in himself, as I have said, he is indeed righteous, but is not our righteousness. If, then, we desire to have God as our righteousness, we must seek Christ; for this cannot be found except in him. The righteousness of God has been set forth to us in Christ; and all who turn away from him, though they may take many circuitous courses, can yet never find the righteousness of God. Hence Paul says that he has been given or made to us righteousness, --- for what end? that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (1 Corinthians 1:30.) Since, then, Christ is made our righteousness, and we are counted the righteousness of God in him, we hence learn how properly and fitly it has been said that he would be Jehovah, not only that the power of his divinity might defend us, but also that we might become righteous in him, for he is not only righteous for himself, but he is our righteousness. [82]

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that we, having been all slaves to sin and to iniquity, but regenerated by the Spirit of thy only-begotten Son, may truly and with sincere desire seek to serve and worship thee alone, and so consecrate ourselves to thee, that it may appear that we do not falsely profess the name of Christ, but that we are truly his members, being partakers of that new life which he brought us; and may we make such progress in it, that, having finished our course on earth, we may at length come to that fullness of life and happiness which has been procured for us by him, and which is laid up in heaven for us. --- Amen.

Lecture Eighty-Sixth

Jeremiah 23:7-8

7. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that they shall no more say,

[82] "This king," says Venema, "is the true God, the meritorious cause and pledge of our righteousness, and also the efficient cause and exemplar of all holiness, piety, and virtue." He holds that Messiah alone is spoken of here, and blames Grotius for applying the passage in the first place to Zerubbabel, and maintains that what is said here cannot be applied to any but to the Messiah. He mentions, as a proof of this, his name — "a righteous Branch;" his royal dignity — "a king shall reign;" his title — "Jehovah our righteousness," his prosperity and the security of his kingdom. All these things comport with the character of no one, but with that of our Lord Jesus Christ. — Ed.

the LORD liveth, which brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt;

7. Propterea ecce dies veniunt, (venient,) dicit Jehova, quibus non dicetur (ad verbum, et non dicetur, --- non dicent) amplius, Vivit Jehova, qui eduxit filios Israel e terra Egypti;

8. But, the LORD liveth, which brought up and which led the seed of the house of Israel out of the north country, and from all countries whither I had driven them; and they shall dwell in their own land.

8. Quin potius, Vivit Jehova, qui eduxit et adduxit (ascendere fecit et introduxit, ad verbum) semen domus Israel e terra Aquilonis, et ex omnibus terris, ad quas expuleram eos illue; et habitabunt super terram suam. [83]

The Prophet, after having spoken of the Redeemer who was to be sent, now sets forth in high terms that great favor of God, and says that it would be so remarkable and glorious, that the former redemption would be nothing to the greatness and excellency of this. When the children of Israel were brought up out of Egypt, God, we know, testified his power by many miracles, in order that this favor towards his people might appear the more illustrious; and rightly did the Prophets exhort and encourage the faithful to entertain good hope by calling to their minds what was then done. But our Prophet enhances the second redemption by this comparison, that hereafter the kindness of God, with which he favored his people when he delivered them from the bondage of Egypt, would not be remembered, but that something more remarkable would be done, so that all would talk of it, and that all would proclaim the immense benefit, which God would confer on them in delivering them from their exile in Babylon. [84]

He then says that the days would come in which it would not be said, Live does Jehovah, who brought his people from Egypt, but who brought his people from the land of the North [85] Yet he does not mean that the memory of God's favor towards the Israelites, when he brought them from Egypt, was to be abolished; but he reasons here from the less to the greater, as though he had said that it was an evidence of God's favor that could not be sufficiently praised, when he delivered his people from the land of Egypt, that if it were taken by itself, it was worthy of being for ever remembered; but that when compared with the second deliverance it would appear almost as nothing. The meaning is, that the second redemption would be so much more remarkable than the first, that it would obscure the remembrance of it, though it would not obliterate it.

And this passage deserves to be especially noticed, for we hence learn how

[83] These two verses are omitted here in the Sept. and Arab., but are given at the end of the chapter. — Ed.

[84] It is a fact worthy of being observed, that what God effected in the course of his providence was more remarkable, and is represented as more astonishing, than what he did by means of many and wonderful miracles: the secret working of his providence on the minds of men is more wonderful and effects greater things than his power when put forth to reverse the course of nature. Though he performs no miracles now, yet he works in a way more wonderful than if he did. We cannot but see this if we notice the course of events with enlightened eyes. — Ed.

[85] The verse begins with {,{לכן rendered ``therefore,'' or, ``on this account,'' by the Vulg., the Syr., and by our own version; but, ``after this,'' by Blayney, and ``moreover,'' by Gataker. It might be rendered ``surely,'' or doubtless, as it is by Venema, --- Surely, behold the days are coming, saith Jehovah, When they shall no more say, Jehovah lives, etc. It is better to render the ,{ו} ``when,'' than ``that,'' as in our version. The Sept. and Vulg, render it ``and,'' which gives no meaning in either language. Calvin follows the Syr., and gives the sense, ``in which.'' --- Ed

much we ought to value that redemption which we have obtained through the only-begotten Son of God. And hence, also, it follows that we are more bound to God than the Fathers under the Law, as he has dealt far more bountifully with us, and has put forth his power more fully and effectually in our behalf. We further learn, that the Prophet does not in this prophecy include a few years only, but the whole kingdom of Christ and its whole progress. He indeed speaks of the return of the people to their own country, and this ought to be allowed, though Christians have been too rigid in this respect; for passing by the whole intermediate time between the return of the people and the coming of Christ, they have too violently turned the prophecies to spiritual redemption. There is no doubt but that the Prophet makes a beginning with the free return of the people from captivity; but, as I have said, Christ's redemption is not to be separated from this, otherwise the accomplishment of the promise would not appear to us, for a small portion only returned to their own land. We also know that they were harassed with many and continual troubles, so that their condition was always miserable, for nothing is worse than a state of disquietude. We know further, that they were spoiled, and that often, and were also reduced to a state of bondage. We know how cruelly they were treated at one time by the Egyptians, and at another by the kings of Syria. Then more was promised by Jeremiah than what God has really performed, except we include in this prophecy the kingdom of Christ. But as God so restored his Church by the hand of Cyrus, that it might be a kind of prelude to a future and perfect redemption, it is no wonder that the prophets, whenever they spoke of the people's return and of the end of their exile, should look forward to Christ and to his spiritual kingdom.

We now, then, see the design of the Prophet, when he says that the days would come in which their first redemption would not be spoken of by the people, as a remarkable or as the chief evidence of God's favor and power, as their second redemption would far exceed it.

As to the formula or manner of speaking, Live does Jehovah, we know that the ancients used such words in making a solemn oath, and whenever they sought to animate themselves with hope under adversities. Whenever, then, they found themselves so pressed down that they had no other escape from evil than through God's favor, they usually said that the God who had formerly been the Redeemer of his people still lived, and that there was no diminution of his power, so that he could ten times, or a hundred times, or a thousand times, if necessary, bring help to his Church and to every member of it.

He says, from all the lands to which I shall have driven them, and he says this for two reasons, which we shall presently state. The change of person does not obscure the meaning: Live, he says, does Jehovah, who brought out and led his people from the land of the north, and from all the lands to which I had driven them; but there is no ambiguity in the sense.

As to the subject itself, it seems that God in the first place intended to remind the Jews of their sins, as this knowledge was to be the way to repentance, or a preparation for it. For except they were convinced that they were chastised for their sins by God's hand, they would either have thought that their exile was by chance, or

have given way to murmuring complaints as they often did. But God here declares that he was the author of their exile, in order that the Jews might know that God justly punished them for their many and grievous sins. But God, in the second place, shews that it was in his power, whenever he pleased, to restore those whom he had afflicted. It was the same as to raise from death those whom he had slain, according to what is said elsewhere,

``God is he who kills, and who brings to life.''
(1 Samuel 2:6.)

Many indeed can destroy, but they cannot heal the wound which they may have made. But with regard to God, he is both a righteous Judge and a merciful Savior. As, then, death is in his power whenever he punishes men for their wickedness, so also he has life in his hand and at his bidding, whenever he intends to shew mercy. We now, then, perceive what the Prophet had in view in saying that the Jews had been driven away by God.

He afterwards adds, They shall dwell in their own land It was necessary that the Jews should have been sustained by this support until the coming of Christ, for they saw that they would be in that inheritance which had been promised to the fathers as a pledge of eternal life and of the heavenly kingdom. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 23:9

9. Mine heart within me is broken because of the prophets; all my bones shake; I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine hath overcome, because of the LORD, and because of the words of his holiness.

9. Propter prophetas (alii, ad prophetas, et potest legi ita ad verbum) contritum est (vel, confractum est) cor meum in medio mei; commota sunt (vel, concussa) omnia ossa mea (proprie, luxata sunt, quia de ossibus agitur; quantum ad verbum spectat, significat agitari, et moveri; sed quoniam nunc loquitur de ossibus, sermo erit aptior, luxata esse ossa;) fui tanquam vir ebrius super quem transiit vinum (hoc est tanquam vir obrutus vino) a facie Jehovae, et a facie sermonum sanctitatis ejus.

The Prophet here again inveighs against the wickedness of the people; but as the prophets by their flatteries had then led astray the king and his princes, as well as the people, the Prophet directed his discourse to them, and says that his heart was troubled on account of the prophets We know that men think themselves half absolved when no one severely reproves them. When, therefore, the prophets ceased from their work, there was so great a security among the whole people, that there was no fear of God in them. This is the reason why the Prophet now says that his heart was troubled on account of so much indifference; for the prophets were, as it is said elsewhere, like dumb dogs; they overlooked the most grievous and the most atrocious sins, they made no effort to restore the people to the right way. Troubled, then, he says, is my heart for the prophets; a heavier judgment awaited them, for they ought to have been the instruments of God's Spirit, the heralds of his judgments; they ought to have undertaken his cause by using exhortations, reproofs, and threatenings.

There is yet no doubt but that what is said ought to be extended to the whole body of the people. But Jeremiah wished to begin with the prophets, as though he had

said that it was monstrous that the prophets boasted that they were God's ministers, and yet were dumb in the midst of so much wickedness. On account of the prophets, [86] he says, broken is my heart Then he says that his bones were disjointed. In the first chapter of Genesis, when Moses speaks of the Spirit as moving on the waters, he uses the same verb, but in a different conjugation. However this may be, it is most suitable to say that his bones were disjointed. [87] And we know that the bones are tied together by sinews, that they may not be moved from their places; for the loosening of one bone renders the whole body almost useless. He meant, then, by this kind of speaking, to express the most painful perturbation of mind, as though he had said that what he had, as the firmost and strongest thing, was become weak and altogether feeble.

He afterwards compares himself to a drunken man; by which metaphor he understands that he was completely stunned, and that all his senses were taken from him. And he adds, over whom wine has passed The verb {עבר}, ober, means to pass beyond; but to pass over is its meaning here. He who is overcome by immoderate drinking seems as though he was drowned; for when one falls under the water, he is no more sunk than he who drowns his brain with wine; for drunkenness is like a grave, inasmuch as it holds the whole man under its power. Yet the Prophet meant no other thing than that this monstrous thing rendered those astonied who were of a sane and sound mind, and that it also shook and disjointed all the members, and terrified and confounded minds otherwise quiet and tranquil. For, certainly, Jeremiah was a wise man, and was also endued with courage, so that he would not have quailed under every evil though great; nor could he have been easily overwhelmed with stupor like a drunken man. Hence by these comparisons he shows how dreadful and monstrous it was, that the prophets were so unconcerned as not to say a word, when they saw that impiety and contempt of God were so rampant, when they saw the whole land defiled with every kind of wickedness, as we shall presently see.

Then he says, On account of Jehovah, and on account of the words of his holiness By saying, on account of Jehovah, he brings God before them as a judge and avenger; as though he had said, ``If they believe that there is a God in heaven, it is a wonder that they are so brutish as to dare to boast of his name, and yet silently to allow heaven and earth to be mingled together. Where, then, is their reason, when they dare so heedlessly to profess a name so fearful and awful? for whenever God's name is mentioned, there ought to come into their minds not only his goodness and mercy, but also his severity, and then his power, which is dreadful to all the wicked. As then these men dare thus to trifle with God, must not their stupidity be monstrous?'' What, then, the Prophet means is this, --- that it was a wonder that the prophets undertook their office, and yet had no concern for the glory of God.

[86] These words are connected with the former verse in the Sept. where they seem to have no meaning. The Vulg. puts them as a heading to what follows, and Blayney has done the same, "concerning the prophets." The Syr. connects them with the following words, as Calvin does, and our version, and also the Arab. and Targ. The most suitable rendering would be, — For the prophets broken is my heart within me. The sentence is otherwise hardly complete. It may be rendered "with regard to the prophets," etc. — Ed.

[87] The idea of shaking or trembling is commonly given here to the verb: "are shaken," Sept.; "have trembled," Vulg., Syr., and Targ. The word "tremble" is the most suitable. — Ed.

And he adds, On account of the words of his holiness Men would seek easiness were not God to rouse them by his word. But as the Law had been written for the Jews, as these false prophets knew that if they wished rightly to perform their work, they ought to have been the expounders of the Law --- as these things were sufficiently known, the Prophet justly refers here to the word of God, as though he would put a bridle in their mouths, lest they should, after their usual manner, evade what a bare profession of God's name implied. Since, then, God had testified in his Law how he would have his people ruled, how was it that these prophets were not terrified by God's words? And as hypocrites not only despise God himself, and depreciate his glory, but also disregard the doctrine of his law, the Prophet adorns God's words with a remarkable encomium, calling his words the words of his holiness And he thus calls God's words holy, and therefore inviolable, in order that the ungodly might know, that a dreadful vengeance was nigh them, because they disregarded both God and his holy words. It follows ---

Jeremiah 23:10

10. For the land is full of adulterers; for because of swearing the land mourneth; the pleasant places of the wilderness are dried up, and their course is evil, and their force is not right.

10. Quia adulteriis referta est terra, quia a facie jurisjurandi (vel, perfidae) luxit terra, aruerunt speciosa deserti (vel, caulae deserti; nam pluribus modis vertunt;) et fuit cursus eorum malus, et robur eorum non rectum.

Jeremiah now assigns the reason why he was so much horrified by the insensibility which he observed in the prophets. If things were in good order, or if, at least, they were tolerable, the prophets would have more calmly addressed the Jews; for what need is there to make a great ado when men willingly follow what God commands? When, therefore, we have to do with meek and modest men, vehemence is foolish; and they who thus bestir themselves, and seek, through great ambition, to shew very fervid zeal when there is no need, are nothing but apes; but when things are in disorder and confusion, then vehemence is wanted. Jeremiah now declares that things were so extremely out of order, that the prophets could not have been silent, except they were like logs of wood.

These two things, then, ought to be connected together, --- that the prophets were dumb, --- and that they were dumb when there was the greatest necessity for speaking; for they saw the land filled with adulteries. Though he names adulterers, he yet condemns the crime. As then the land was polluted by adulteries and perjuries, as they all gave themselves up to do evil, it was by no means to be tolerated that the prophets should not be indignant, as though things were well ordered and peaceable.

We hence see how much God abhors sloth in the ministers of his word, in those whom he appoints as teachers in his Church, while they connive at wickedness, and heedlessly pass by adulteries, and fornications, and perjuries, and frauds, and other kinds of wrongs; for if there were even the least particle of religion in their hearts, they would certainly have been moved, and could not have been for a moment silent. For if that zeal ought to be in all God's children, which was in the Psalmist,

``The zeal of thine house has consumed me, and the reproaches of them who reproached thee have fallen upon me,'' *
*(Psalm 69:10,)

how inexcusable must be the indifference of prophets, when they see God's name exposed to mockery, and when they see every kind of wickedness prevailing? We now see not only what the Prophet teaches in this passage, but also the usefulness of his doctrine and how it ought to be applied. Let us then learn, that the more liberty men take in sinning, and the more audaciously their impiety and contempt of God break out, the more sharply ought prophets and faithful teachers to reprove and condemn them; and that it is the time of fighting, when the world thus presumptuously and furiously rise up against God.

The Prophet mentions some kinds of evil, and yet does not enumerate all kinds; but under adulteries and perjuries he includes also other crimes. As to the word {אלה}, ale, it properly means swearing; but as cursing often accompanies it, some render it here ``execration.'' [88] But I rather think that what is meant is perjury, and that swearing here is taken in a bad sense, signifying swearing falsely in the name of God.

Mourned, he says, has the land, and dried up have the pastures of the desert Here the Prophet strikingly shews how shameful was that torpor of which he speaks, for the land itself cried out, and not only the land which was cultivated and had on it many men, but also the very mountains and their recesses. He says that the land was in mourning, because God shewed his judgments everywhere by rendering the fields barren, and by other means which he used as punishments. And it is a very striking mode of speaking, when the Prophet mentions the mourning of the land, as though it assumed the character of a mourner, when it saw God angry on account of the wickedness of men. It is, indeed, a kind of personification, though he does not introduce the land as speaking; but he describes mourning as it appeared in the sterility of the land, and also in hails and storms, in unseasonable rains, in droughts, and in other calamities.

Whenever then God raises his hand to punish men for their sins, if they themselves perceive it not, the very land, which is without sense and feeling, ought to fill them with shame for their madness; for mourning appears in the very land, as though it knew that God was displeased with it. When, therefore, men sleep in their

[88] The early Versions and the Targum differ as to this word: the Sept., the Syr., and the Arab. have "on account of these," that is, adulterers; the Vulg.," on account of a curse," that is of God; the Targ., "on account of false swearing." Blayney says, that there is nothing here about swearing, and renders the words "because of these:" but the 14th verse (Jeremiah 23:14) decides the question, where we have "adultery" and "walking in lies," ascribed to the same persons, the prophets. That, {{אלה means sometimes ``false swearing,'' is evident from Hosea 4:2; and in Hosea 10:4, we have the word ``falsely'' added to it. Their false swearing was their unfaithfulness to God's covenant, their apostasy in worshipping idols. And the charge of being ``adulterers'' seems to refer to their spiritual adultery --- their idolatry, and not as Calvin and others think, to that which is natural. Everything in the context favors this view; their wickedness was found in God's house, verse 11 (Jeremiah 23:11); and a comparison is made between them and the Samaritan prophets, verse 14 (Jeremiah 23:14). The construction of this verse leads us to the same conclusion: when two {כי} occur in succession, as here, they may be rendered as and so, --- As the land has been filled with adulterers, So for false swearing has the land mourned, Withered have the pastures of the wilderness; And their course has become calamitous, And their strength not firm, (that is, to run their course.) Houbigant and Horsley have re-arranged the whole verse, and made several transpositions. Had these learned men for a moment reflected how such delocations of words, as they suppose, could have taken place, they would have, no doubt, restrained their innovating propensities. --- Ed.

sins, and thus disregard God's vengeance, how monstrous must be their torpor! And if this be intolerable in the common people, what can be said of the prophets, who ought to proclaim such words as these, --- ``Cursed is he who has transgressed the precepts of this law'' --- ``cursed is he who has corrupted the worship of God'' --- or, ``who hath dealt unjustly with his neighbor,'' --- and whatever else the law contains? (Deuteronomy 27:26; Deuteronomy 28:47, 58.) We now then perceive how emphatical are the words when the Prophet says, Mourned has the land And he amplifies the same thing by saying, Dried up have the beautiful places of the desert; as though he had said, that God's judgments were seen in the remotest places, not only in the plains, where the greater number of men dwelt, did the land mourn; but if any one ascended the mountains, where shepherds only with their flocks were to be found, even there the wrath of God was visible; and the very mountains cried out that God was angry; and yet men still deluded themselves, who, at the same time were expounders of the law, who were the mouth of God, and to whom he had committed the office of reproving; but they were dumb! We now understand what these words contain, and what is to be learnt from them.

He adds, that their course was evil, [89] and that their strength was not right By course he no doubt means their doings and all their actions, and also the aid which they proposed to themselves; for our life is called a course, because God has not created us that we may lie down in one place, but he has set before us an end for which we are to live. Therefore, by course, the Scripture means all our doings, and the very end for which we are to live. He then says, that all their strength had been perverted; that is, that they had applied all their powers to do evil. It then hence appears that, except the prophets had been perfidious, they would have thought it full time to cry out, when men provoked God with so much audacity in their wicked courses. It follows ---

Jeremiah 23:11

11. For both prophet and priest are profane; yea, in my house have I found their wickedness, saith the LORD.

11. Quia tam propheta quam sacerdos impia egerunt; etiam in domo mea deprehendi (vel, reperi) malitiam ipsorum, dicit Jehova.

He adds here that it ought not to appear strange that the prophets were silent when they ought to have loudly cried out, because they were guilty themselves: and whence can freedom of speech come except from a good conscience? Hypocrites, who indulge themselves, are indeed often severe against others, and even more than necessary; but no one can dare honestly to cry out against wickedness, but he who is innocent. For he who condemns others seems to make a law for himself, according to what a heathen writer has said, (Cicero in Salustium.) Then the Prophet here shews to us why the prophets were not only idle, but were even like stocks and stones; for in speaking against wickedness, it was necessary for them in the first place to amend themselves; for their lives were wholly dissolute. As then they

[89] That the word means "course," is evident from Jeremiah 8:6, where it can have no other meaning. So it is rendered by the Sept. and the Vulg. Blayney gives it another meaning. Their will also hath been wickedness, And their might without right. He derives it from {רצה,} to choose, and not from {רוץ,} run: but the sense of the last line is hardly discernible. --- Ed

were of all the most wicked, they could not boldly cry out against others; and hence the Prophet condemns them, because their own impiety prevented them to perform their own duty.

It is, indeed, possible for one to live soberly, honestly, and justly, and yet to connive at the wickedness of others; but the Prophet here condemns the prophets and priests on two accounts, --- for being mute, and for not undertaking God's cause when they saw the land polluted with all kinds of defilements; and he then shews the fountain of this evil, that is, the cause why they were idle and wholly indifferent, and that was, because they dared not say a word against those crimes of which they were themselves guilty, yea, with which they were more loaded than even the common people. We now perceive the Prophet's object in saying that both the priests and the prophets had acted impiously; [90] it was to shew, that their contempt of God, for which they were notorious, and also their wickedness, had taken away from them all power and freedom in acting.

It is added, Even in my house have I found their wickedness He enhances what he had said of their impiety; for they were not only infamous and wicked in common life, as to the duties of the Second Table; but they also corrupted the whole service of God, and the true Prophets were derided by them. For what was found to be the priests' wickedness in the Temple, except that they practiced a sort of merchandise under the cover of the priesthood? and then the prophets vitiated and adulterated God's worship; and what was religion to them but the means of filthy lucre or gain? When, therefore, the prophets thus trod under foot the service of God, corrupted and perverted the Law to make gain or to acquire power, their impiety was not only seen in the habits of daily life, but also in the very Temple of God, that is, with regard to the sacerdotal office.

Now, since this is true as to what took place under the Law, there is no wonder that such a base example is to be seen in the present day. And hence also is discovered the folly of the Papists, who think that they ingeniously evade every objection as to the crimes of the Pope and his filthy clergy, by saying that the Pope indeed may be wicked, as almost all of them have been, and that the same thing may be said of their mitred bishops; but that the Pope, as a Pope, cannot err, and that the bishops, as bishops, that is, in their government and office, are ruled by the Holy Spirit, because they represent the Church. But are they better than these ancient priests, whom God himself had expressly appointed, and to whom he commanded obedience to be rendered by the whole people? But the Prophet not only says here that they were wicked, that they acted impiously and wickedly towards their neighbors, that they committed plunders and robberies, that they were given to violence and rapacity,

[90] This verb is used three times in Jeremiah 3:1, 2, and 9, and in every instance in the sense of defiling the land with adultery, and in the two last verses, with spiritual adultery — idolatry. It is rendered here passively by the Sept. and the Vulg., “have become defiled;” but it is most commonly used in a transitive sense; and so Jun. and Trem. render it here, and consider it, the land, as understood after it; and this is most consistent with the context, — For both prophet and priest have defiled it: Also in my house have I found Their wickedness, saith Jehovah. The “house” of God is here put in contrast with the land or the country; and in Jeremiah 23:15, it is expressly said that from Jerusalem pollution had gone forth throughout all the land. Idolatry is evidently what is meant throughout this passage, from verse 9 to 15 (Jeremiah 23:9-15). Calvin as to this verb has followed the Syriac version. — Ed.

that they abandoned themselves to adultery and to every other crime; but he says also, that their wickedness was found in the very Temple, that is, in the very sacred office itself; for not only was their life wicked, but they also impiously and perfidiously corrupted the doctrine of God and subverted his worship.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast been pleased to set before us an example of every perfection in thine only-begotten Son, we may study to form ourselves in imitation of him, and so to follow not only what he has prescribed, but also what he really performed, that we may prove ourselves to be really his members, and thus confirm our adoption; and may we so proceed in the whole course of our life, that we may at length be gathered into that blessed rest which the same, thine only-begotten Son, hath obtained for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture Eighty-Seventh

Jeremiah 23:12

12. Wherefore their way shall be unto them as slippery ways in the darkness: they shall be driven on, and fall therein: for I will bring evil upon them, even the year of their visitation, saith the LORD.

12. Propterea erit via eorum ipsis tanquam lubricitates, in caligine impingent, et cadent in ea; quia inducam super eos malum, annum visitationis eorum, dicit Jehova.

Here he declares to false prophets and unfaithful priests that the Lord's judgment was nigh at hand, because they had deceived the people. But he speaks figuratively when he says, that their way would be to them as lubricities. By way he understands the means which they thought to be of the best kind, as elsewhere, nearly in the same sense, what is deemed delectable, or what conduces to sustain life, is called ``the table'' of the wicked. (Psalm 69:22.) The meaning then is, that when they thought all things prosperous, as if one made his way through a plain, they would find themselves on a slippery ground. Their way, then, would be to them as lubricities, [91] that is, when they seemed to take a safe counsel and so prudently to set all things in order, as that nothing could happen amiss to them, their way would become slippery, and that in darkness. He doubles the evil; for one may stand on a slippery ground, and yet may take care of himself on seeing danger; but when darkness is added to the slippery ground, he who can neither stand nor move can hardly do otherwise than fall, either on this or that side: hence he says, they shall stumble and fall in it

The reason follows, even because the Lord was displeased with them. They could not then escape ruin, for they had to do with God. But as the ungodly derive false confidence from God's forbearance, so that they dare to glory in their wickedness, he adds, the year of their visitation Though, then, God would not immediately put forth

[91] Such is the word literally; but there is here an ellipsis, not uncommon in Hebrew; the word way is left out before “lubricities” or slipperinesses. The word being plural, and a reduplicate, expresses what is extreme — “most slippery,” or, wholly slippery, — 12. Therefore their way shall be to them, As a way wholly slippery in thick darkness; They shall drive on and fall in it; For I will bring on them an evil — The year of their visitation, saith Jehovah. It is not darkness, but thick darkness is what the word means; and it is connected with the previous words by the Targ. and by all the versions, except the Syr.; which Blayney has thus followed, — Into darkness shall they be thrust and shall fall therein. But this spoils the whole force of the passage: their way was to be altogether slippery, and also in thick darkness; along which they would be hurried on, or slide, or drive on, and the inevitable effect would be falling. — Ed.

his hand to punish them, yet their time was to come; for the year of visitation means the suitable time which God has determined within himself. He indeed defers punishment; but when hypocrites and his despisers have long abused his forbearance, he then suddenly begins to thunder against them; and this is the year of visitation. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 23:13-14

13. And I have seen folly in the prophets of Samaria; they prophesied in Baal, and caused my people Israel to err.

13. In prophetis (Et in prophetis) Samariae vidi fatuitatem (vel, insulsum, aut, insulsitatem;) prophetant in Baal, et errare faciunt (vel, decipiunt) populum meum Israel.

14. I have seen also in the prophets of Jerusalem an horrible thing: they commit adultery, and walk in lies: they strengthen also the hands of evildoers, that none doth return from his wickedness: they are all of them unto me as Sodom, and the inhabitants thereof as Gomorrah.

14. Et in prophetis Jerusalem vidi pravitatem, adulterando et ambulando in fallacia; et roborant manus improborum, ut non revertantur quisque a malitia sua; erunt mihi onmes tanquam Sodoma, et habitatores ejus tanquam Gomorrha.

These two verses are to be read together; for there is no doubt but that the Prophet here compares the false prophets, who had corrupted God's worship in the kingdom of Israel, with those in Jerusalem who wished to appear more holy and more perfect. And he thus compares them that he might set forth those who sought to be deemed God's faithful ministers, as being by far the worst; for he says, that he had found fatuity in the prophets of Samaria, but depravity in the prophets of Jerusalem. They are, therefore, mistaken in my judgment who take also, {תפלה}, tephle, as meaning depravity; for they do not consider that he here enhances by comparison their wickedness who thought themselves the best, as they say, without exception.

As to the prophets of Samaria, they had been long ago condemned; nor was there any at Jerusalem who dared openly to defend them; for they had departed from the worship of God, and had led away the people from the only true Temple and altar. They were then held at that time in the kingdom of Judah as apostates, perfidious, and unprincipled. But the kingdom of Judah still wished to be deemed pure and blameless; and the prophets, who were there, boasted that they were uncorrupt and free from every spot. The Prophet therefore says, that fatuity had been found in the prophets of Samaria, that is, in those who had corrupted the ten tribes, and vitiated there the pure worship of God; but that there was more wickedness in the prophets of Jerusalem and of the kingdom of Judah, because they were not only foolish, but also designedly subverted all religion, and allowed liberty in all kinds of wickedness, so that they carried as it were a banner in approbation of every species of iniquity. We hence see that the object of Jeremiah was to shew, that the prophets of the kingdom of Judah surpassed in impiety those very prophets whom they proudly condemned; for they were not only fatuitous and foolish, but had designedly as it were conspired against God, and had become open enemies not only to religion but to all laws.

As to the words, that he found fatuity [92] in the prophets of Samaria, he speaks in the person of God, who is the only fit judge. And he subjoins the cause of their senselessness, because they prophesied by Baal, and made the people of Israel to go astray Had Jeremiah spoken only of these, he would no doubt have used stronger terms in describing their sin; but as he was contrasting them with those who were worse, he was satisfied with the word fatuity; as though he had said, ``Were any one to consider them by themselves, they were indeed very wicked, and deserved the most severe punishment; but if they be compared with the prophets of Judah, then they must be deemed only fatuitous and sottish.'' Then the copulative is to be rendered thus, ``I have, indeed, seen fatuity in the prophets of Samaria;'' and then differently in the following clause, ``but in the prophets of Judah I have seen depravity.'' It is to be read adversatively in this verse, and concessively in the former. Then in the prophets of Jerusalem have I seen depravity [93]

It follows, They commit adultery, and walk in deception Expositors think that there is a change of number; but what if these words be applied to the people? as though Jeremiah had said, ``When any one is an adulterer, when any one walks in deception, that is, when any one is fraudulent, they strengthen, the hands of the wicked.'' And, doubtless, this sense seems here to be the most correct. Then Jeremiah shews how they surpassed other prophets in impiety, even because they dissimulated when they saw on one hand adulteries prevailing, and on the other frauds, plunders, and perjuries; and not only so, but they undertook the patronizing of the wicked, and strengthened the hands of the ungodly, and added audacity to their madness. For as fear weakens the hands, so does shame; as, then, these prophets removed shame as well as fear from the wicked and ungodly, so they strengthened their hands; that is, they gave them more confidence, so that they rushed headlong into every evil

[92] Rendered “iniquities” by the Sept.; “fatuity” by the Vulg.; “falsehood” by the Syr.; and “impiety by the Targ. Blayney has, “that which was disgusting.” The word, as here, is found only in two other places, Job 1:22; Job 24:12. It means, not what is “disgusting,” but what is crude, insipid, untempered, and hence figuratively, what is unreasonable, absurd, fatuitous, foolish. It is rendered “folly” in Job. The Vulg., which is followed by Calvin, gives its best meaning here — “fatuity.” To prophesy by Baal was the effect of infatuation: it was an absurd and fatuitous thing. This was the character of the thing in itself; and the evil which this fatuity produced was to lead the people astray. — Ed.

[93] Or “wickedness — pravitatem,” rendered “horrible things” by the Sept., and “folly” by the Syr. The Vulg. and the Targ. go altogether astray. The word means properly horridness, hideousness, or a horrid thing, and may be rendered enormity. The difference found in the Targ. and the Versions, as to the word and the manner of rendering the words which follow, seems to shew that the passage was not understood. I offer the following version, — 14. But among the prophets of Jerusalem Have I seen a horrid thing — The committing of adultery and walking in falsehood; And they have strengthened the hand of the wicked, That they might not turn, each from his wickedness: They are all of them become to me like Sodom, And its inhabitants like those of Gomorrah. The verb I render “the committing of adultery,” is an infinitive without a preposition; it cannot be otherwise rendered in our language, but in Welsh it can be rendered literally, as an infinitive without a preposition, though commonly in that language, as in Hebrew, the infinitive mood has a preposition before it. The “horrid thing” was adultery, that is, idolatry, combined with “walking in falsehood,” that is, with a false profession of prophesying in God’s name, which is afterwards more distinctly specified. Here was the difference between the prophets: those of Samaria were idolaters, and consistently they prophesied in the name of Baal; but the prophets of Jerusalem were not only idolaters, but added to this sin the enormity of defending all they did by alleging that they were the Lord’s prophets. This was the horrid thing. It is a great sin to advocate error, but to do this in the name of the Lord, or by perverting his word, is a horrid thing. The last line presents an instance of that ellipsis mentioned in a Note on the 12th verse. The word “inhabitants” is to be understood before Gomorrah. — Ed.

more freely and with greater liberty.

That they might not return, he says, every one from his wickedness This is added for the sake of explanation; for, as I have said, either the fear of God or shame from men might have checked their audacity; but when they were confirmed and countenanced, they broke out into all excesses, and hardened themselves in their obstinacy: That they might not return, every one from his wickedness.

In the last place he adds, They shall be to me all of them as Sodom, and its inhabitants as Gomorrah We see that the last clause is confined to the citizens of Jerusalem. Then God says, that these prophets would be like the Sodomites, and the citizens of Jerusalem like the citizens of Gomorrah. This is not to be understood only as to crimes, but also as to punishment; as though he had said, that there was no more hope of pardon for them than for the Sodomites, for they had provoked to the utmost the wrath of God, so that he could not now spare them. It then follows, ---

Jeremiah 23:15

15. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the prophets; Behold, I will feed them with wormwood, and them drink the water of gall: for from the prophets of Jerusalem is profaneness gone forth into all the land.

15. Propterea sic dicit Jehova exercituum super (vel, ad) prophetas istos, Ecce ego cibabo eos amaritudine (aut, veneno; alii vertunt, absynthio, ,{הנעל} sed nomen absynthii non videtur quadrare; ubicumque enim ponitur hoec vox, significat amaritudinem noxiam et virulentem et mortiferam,) et potabo eos aquis veneni (alii vertunt, fellis; diximus alibide hac voce, (,{שאר} quoniam a prophetis Jerusalem egressa est impietas in totam terram.

This verse is addressed to the prophets of the kingdom of Judah, as we learn from its conclusion; and thus the exposition which I have given is confirmed, even this, that God extenuates the fault of other prophets, in speaking of the prophets of Jerusalem, who boasted of greater sanctity. But he declares that they would have poison for meat and gall for drink; as though he had said, ``I will pursue them with every kind of punishment.'' He expresses evidently the same thing I have before referred to, that their table would become a snare to them. (Psalm 69:22.) The ungodly, indeed, always think that they can by their arts escape; God on the other hand declares, that though they might have a table prepared, they yet would find nothing on it, but poison for meat, and gall for drink. For as to God's children and faithful servants, evils are turned to their benefit; so as to the ungodly and his wicked despisers, all things must necessarily turn out for their ruin, even meat and drink, and their course of life, and in a word everything.

The cause follows, For gone forth is impiety [94] through the whole land from the prophets of Jerusalem By which words he declares that they were the authors of all evils, so that in comparison with them the prophets of Samaria might have been deemed in a manner righteous. But there is no doubt but that this declaration was

[94] This is the Syr., but it is not the meaning; it is properly rendered "pollution," or defilement, by the Sept., the Vulg., and Arab., but improperly flattery, by the Targ. The verb from which it comes is commonly rendered to defile; see Isaiah 24:5; Micah 4:11. The "profaneness" of our version, and "the perverseness" of Blayney, seem incorrect; the word is used in neither sense. The pollution here was by idolatry — the adultery beforementioned. This pollution had spread from Jerusalem through the whole land. — Ed.

considered too severe; yet we see by what necessity Jeremiah was constrained thus to speak; for the lamp of God as yet remained at Jerusalem, according to what is said in many passages, nor was the light of sound doctrine wholly put out. They professed that they continued to obey the Law; and at the same time they were much worse than others, for not only the worship of God in the Temple and in the city was corrupted, but adulteries, frauds, plunders, and all kinds of wickedness prevailed everywhere. He adds ---

Jeremiah 23:16

16. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD.

16. Sic dicit Jehovah exercituum, Ne audiatis verba prophetarum, qui prophetant vobis; evanescere faciunt ipsi vobis, visionem cordis sui loquuntur, non ex ore Jehovae.

What is here said must have appeared very severe, and must have grievously offended the people; for Jeremiah forbade them to hear the teaching of the prophets. He indeed concedes to them the name of prophets, which was a sacred name; but yet he discredits them, and deprives them of all dignity. he speaks not of magicians or impostors, who were aliens to God's people; he speaks not of Egyptians, or Chaldeans, or any like them, nor does he speak of the prophets of Samaria, but of those who daily appeared in the Temple and boasted that they were divinely chosen, endued with the spirit of revelation, and that they brought nothing but what God had committed to them. As then Jeremiah forbade them to hear these, some great perplexity must have necessarily seized the minds of all, especially of the simple, --- ``What does this mean? why does God suffer these unprincipled men to occupy a place in the Temple, and to exercise there the prophetic office, while at the same time they are cheats, perjurers, and impostors?''

In the same manner we see that many at this day are perplexed on account of the discords by which the Church is harassed, and as it were torn to pieces. We are constrained to contend with those who arrogate to themselves the name of the Catholic Church, who boast that they are bishops, vicars of Christ, successors of the Apostles. When therefore the ignorant see such hostile conflicts in the very bosom of the Church, they must necessarily be terrified, and such stumbling-block shakes dreadfully their faith. Hence this passage ought to be especially noticed; for though at first ignorant people may be disturbed by such a prohibition as this, yet every one who really fears God will exercise his mind, so that he may distinguish between false and true prophets; and God will never leave his chosen people destitute of the spirit of judgment and discernment, when teachers contend on both sides, and tumults nearly overthrow the Church; even then, as I have said, God will preserve his own elect, provided we piously and humbly strive to submit to his word; he will also guide us by his hand, so that we may not be deceived. Since then God had commanded Jeremiah to forbid the people to hear the false prophets, let us not at this day wonder, that faithful teachers who desire to maintain true doctrine and genuine piety, feel themselves constrained to oppose these men of titles who shelter themselves under

the masked names of pastors, and prelates, and bishops, that they may delude the unwary and the ignorant; Hear not, he says, the words of the prophets who prophesy to you

He adds, They make you to be vain; that is, they infatuate you. [95] But this would not have been sufficient, had he not added what more fully confirmed it. Hence Jeremiah says, that they brought forward the vision of their own hearts, and did not speak what came from God's mouth. This is a mark which can never deceive us, except we willingly throw ourselves into the snares and intrigues of Satan, as many do who wilfully seek to be deceived, and even hunt for falsehoods; but whosoever applies his mind to the study of truth, can never be deceived, if by this mark, which is set before us, he distinguishes between prophets and prophets; for every one who speaks according to the mere suggestions of his own mind must be an impostor. No one then ought to be deemed a sound teacher, but he who speaks from God's mouth.

But here a question may be raised, How can the common people understand that some speak from God's mouth, and that others propound their own glosses? I answer, That the doctrine of the Law was then sufficient to guide the minds of the people, provided they closed not their eyes; and if the Law was sufficient at that time, God does now most surely give us a clearer light by his prophets, and especially by his Gospel. Since then God has once given us his testimony, every one ought to obey him as soon as he knows what is right, what he ought to follow, and what he ought to shun.

We now then see how useful this passage is; for there is nothing more miserable than for men to be tossed here and there, and to be led astray from the way of salvation. There is therefore nothing more desirable than to know this way with certainty, Now, God shews us the way here as by the finger; for he says that those who speak from his mouth can be heard with safety; but that others are to be rejected, how much soever they may boast of being prophets, and thus seek under the guise of authority to subject men's minds captive to themselves. And this ought to suffice at this day to put an end to all controversies; for on this no doubt depends almost every question that is now agitated in the world. The Papists will have their own devices to be taken as oracles, and claim to be the Church; but we, on the other hand, say that perfect wisdom is alone to be found in the Law, in the Prophets, and in the Gospel. Were we then to attend to the mouth of God, it would be easy to settle all the disputes between us. It hence also follows, that the Papists are deceived because they deign not to ask at God's mouth, but choose to become slaves to men and to their own falsehoods, rather than to inquire what pleases God; for he himself has spoken,

[95] The Sept. gives this version, "for they make a vain vision for themselves; from their heart they speak, and not from the mouth of the Lord." Though the sense is given, yet it is not a correct version. The Vulg. and Syr. keep nearer to the original, and render the first clause "and they deceive you." The words literally are, "Infatuating you are they." The whole verse is as follows, — 16. Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Hearken not to the words of the prophets, Who prophesy unto you; Infatuating you are they; The vision of their own heart do they speak, And not from the mouth of Jehovah. The "And" in the last line is supplied in several copies, is given by the Sept. and the Syr. To render "from," as Blayney does, "after the mouth," etc., is no improvement. To speak "from the mouth of the Lord" is very striking. All the Versions retain the preposition "from," and the Targ. gives "word" for "mouth." — Ed.

and has not spoken hiddenly, neither doubtfully nor obscurely; for there is nothing more clear than his teaching, provided men do not become wilfully blind. He then adds, ---

Jeremiah 23:17-18

17. They say still unto them that despise me, The LORD hath said, Ye shall have peace; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.

17. Dicentes dicendo iis qui me contemnunt, Loquutus est Jehova, Pax erit vobis, et omnibus qui ambulant (cunctis ambulantibus; est quidem singularis numerus, ad verbum, cuique ambulanti) in pravitate cordis sui, dicunt, Non veniet super vos malum.

18. For who hath stood in the counsel of the LORD, and hath perceived and heard his word? who hath marked his word, and heard it?

18. Nam quis stetit in consilio Jehovae? et vidit et audivit sermonem ejus? Quis attendit ad sermonem ejus et audivit?

Jeremiah introduces another mark by which the false prophets might be known as different from the true prophets, --- they flattered the ungodly and wicked despisers of God. He thus repeats what he had before said, that they strengthened the hands of the wicked, so that they became hardened in their impiety, and threw aside every care for repentance. Though he uses different words, yet the meaning is the same, that they promised peace, or prosperity, to the despisers of God, for the word {שלום}, shalum, means to live well or happily.

They say, then, to those who despise or reject me; for {נאץ}, nats, means both. The doubling of the word for ``saying,'' is also emphatical, {אמור} {אמרים}, amrim amur: [96] for we know with how much haughtiness and confidence the false prophets dared to announce their dreams; for they were led by the spirit of pride, as they were the children of Satan. Hence then was their confidence, so that they made their declarations as though they had come down from heaven. They say, then, by saying; that is, they promise, and that with great effrontery, that peace would be to all the despisers of God; and not only so, but they pretended God's name, Spoken, has Jehovah [97] They wished to be deemed the instruments or agents of the Holy Spirit, while they were vainly announcing, as it has been said, their own imaginations. And hence Jeremiah applied to them, though improperly, the word vision, They speak the vision of their own heart By using this word he makes a concession; for he might have said only, that they adduced nothing but trifles, even the falsehoods which

[96] Some, as Venema and Blayney, think that {אמרים} belongs to the preceding verse; but this would not consist with the Hebrew idiom, where a participle often precedes a verb in the future tense, but never follows it; nor is this countenanced by any of the Versions or the Targ. The words as they stand are indeed unusual; the probability is that {אמור} should be ,{אמרו} and all the Versions give it as such, ``they say.'' Then it would be, ``Saying they say;'' which imports the boldness and the confidence of the false prophets; that is, ``They boldly say.'' --- Ed

[97] There is a difference in the early versions as to this clause; it is connected in the Sept. and Arab. with the preceding, “They say to those who reject the word of the Lord,” etc., and Blayney has followed this arrangement. The Vulg., the Syr., and the Targ., take it as a separate clause, and render it as here. The Hebrew no doubt admits of either constructions, but the Lord appears to be the speaker, and therefore the latter construction ought to have the preference, — 17. They boldly say to those who despise me, Spoken hath Jehovah, “Peace shall be to you;” And to every one who walks in the resolutions of his own heart, They say, “Not come upon you shall evil.” This rendering also corresponds more with what is said in Jeremiah 23:25, that the prophets prophesied lies in God’s name. — Ed.

they themselves had devised, but he mentions the word {חזון}, chezun, which in itself ought to be deemed of high import. And yet he means that they were only apes as prophets, when they prattled of visions and confidently declared that they brought forward the revelations of the Spirit. He then concedes to them, though improperly, that they saw visions; but what did they see? even that Jehovah had spoken, Peace shall be to you

Then he says, They promise to those who walk in the wickedness of their own heart, that all things shall turn out well to them, No evil shall come upon you; as though he had said, ``They promise impunity to all the wicked.''

The verse which follows is usually thus explained, Jeremiah condemns the false teachers for their carelessness, because they attended not to the word of God, and regarded as nothing what the Law contained. But interpreters seem to me to have been certainly much mistaken in this view; for Jeremiah here shews throughout, he passage how insolently and arrogantly the false teachers conducted themselves in audaciously opposing the true and faithful servants of God, Who has stood in the counsel of Jehovah? They no doubt spoke thus tauntingly of the true prophets, ``What! These announce to you pestilence, war, famine, as though they were angels sent by God from heaven; have they stood in the counsel of God?'' Thus I connect this verse with the former, for I am fully persuaded that he refers here to the arrogance which the false teachers manifested towards the true teachers. [98]

Examples of this in our time give a plain exposition to this passage. For when the Papists feel themselves driven to an extremity, when they prevail nothing by clamor and falsehood, they run to this sort of evasion, ``He! if we must determine everything in religion by the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel, what certainty can be found? The Scripture is like a nose of wax, for it can be turned to anything, and no meaning can with certainty be elicited; thus all things will remain perplexed and doubtful, if authority belongs to the Scripture alone.'' We then see that the enemies of truth at this day, when they cannot otherwise cover their filthiness, labor to throw all things into confusion, and to discredit God's word, and to introduce such darkness, that white cannot be distinguished from black, that light becomes mixed with darkness.

Similar to this was the perverse wickedness of the false teachers. For Jeremiah and his associates, when they came forth, declared that God's vengeance could no longer be deferred, for the people continued to provoke it; and they announced themselves as the heralds of God and witnesses to his hidden purpose; but these

[98] What seems to militate against this view is the fact, that these false prophets themselves pretended to a divine revelation; they announced their message as coming from God. Hence these questions seem to deny their pretensions. He seems to say, "Who of you have been in the council of Jehovah?" The tautology may be avoided without having recourse to the emendations which Blayney proposes, — But who (of you) has stood in the secret council of Jehovah? And saw and understood his business? Who has listened to his word and heard it? We know that {דבר} means not only a word, but also a thing, affair, business, matter, any thing represented or imagined. The verb to ``see,'' which implies a vision, proves that it means the latter here. Then in the last line it means a message, because it was what was listened to and heard. But the verb ,{שמע} in the first clause, comports with seeing, and understanding is what it sometimes signifies; and in the last clause it comports with listening, which is that of hearing. The Prophet refers to a vision and to a message, or to an affair as set before one admitted into the council chamber of his sovereign, (for this is the representation,) and to a message given to him who is commissioned to transact the business. It is not an unusual thing in Scripture to use a word in two different senses in the same passage; but the surrounding context is always sufficient to make the subject clear. --- Ed

unprincipled men, that they might lull to sleep, yea, and stupify the consciences of men, said, ``Eh! who has stood in the counsel of Jehovah? who has heard? who has attended? who has seen? all these things are uncertain; and though these severely threaten you with pestilence, war, and famine, yet there is no reason why ye ought to fear. Be then easy, and quietly and cheerfully enjoy yourselves, for they do not understand the purpose of God.'' And this meaning we shall presently see confirmed by what is said in verse 22, {בסודי} {ואם־עמדו}, veam omdu besudi, ``And if they had stood in my counsel.'' There is then no doubt but that he turns against them what they perversely boasted. But it now follows, ---

Jeremiah 23:19

19. Behold, a whirlwind of the LORD is gone forth in fury, even a grievous whirlwind: it shall fall grievously upon the head of the wicked.

19. Ecce turbo (vel, tempestas) Jehovae cum furore (vel, cum iracundia) egreditur, et turbo impendens super caput impiorum cadet (vel, turbo cadens cadet; est participium {מתחולל}, et postea est simplex verbum, sed eadem est radix utriusque.)

I shall defer the consideration of this to the next Lecture. Tomorrow there will be no Lecture, for, as you know, the conferring of honors will engage us.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are ever inclined to be led away by ensnaring flatteries, and thus seek death and final ruin for ourselves, --- O grant that we may learn to tremble at those denunciations announced by the prophets, by which thou shewest to us thy wrath, so that we may be roused to true repentance, and not harden ourselves through thy forbearance in what is evil, but pursue our heavenly course, until having at length put off all our vices, we shall be restored to that perfect form in which thy holy image fully shines forth, through Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Eighty-Eighth

The verse which I read at the end of my last Lecture must be now repeated to you, Behold, the tempest (or whirlwind) of Jehovah! it shall go forth with fury; even the impending whirlwind! on the head of the ungodly shall it abide, or fall; for {יחול}, ichul, means both. The Prophet now assails with more vehemence the false teachers, for they were almost stupid. None, indeed, can betray so much audacity as to oppose God, except when wholly blinded by Satan. Hence our Prophet deals with the false teachers as with fanatics or those wholly stupified: he tells them that God would come like a whirlwind Whether we render it a whirlwind or a storm, there is not much difference. [99] And he adds, that they could not escape, for the wrath of God was impending over them, and would at length remain on them.

Now, it is usual in Scripture to deal very sharply with hypocrites, and especially with false teachers, because Satan rules in them to an awful extent. And doubtless, as I have already said, except a person be fascinated with illusions, he could not dare

[99] "Storm," or tempest, is the most suitable here. The word {חמה} after Jehovah, seems to belong to it --- ``hot tempest;'' the reference is to the burning winds of the south. See Jeremiah 4:11, 12. The verse may be thus rendered, --- Behold the burning tempest of Jehovah! It shall go forth, yea, a pregnant tempest; On the head of the wicked shall it burst. The tempest or storm would be ``burning,'' and also ``pregnant,'' or in travail, as the word means; and being as it were in labor, it would ``burst,'' or literally bring forth on the head of the wicked. The verb is not from {יחל}, but from {חול} which means not only to be in labor but also to bring forth. ``It shall come,'' is the Sept. and the Vulg.; our version is the Targum. --- Ed

to oppose God. There is, then, no wonder that the Prophet fulminates against these ungodly teachers; for it was nothing but play and sport to them to pretend God's sacred name that they might deceive the people. He afterwards adds, ---

Jeremiah 23:20

20. The anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly.

20. Non revertetur iracundia Jehovae usque dum fecerit, et usque dum stabilierit cogitationes cordis sui: in extremitate dierum intelligetis hoc intelligentia (hoc est, intelligetis hujus rei intelligentiam, ad verbum.)

He confirms what he had said, lest the hypocrites, with whom he had to do, should think that their punishment would be light and soon pass away. For though they may have seen that God's hand was armed against them, yet they took comfort, because they expected that it would only be for a short time. Hence Jeremiah here reminds them that they were much deceived if they thought that they could dissipate as a cloud the vengeance that, was at hand; for God would not cease to punish them until he had destroyed them.

There was another security which deceived the ungodly: they were not terrified by threatenings of the Prophet, because they thought that God was in a manner dallying with them whenever he denounced ruin. And, doubtless, the wicked could not have so securely indulged themselves, had it not been that they did not believe that God's word would be fulfilled. As, then, God's threatenings did not strike hypocrites with terror, the Prophet here declares that there was no reason for them to harbor the vain hope that God only uttered words, and that there would be no execution of his vengeance.

Turn back, he says, shall not the anger of Jehovah until he has performed and confirmed the thoughts of his heart Jeremiah shews that God had not spoken in vain by his servants, according to what is done by men, who often speak rashly, for their tongue frequently outruns their purpose. But he reminds them here that God is far different from men, for he ever speaks in earnest, and his prophetic word is a sure evidence of his hidden purpose, as it will again be presently declared. This is the reason why he mentions the thoughts of his heart

We must not yet think that God is like us, as though he reflected on this thing and on that, and formed many purposes, while one thing or another comes into his mind; no, such a gross idea as this cannot be entertained, and cannot be consistent with the nature of God.

But Jeremiah calls, by a kind of metaphor, the counsel of God his thoughts, even that fixed and unchangeable counsel, which he declared by his prophets. Sometimes, indeed, God threatened, in order to restore men to repentance; but we must bear in mind that he neither varies himself nor changes his purpose. Whatever, then, the prophets announced in his name, flowed from his hidden purpose, and it was the same as though he had made known to us his own heart. And it is no small commendation to prophetic doctrine that God as it were connected his heart with his mouth. The mouth of God is the doctrine itself; and he says now that it had proceeded from

the depth of his heart. It hence follows that there is nothing frustratory, (deceptive,) as they say, in God's word; for he here declares that whatever he had committed to his servants were the thoughts of his heart. And to confirm, or establish, must be applied to the execution of his thoughts.

The sum of the whole is, that God now pronounces a sentence against the people, which could not be reversed; for he had once for all decreed to destroy the men who were obstinate in their sins.

But he seems to refer to the word {יחול}, ichul, which means, as I have said, to fall, and also to abide or to lie upon. According to this meaning, he says now, that the anger of God would not return, so as to change its course, until it had completed what had already been decreed, even what God had resolved respecting the destruction of the people.

Then he adds, In the extremity of days ye shall understand the knowledge of this thing So it is literally; but we may give a simpler version, ``Ye shall perceive the knowledge of this matter,'' or ``Ye shall know what this means.'' The Prophet, no doubt, exults over the insensibility of those who could not be moved by such awful warnings. We know how great is the hardness of the ungodly, especially when Satan possesses their minds and hearts. There is, indeed, no iron and no stone which has so much hardness as there is in the perversely wicked; and they in a manner assail God with the greatest obstinacy, as though they were victorious, for they despise all his warnings and threatenings. Hence the Prophet derides their insolence, or rather their madness, and. says, ``Ye shall understand,'' but too late; for by extremity of days, [100] he means the time which God had appointed for his anger. But yet God had in due time warned them that they might repent before his judgment came. It was now then the same as though he left them in their own stupor, and said that they could not, however, escape the hand of God by their perverseness, according to what Paul says,

``Let him who is ignorant, be ignorant.''
(1 Corinthians 14:38.)

He no doubt checks the arrogance of those who rejected every sound doctrine and all right counsels.

So, then, the Prophet teaches us here that hypocrites gain nothing by setting up their own contumacy and arrogance in opposition to God, for they will find, though too late, that God has not spoken in vain. We then see that by extremity of days is to be understood that time when the door shall be closed, because they did not in due time respond to God when he invited them to himself, and set before them the hope of salvation.

[100] Literally, “at the posteriority of days,” meaning, at a future time, without designating any particular period; it is the same as “hereafter.” The words which follow can hardly be rendered literally in our language — “ye shall discern it with discernment.” What is the antecedent to “it,” which is, {,{ה a feminine gender? Venema says that it is to be taken as a neuter; but if so, what does it refer to? It appears to me that there is nothing in the passage to which it can be referred, except to the ``tempest,'' which is feminine, in the former verse; they would understand at a future time the meaning of that tempest, that it was from the Lord as a punishment for their sins. This they did not understand at the time. These two verses are found nearly in the same words at the end of Jeremiah 23:30: The last word is omitted there, --- ``At the posteriority of days ye shall discern it,'' or understand it, or consider it. The Vulg. here is, ``at the last days ye shall understand his counsel;'' the Sept., ``at the last of days ye shall understand it;'' and the Targ., ``at the end of days ye shall by understanding understand this.''

There is also another truth taught us here, that we are to seek God while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near. (Isaiah 55:6.) For if we abuse his forbearance and despise him who speaks to us today, we shall find out too late, and not without the most grievous sorrow, that we have been deceived by the devil, because we did not attend to God calling us. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 23:21

21. I have not sent these prophets, yet they ran: I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied.

21. Non misi prophetas, et ipsi concurrerunt; non loquutus sum ad eos, et ipsi prophetarunt.

The Prophet again warns the Jews not to be perverted by the flatteries of false teachers, and not to disregard the threatenings of God. We have already said that the minds of the people were then lulled asleep by false teachers, who promised them impunity. And there is no evil worse than when false teachers, under the name of God, flatter us, and drive away every fear and concern for our souls. This evil prevailed among the ancient people, as it does also at this day. Indeed the greater part of the world have ever sought flatterers, and when God sees that men thus indulge themselves, and in a manner seek for themselves snares, he gives loose reins to Satan and his ministers, that they may deceive those miserable men who thus wilfully seek to be deceived. The object, then, of Jeremiah was to remind the people often, that all flatteries were nothing but the wiles of Satan, or some deadly poison which stupified all their senses. For when one gives a person poison, which extinguishes the senses of the body and the faculties of the mind, it is all over with the miserable being who has been thus drugged. We see a similar thing done by false teachers, who soothe miserable sinners and promise peace to them, as we saw in our last lecture. As, then, it was difficult to awaken men out of this stupor, which became, as it were, innate in them, and as Satan always employs the same intrigues, it was necessary for the holy Prophet to urge his doctrine more and more.

God now says that he did not send the Prophets, and yet they ran For this objection might have appeared sufficient against Jeremiah, --- that he was alone, and that the other prophets were many in number. It is, indeed, the dictate of common sense, that we ought to believe a hundred persons rather than one. Jeremiah, then, was alone, and there was a great number of false prophets; and the prophetic name was common to them all. It was therefore necessary to meet this objection, which was calculated to render God's faithful servant contemptible. Hence he mentions the difference between the false teachers with whom he contended and himself, as though he had said, ``I indeed am alone, but sent by God; and I am thoroughly convinced of my legitimate calling, and am also ready to prove that I bring no inventions of my own brain; let not, then, a false comparison of one man with a great multitude deceive you. For the question here is not of men or of their authority, but what we ought to inquire is, who sends them? If God be the author of my mission, then I, though alone, am superior to the whole world; and if they have not been called by God, though they were a hundredfold more than they are, yet all that they boast of means nothing, for in God alone we ought to believe.'' We now see the design of the

Prophet in saying that the prophets ran, but were not sent, that they prophesied, but had received no commands from God.

Now this passage especially teaches us that no one is worthy of being heard except he be a true minister of God. But there are two things necessary to prove a person to be such --- a divine call, and faithfulness and integrity. Whosoever, then, thrusts in himself, however he may pretend a prophetic name, may be safely rejected, for God claims the right of being heard to himself alone. Yet a simple and naked call is not sufficient; but he who is called must also faithfully labor for his God; and both these things are intimated here, for he says that the prophets ran, though they were not sent, and that they prophesied, though they were without any command from God. I indeed allow that the same thing is here repeated, according to common usage, in Hebrew, in different words; yet the stronger expression is found in the second clause, for to send belongs properly to the call, and to command to the execution of the office. For God in the first place chose his prophets, and committed to them the office of teaching, and then he commanded them what to say, and dictated to them as it were his message, that they might not bring forward anything devised by themselves, but be only his heralds, as it has appeared elsewhere. [101]

We hence learn also that our ears ought not to be open to impostors, who boldly pretend the name of God, but that we ought to distinguish between true and false teachers; for Jeremiah does not here speak to a few men, but he addresses the whole people. And what he designed to shew was, that they in vain sought to escape under the pretense of ignorance, who were not attentive to sound doctrine; for except they designedly neglected God and his word, they might have known whom to believe. It hence follows that frivolous is the excuse which many consider at this day to be as it were their sacred asylum; for they plead in their own behalf they have been deceived by false teachers. But we ought to see and to inquire whether God has sent them, and whether they teach as coming from his school, and bring anything but what they have received from his mouth.

I shall not here speak at large of God's call; but if any one wishes for a very short definition, let him take the following: There is a twofold call; one is internal and the other belongs to order, and may, therefore, be called external or ecclesiastical. But the external call is never legitimate, except it be preceded by the internal; for it does not belong to us to create prophets, or apostles, or pastors, as this is the special work of the Holy Spirit. Though then one be called and chosen by men a hundred times, he cannot yet be deemed a legitimate minister, except he has been called by God; for there are peculiar endowments required for the prophetic, the apostolic, and the pastoral office, which are not in the power or at the will of men. We hence see that the hidden call of God is ever necessary, in order that any one may become a prophet, or an apostle, or a pastor. But the second call belongs to order; for God

[101] The order here is according to the usual style of the prophets; the most visible act is mentioned first — the prophets ran without being sent; then the previous act is referred to, — God never spoke to them, and yet they prophesied. They ran as though God had communicated something to them; but God neither spoke to them nor sent them. They had neither a mission nor a message from God. In the following verse, consistently still with the style of Scripture, the order is reversed. The message is first referred to, and then the mission. They had no message, because they never “stood” or were present in God’s council; and then they did not go forth for the purpose of turning the people from their evil way. — Ed.

will have all things carried on by us orderly and without confusion. (1 Corinthians 14:40.) Hence has arisen the custom of electing. But it often happens that the call of God is sufficient, especially for a time. For when there is no Church, there is no remedy for the evil, except God raises up extraordinary teachers. Then the ordinary call, of which we now speak, depends on a well-ordered state of things. Wherever there is a Church of God, it has its own laws, it has a certain rule of discipline: there no one should thrust in himself, so as to exercise the prophetic or the pastoral office, though he equaled all the angels in sanctity. But when there is no Church, God raises up teachers in an unusual way, who are not chosen by men; for such a thing cannot be done, where no Church is formed.

This subject deserves, indeed, to be much more diffusely treated; but as I am not wont to digress unto particular points, it is enough for me to state what the present passage requires, which seems to be this, --- that none ought to be acknowledged as God's servants and teachers in the Church, except those who have been sent by God, and to whom he has, as it were, stretched forth his hand and given them their commission. But as the internal call of God cannot be surely known by us, we ought to see and ascertain whether he who speaks is the organ or instrument of the Holy Spirit. For whosoever brings forward his own figments and devises, is unworthy of being attended to. Hence, let him who speaks shew really that he is God's ambassador; but how can he shew this? By speaking from the mouth of God himself; that is, let him not bring anything of his own, but faithfully deliver, as from hand to hand, what he has received from God. But as there might be still some perplexity on the subject, it follows ---

Jeremiah 23:22

22. But if they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings.

22. Quod si stetissent in concilio meo, certe (copula enim ita resolvi debet) udire fecissent verba mea populum meum (hoc est, docuissent populum meum sermones meos) et reduxissent eos a via sua mala, et a malitia studiorum ipsorum.

This verse is as it were an explanation of the former; for many might have been perplexed, if it had only been said to them, that there are none who are fit and legitimate teachers but those who had been sent and entrusted with what God had commanded. Hence the Prophet here calls our attention to the truth which is certain and manifest; for God had delivered the sum of all truth in his Law. As then the perfection of wisdom was found in the Law, from which the prophets drew whatever we read in their writings, no excuses, such as the following, could be admitted, --- ``How can we know that the prophets speak from God's mouth, that they bring nothing devised by themselves, that they have the instructions which God approves?''

The Prophet then calls the attention of the Jews to the Law, as though He had said as Moses did,

``There is no need to ascend above the clouds, or to descend into the depths, or to run beyond the sea; for the Law and the word is nigh in thy mouth, that is, God has set before you whatever is necessary and useful to be known.'' (Deuteronomy

30:12-14; Romans 10:6.)

This, then, is fully made known to you, nor will the knowledge of anything necessary be obscure, if ye attend to the Law. Hence the cause of error is not only your sloth, but also your perverseness; for ye wilfully neglect the Law, and remain doubtful and inquire, ``Which is the way?''

``This is the way,'' said Moses, ``walk ye in it.'' (Deuteronomy 5:33.)

We now then perceive what Jeremiah had in view: he had before said, that none were to be attended to, except they who were sent and spoke from the mouth of God; but he now explains what he meant, even that the Law contained the whole sum of wisdom. But as he had before introduced the false prophets, as boldly deriding the true and faithful servants of God, by objecting to them and saying, ``Who had stood in the counsel of God? these imagine that they have fallen from the clouds, they terrify you with dreadful threatenings, as though they were angels from heaven,'' --- as then the false prophets were thus wont to speak disdainfully of God's servants, and alleged that they did not stand in God's counsel, Jeremiah now retorts upon them, and says, speaking in God's name, If they had stood in my counsel, they would doubtless have spoken from my Law; as though he had said, ``They believe not my servants, because they are men and not angels; they hence deny that they are of my counsel: thus they persuade the whole people to despise the doctrine of salvation. There are, however, some prophets whom I have sent: now, if they wish to be deemed sent, let them prove themselves to be so.'' What is the true proof? If they had stood in my counsel, they would have doubtless made known my word to my people. What is that word? the definition follows, even the word of the Law, They would have turned the straying people from their evil way [102]

The passage may seem obscure, but from the context itself we can gather that the real design of the Prophet was to convict the false teachers, that they might no longer boast of God's name, and falsely pretend that they were endued with the prophetic office, and glory in that distinction. He says that it was an evident proof that they were not God's prophets, because they did not faithfully teach what they ought to have derived from the Law.

It is indeed certain, that no one has been God's counsellor, according to what Scripture says in many places, when the object is to check the arrogance of those who, in their curiosity, attempt to penetrate into the hidden judgments of God, (Isaiah 40:13;) and Paul, while speaking of God's eternal election, it being incomprehensible, exclaims, Who has been his counsellor? (Romans 11: 34.) He uses a similar language in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, (1 Corinthians 2:16:) and why? that he might check the temerity of the human mind, which ventures farther than it is lawful. But afterwards Paul adds by way of correction, ``But we have the mind of Christ:'' how so? because he has made known his counsel to us. When,

[102] In the Sept. there is no corresponding clause to the "if" at the beginning of the verse. The Vulg. and the Targ., as in our version, make the "turning" to be such a clause, but strangely render it in the first person singular, "then would I have turned them," etc. The rendering of Calvin, is the most suitable, only the {{ו after ,{אם} might better be rendered ``then'' than ``surely,'' --- But if they had stood in my council, Then would they have caused my people to hear my words, And turned them from their wicked way, And from the wickedness of their doings. Blayney renders the verse in the same way, making the corresponding clause to begin at the second line. --- Ed.

therefore, the false prophets denied that God's servants were his counsellors, they might indeed have said so, viewing them only as mortal men; but their object was to discredit and to render void the word of God; so that they wished to put a restraint not only on men, but also on God himself. This was an intolerable insult to God.

Moreover the Prophet now turns as it were upon them, ``There is then no Prophet of God in the world!'' But fixed was that saying, that there would ever be some prophets; and none of the Jews could have dared to deny Moses to have been divinely inspired. This, then, being allowed, the Prophet now indirectly reproves them, ``Where are the prophets of God?'' and as they laid claim to this distinction, he says, ``Doubtless ye stand not in God's counsel. How so? because the counsel of God is included in his Law; and as ye have departed from the doctrine of true religion, as ye have no care to convey instruction, as your doctrine does not teach men the fear of God, nor leads to repentance, it follows that ye are not God's counsellors nor his prophets.'' But that this may appear more evident, we must bear in mind what Moses said, that God has his own secret things, but that whatever is taught in the Law belongs to us and to our children. (Deuteronomy 29:29.) There is then no reason why the inquiry should be difficult respecting the true prophets of God; for they, without controversy, deserve to be heard as the angels of God, who are faithful interpreters of his Law; but they who lead us away from the Law ought to be firmly and boldly rejected.

But we must also bear in mind the definition that is given when it is said, that they ought to have turned the people from their evil way, and from the wickedness of their doings [103] We indeed know that the worst men insolently pretend to preach God's word, as the Papists do at this day: though they have inebriated the whole world with their ungodly and delirious doctrines, they yet boast that they are the servants of God. Hence the Prophet, after having spoken generally of God's word, adds a special distinction, --- that the doctrine of God is that which edifies, which teaches and leads men to repentance and the fear of God, according to what Paul says, that the Scripture is useful for these purposes, (2 Timothy 3:16;) for by so saying, he intended to condemn all false interpreters of Scripture, as there were many then who boasted that they were the best teachers, while yet they only pleased itching ears. As then there were many who regarded display and not edification, Paul says, that the Scripture is useful; and therefore he rejected with contempt all expositions in which there was nothing useful. So also in this place the Prophet shews that the right and legitimate use of Scripture was when it was employed to restore men from their evil way.

There is, indeed, here an instance of a part being stated for the whole: for if we only exhort men to repent, there will be no great fruit; and our teaching would be defective, for the doctrine of repentance would be inefficient without faith and without calling on the name of God. But the Prophet did not intend here to mention every part of a sound and useful doctrine; he deemed it enough to confute the false teachers who wished to be alone in repute, while yet they had no care to edify the

[103] Their “evil way” was their idolatry, and “the wickedness of their doings” was their injustice and immoral conduct. — Ed.

people; for they saw all things in disorder, they saw crimes prevailing everywhere, they saw a dreadful contempt of God, but to these things they were wholly blind. It might then have been hence easily inferred that they neither faithfully labored for God nor manifested any care for the safety of the Church; for they thus betrayed miserable souls, whose ruin they saw was near at hand.

We now then see the whole design of the Prophet. But there is no doubt but that to the evil way he added the wickedness of their doings, in order that he might more fully expose the insensibility of those who under such an urgency were silent and remained inactive. There is sometimes the need of a moderate reproof; but when people allow themselves an extreme license in wickedness, when impunity is everywhere permitted, and when such corruptions prevail in common, that nothing remains untainted, if then the tongue of the teacher is silent and as it were tied, is he not rightly called an idle and a dumb dog? And thus the Prophet enhances the insensibility, for which he condemns the false teachers; they were silent, as though things were in a good order, while they had to witness not only common crimes, but even a vast accumulation of all kinds of crimes; for the people gave themselves up not only to one kind of wickedness, but to all kinds, and wholly despised God and his Law. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 23:23-24

23 Am I a God at hand, saith the LORD, and not a God afar off?

23. An Deus e propinquo, dicit Jehova? Et non Deus e longinquo?

24. Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD.

24. An absonderit vir in latebris et ego non videbo eum, dicit Jehova? An non coelos et terram impleo, dicit Jehova?

Here he especially shakes off from hypocrites their self-delusions; for they were torpid in their vices, because they thought that they could in a manner blind the eyes of God. They did not indeed say so; but the heedless security of men would, never be so great as it is, were they to believe that nothing is hid from God, but that he penetrates into the inmost recesses of the heart, that he discerns between the thoughts and the feelings, and leaves not unobserved the very marrow. If, then, this truth were fixed in the hearts of all, they would certainly obey God with more reverence, and also dread his threatenings.

As, then, they are so heedlessly torpid, it follows, that they imagine God as not having a clear sight, who sees only things nigh him, like one who has a deficient vision, who can see what is near at hand, but not what is far off. Such is what hypocrites dream God to be, who after the manner of men either connives at things, or is blind, or at least does not clearly see but what is near at hand. We now understand the design of the Prophet in saying, that Jehovah is God afar off as well as near at hand.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as nothing necessary to be known for salvation is wanting in thy holy and celestial oracles, we may carefully and diligently study them, and so labor to make progress in the fear of thy name, in reliance on that grace which is

offered to us in Christ, that we may derive real fruit from the reading and hearing of thy word; and may we also learn to turn everything to edification, so that thy name may be really glorified in us, and that we may through the whole course of our life make progress in faith and repentance, until we shall at length attain to that perfect holiness, to which thou daily invitest us, when we shall be wholly divested of all the filth of our flesh, and become fully renewed after the image of thy Son, our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Eighty-Ninth

Am I a God at hand, saith Jehovah? and not a God afar off? Will a man hide himself in darkness, or in coverts, and I shall not see him, or that I could not see him, saith Jehovah? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith Jehovah? Here the Prophet most sharply reproves the hypocrites, who thought that they had no concern with God, as is the case always with those who delude themselves in their sins. Though this truth is ever professed by them, that God is the judge of the world, and that an account must some time be rendered to him; yet they afterwards think that they can by some evasion escape, so that God will forgive them. In short, it is usual with hypocrites to trifle as it were childishly with God. On this account, God is grievously displeased with them, and declares that he is far different from what they imagine him to be. For while they thus set themselves up as arbitrators, so that they subject God to their own laws, they think him to be as it were full of apprehension, and that he sees nothing, or at least very little; he says, that he is not only a God near at hand but also afar off [104]

Some apply this to time, as though he denied that he lately came into existence; and so they think that the only true and eternal God is compared with idols, which men form presumptuously for themselves. But the other meaning is far more suitable, --- even that he is a God afar off; for as it is said elsewhere,

``Though he dwells on high, yet he sees everything
that is done on earth.'' (Psalm 102:19)

As, then, nothing escapes his sight, he is said to be a God afar off, while hypocrites thought him to be a God only near at hand, as we say in French, De courte veue, who sees only things near, as it were before the eyes. But a question has much more force than if it was said, that he was not merely a God near at hand; and this mode of speaking conveys reproof; for hypocrites greatly detract from his majesty, when they thus, according to their own notions, imagine that he can see no more than a mortal man. They would not indeed have dared to speak thus; but when any one examined all their counsels and their actions, he would have found that they could have never shewn so much audacity, had they not deceived themselves with the vain notion, that God could be deceived [105] And, therefore, Jeremiah does not

[104] "Am I not a God here upon earth, that seems farther from me, as well as in heaven, that seemeth nearer to me, as being the place of my special residence? do you think that because my palace is in heaven I take no notice of what is done upon earth?" — Gataker. This appears to be the meaning; for he says afterwards, "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" The words seem literally to be, — 21. Am I a God of nearness, saith Jehovah? And not a God of distance? — Ed.

[105] "The Scripture," says Venema, "often brings to light and condemns, not what men profess, but what may be inferred from their doings." — Ed.

relate their words, but points out the wickedness which sufficiently manifested itself in their doings, though they professed otherwise with their tongues.

And that this is the meaning appears more clearly from the next verse, which ought to be read in connection with this; Will a man hide himself in coverts, that I should not see him? [106] This verse is added by way of explanation; there can therefore be no doubt respecting the words, far off and near, --- that God is said to be a God afar off; because his eyes penetrate into the lowest depths, so that nothing can escape him.

It is a wonder that the Greek translators made so great a mistake; for they wholly changed the sense, --- that God is God nigh at hand, but not afar off. In the first place, they did not consider the question, and then, as they did not see the drift of the passage, they contrived from their own brains what is wholly remote from the words of the Prophet. This sentiment, that God is nigh and not afar off, is indeed true; but what is meant here is quite another thing, --- that God sees in a way very different from men, for he fully and perfectly sees what is farthest from him, according to the passage we have quoted from Psalm 102:19; and there is another in Psalm 139:7-12, where the Psalmist says,

``Where shall I flee from thy face? for if I ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I lie down in hell, there thou stretchest forth thine hand; if I take the wings of the dawn and fly to the clouds, even thine hand will lay hold of me there; if I seek coverts, even the night itself is before thee as the light, and darkness shines as the light.''

If, then, we join together these two passages, there will appear nothing ambiguous in the words of Jeremiah, --- even that God penetrates with his eyes into the lowest depths, so that nothing is hid from him.

But Jeremiah not only explains the meaning of the last verse, but also makes a practical use of it; Will any one, he says, hide himself in coverts that I should not see him? The seeing of God has a reference to his judgment. Then all frivolous speculations ought to be cast aside, since Scripture says that God sees all things; but we ought especially to consider for what purpose it is that he sees all things; which is evidently this, --- that he may at last call to judgment whatever is done by men. There is then an application of the doctrine to our case; for we hence learn, that whatsoever we do, think, and speak, is known to God.

By coverts, or hiding-places, he means all the secret frauds which men think they can cover; but by such an attempt they gain nothing but a heavier judgment. By coverts then we are to understand all those vain thoughts which hypocrites entertain; for they think that they can so hide themselves that God cannot see their purposes. Hence God laughs them to scorn, and says in effect, ``Let them enter into their coverts, let them hide themselves as much as they please, I yet do see them in their coverts no less clearly than if they were quite close to me.''

To confirm this he adds, Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith Jehovah? This must

[106] The future here ought to be rendered potentially, — Can a man hide in hiding-places, That I should not see him, saith Jehovah? Do not I fill the heavens and the earth, saith Jehovah? The first line may be thus rendered more literally, — Can a man secrete himself in secrecies? In Welsh, — A lecha dyn mewn llechveydd? "The heavens," and not "heaven," ought to be the word in the last line; and so does Blayney render it. The visible and the invisible heaven are intended. — Ed.

not be refinedly explained of the infinite essence of God. It is indeed true, that his essence extends through heaven and earth, as it is interminable. But Scripture will not have us to feed on frivolous and unprofitable notions; it teaches only what avails to promote true religion. What therefore God declares here, that he fills heaven and earth, ought to be applied to his providence and his power; as though he had said, that he is not so taken up with things in heaven that he neglects the concerns of earth, as profane men dream; but he is said to fill heaven and earth, because he governs all things, because all things are noticed by him, because he is, in short, the judge of the world.

We now perceive what the Prophet means; and this passage is entitled to particular notice, because this error of imagining a God like ourselves is inbred almost in us all. Hence it is, that men allow themselves so much liberty; for they consider it a light thing to discharge their duty towards God, because they reflect not what sort of being he is, but they think of him according to their own understanding and character. As, then, we are thus gross in our ideas, it becomes us carefully to reflect on this passage, where God declares, that he is not only a God near at hand, that is, that he is not like us, who have only a limited power of seeing, but that he sees in the thickest darkness as well as in the clearest light; and that therefore it avails those nothing to deceive themselves who dig for themselves caverns, as it is said in Isaiah, and hide themselves in deep labyrinths. (Isaiah 2:21.) He thus denies that they gain anything, and gives this as the reason,

``Because he fills heaven and earth;''

that is, his providence, his power, and his justice are so diffused everywhere, that wherever men betake themselves, it is impossible for them to be concealed from him. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 23:25

25. I have heard what the prophets said, that prophesy lies in my name, saying, I have dreamed, I have dreamed.

25. Audivi quod dicunt (vel, quid dicant,) prophetae prophetantes in nomine meo, dicendo, somniavi, somniavi.

Jeremiah returns again to those impostors who soothed the people with their blandishments. Whenever Jeremiah and those who were like him, who faithfully performed their office, treated the people with severity by reproving and threatening them for their sins, these unprincipled men rose up against, them, and under the name of prophets flattered the ungodly despisers of God. It was, as we have before said, a most grievous trial, when in the very Church itself the ministers of Satan thus falsely pretended the name of God. The Jews would have unhesitantly despised and laughed to scorn what the vain prophets of the Gentiles might have boasted; for they knew that these had no knowledge of God; but when the false prophets of whom he now speaks occupied a place in the Church, and in high terms boasted that they were God's servants, this would have greatly disturbed the weak and shaken their faith, and even wholly upset it, had not God stretched forth his hand. It is therefore no wonder that Jeremiah dwells so much on this subject; for it was an evil that could not be easily cured; had he said only, that they were not to be esteemed, the weak

would not have been satisfied. It was hence necessary for him often to repeat this truth, that they were all to know that there was need of discrimination and judgment, and that those who pretended God's name were not to be indiscriminately allowed to be his prophets.

He then repeats what we have before observed, but in other words, --- I have heard, says God, what the prophets say who prophesy in my name [107] An objection is anticipated, for it might have been said, ``What can this mean? the prophets disagree! and what is to be done under these dissensions? they who differ dazzle our eyes with an illustrious title, and boldly affirm that they have been sent by God. As, then, there is such a conflict between the prophets, what are we to do?'' God meets this objection, and declares that it was not unknown to him what the false prophets boasted of. He adds, that they prophesied in his name It was an offense, which must have greatly distressed weak minds, to hear of this profanation of God's name. For as it behoves us reverently to receive what proceeds from God, so it is no small danger when God's name is falsely and mendaciously pretended. As, then, they might have been greatly disturbed by this false pretext of what was good, it is here expressly said, that they had used the name of God, but he adds, falsely

We hence see the truth of what I have said, that those who affirm that they are prophets and ostentatiously pretend God's name, ought not to be received indiscriminately, but that judgment ought to be exercised; for it has been God's will in all ages to try the faith of his servants by permitting to Satan and his ministers the liberty of pretending falsely his holy name. And as we see that the Church has ever been exposed to this evil, there is no cause for us to be disturbed at this day, when the same thing happens, for it is nothing new. Let us, therefore, learn to harden ourselves against such trials; and whenever false prophets try our faith, let; us remain firm, holding this principle, --- that we ought wisely to consider, whether God himself speaks, or whether men falsely boast themselves to be his servants.

To dream is to be taken here in a good sense; for, as we have seen elsewhere, God was wont to make himself known to his servants by dreams. It is not then every kind of dreams that is to be understood here, but, such dreams as were from above. The false prophets, indeed, stated what was not true by using this language; for it was the same as though they testified that they did not bring their own devices, but faithfully related what they had received from God. As the Pope at this day declares that he is the vicar of Christ and the successor of Peter, while he exercises tyranny over the Church; so also these, by a specious pretext, deceived the simple by saying that they brought nothing human, but were only witnesses as to God's oracles. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 23:26-27

26. How long shall this be in the heart of the prophets that prophesy lies? yea, they are prophets of the deceit of their own heart;

26. Quosque erit in corde prophetarum prophetantium mendacium, et prophetarum doli cordis sui?

[107] The more literal rendering is as follows, — 25. I have heard what the prophets have said, Who have prophesied in my name falsely, saying. — “I have dreamed, I have dreamed.” — Ed.

27. Which think to cause my people to forget my name by their dreams which they tell every man to his neighbour, as their fathers have forgotten my name for Baal.

27. Cogitantes ut faciant oblivisci populum meum nominis mei per somnia sua (vel, in somniis suis, ad verbum,) qua narrant quisque socio suo; quemadmodum obliti sunt patres eorum nominis mei in Baal.

Here God reproves the false prophets, and also promises to his people what was especially to be desired, --- that he would cleanse his Church from such pollutions. He then shews that it was his purpose to take vengeance, because the false prophets had dared in such an impious and bold manner to abuse his sacred name. For it ever occurred to their minds, ``How is it that God permits this? Is it because he cares not for the safety of his people? or does it give him any delight when he sees truth mingled with falsehood, and light with darkness?'' Hence God here shews that he for a time bore with that sacrilegious audacity which the false prophets practiced, but that he did not so connive at it as not at length to punish them.

How long? he says, which is the same as though he had said, ``It shall not be perpetual; though I may delay, yet they shall know that they have with extreme perverseness abused my forbearance.'' And he also enhances their crime by saying, How long shall it be in the heart of the prophets to prophesy falsehood? By this way of speaking he intimates, that they erred not through ignorance, as many do, who through want of knowledge bring forth what they do not understand; but God here complains that these prophets, as it were designedly, rose up to suppress the truth. Then by heart is to be understood thought or purpose; as though he had said, that they designedly made a false pretense as to his name, that it was their settled purpose to deceive the people. [108]

He adds, that they were prophets of the deceit of their own heart. This deceit of the heart is put in opposition to true doctrine; and thus God intimates that whatever men bring forward from themselves is deceitful, for nothing can proceed from them but vanity. There is yet no doubt but that he condemns that foolish conceit, of which the false prophets proudly boasted, that they were alone wise, as the case is now under the Papacy; how arrogantly do unprincipled men prattle whenever they speak of their own figments? Nothing can be more silly, and yet they think that they surpass the angels in acuteness and in high speculations. Such was the arrogance displayed by the false prophets of old. But God declares that whatever men invent, and whatever they devise, which they have not received from his mouth, is only the deceit of the heart.

And this ought to be carefully noticed; for there are many plausible refinements,

[108] Emendators have been very busy in correcting the first words in this verse, without the authority of any MSS., or of the early versions. When there is a meaning and a striking one, emendations, merely conjectural, are surely to be repudiated. Houbigant, Blayney, and Horsley, have their corrections, but we can do without them. What seems to have prompted conjectural emendations has been the {{ה prefixed to ;{ישׁ} but Gataker removed this difficulty; his version is substantially as follows, --- How long! --- Is it in the heart of these prophets, To be prophesying falsehood, And prophesying the deceit of their own hearts? To be ``in the heart'' is to be resolved, to form a purpose or determination. See Isaiah 63:4. It is the same, as though it was said, ``Are these prophets resolved?'' To be ``in the heart'' means also to delight in a thing. See Psalm 40:8. The meaning then may be, ``Is it the delight of these prophets?'' etc. But the first sense is the most suitable. ``How long!'' is an exclamation of wonder at their perseverance in their wicked course. They had been often warned, and yet they continued. Then follows a question, whether it was their settled purpose to persevere in prophesying falsely? --- Ed.

in which there is nothing solid, but they are mere trifles. If, then, at any time these vain thoughts seem pleasing to us, let us bear in mind what Jeremiah says here, that whatever proceeds not from God is the deceit of the heart; and further, that though the whole world applaud falsehoods and impostures, we ought yet to know that everything is a deceit which has not God himself as its author.

Then follows a clearer definition, that they made his people to forget his name by their dreams, as their fathers had forgotten it through Baal. [109] We may infer from this verse, that those with whom Jeremiah contended were not openly the enemies of the Law; for they held many principles of true religion. They maintained in common with the true and sincere worshippers of God this truth, --- that the only true God ought to be worshipped; and also this, --- that there was only one legitimate altar on which sacrifices according to the Law were to be offered. On these points, then, there was no controversy. But yet they deceived the people by their flatteries; for they made gain of their prophetic office. Hence Jeremiah condemns them, because they made God's name to be forgotten by their dreams, as their fathers had forgotten it through Baal; as though he had said, ``These dreams are like the fictitious and spurious forms of worship, by which true religion was formerly subverted; for their fathers worshipped Baal and Baalim: they set up for themselves these false gods, and thus subverted the glory of God by their own devices.'' The impiety of the false prophets, who lived in the time of Jeremiah, was not indeed so gross; and yet it was an indirect defection, for they brought forward their dreams, and falsely professed that. they were God's servants, though he had not commissioned them.

We have said elsewhere (Jeremiah 23:21) that their crime was twofold; first, they ran when not called nor sent; and secondly, they brought forward their own fancies and not the word of God. And this passage ought to be carefully noticed; for we here learn, that not only open defection cannot be endured by God, but also indirect depravations, which stealthily withdraw us from the fear of God. Then these two evils must be carefully avoided in the Church, if we desire to continue entire in our obedience to God. One evil is sufficiently known, that is, when truth is openly turned into falsehood, when men are drawn away into idolatry and filthy superstitions, or when the ancient people, as Jeremiah says, forgat the name of God through Baal. But the other evil is more hidden, and therefore more dangerous, that is, when some appearance of true religion is retained, and men are yet insidiously drawn away from the fear of God and his true worship, and from pure doctrine, as we see to be the case at this day in the Churches, which profess to have separated from the Papacy that they might embrace the doctrine of the Gospel: there are many among them who insidiously corrupt the simple and genuine doctrine of the Gospel. We see how many curious men there are at this time, who disturb all things by their own inventions, and how absurdly many seek refinements, and how confidently also do many propound

[109] Calvin begins this verse as our version, “Who think,” etc. So the Sept.; the Vulg. is, “who seek (or wish), volunt.” Blayney has, “who study.” The verb means sometimes to contrive or to purpose a thing after counting the reasons for and against. It may be rendered here, “who design.” The Syriac is, “whose counsel is.” It was their design and intended object to make the people to forget God’s name through their dreams. But how to forget his name? for they professed to announce their dreams in his name. God’s name here evidently means his revealed name, himself as revealed in his word. — Ed

their own inventions as oracles! It behoves us then to be watchful, not only that we may shun open abominations, but that we may also retain the pure and true word of God, so as not to allow false workers insidiously to corrupt and vitiate anything. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 23:28

28. The prophet that hath a dream, let him tell a dream; and he that hath my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? saith the LORD.

28. Propheta apud quem est somnium, narrabit somnium; et apud quem est sermo meus, narrabit sermonem meum veritatis: quid palae ad triticum, dicit Jehova?

We ought also to read this verse attentively, for doubtless it contains a doctrine especially useful. I have already said, that the faith of many might have failed at seeing a conflict in the Temple of God, not only among the common people, but also among the prophets of God. God did not appear from heaven, nor did he send his angels, but would have himself to be heard through men. They who came to the Temple expected the prophets to teach them. There the ministers of Satan appeared, who corrupted and perverted all things. There were a few, who sincerely declared the truth of God, and faithfully explained what God commanded. What could miserable men do in this case, who were willing to obey, and possessed a teachable spirit? Hence it was, that many threw aside every concern for religion, and gave themselves up to despair: ``What means all this? why are there so many discords, so many disputes, so many contentions, so many invectives? Where can we now betake ourselves? It is better not to care for anything any more.'' Thus many took occasion to indulge their indifference, choosing not to weary themselves any more, nor to seek what God was, what his will was, whether there was salvation for them, whether there was any hope, rather than to entangle themselves in troublesome and thorny disputes.

Such a temptation existed in the time of Jeremiah. He, therefore, applied in due time a suitable remedy and said, The Prophet, who has a dream, that is, with whom is a dream, he will relate a dream; and then, The Prophet with whom is my word, he will speak my word; [110] as though God had said, that it was all extremely wicked thing to obstruct the way of truth by falsehood. But this is what usually happens, as I have already said; for where Satan has his agents, an obstacle seems to be in our way which prevents us to go on and proceed in the course of true religion. For when those who are right-minded, as we have said, see the prophets themselves contending, disputing, and quarrelling, they stand still, nay, they go backward. Now God shews that this is extremely unreasonable. Then the meaning is, as though he had said, ``Let not the false prophets by Their fallacies impede the course of God's servants, that they may not proceed, and that his word should not be reverently heard.''

Unless we attend to this which the Prophet had in view, the passage will appear

[110] All the early versions and the Targ. render the last verb in the imperative mood, “Let him speak,” etc. And so most of modern expounders. — Ed

unmeaning. It has been often quoted, but this circumstance has not certainly been observed. We ought, therefore, ever to consider, why is a thing said. This verse depends on what is gone before; and God here answers a question, which might have been raised, --- ``What then must we do, for falsehoods conflict with truth?'' God answers, that his word ought not to be prejudiced by this circumstance; as though he had said, ``Let nothing prevent my Prophets from teaching; I bid them to be heard.'' We hence conclude, that those do wrong to God, who allege the controversies, by which religion is torn and as it were lacerated, and think that they thus obtain a license to indulge their impiety; for it is not a reason that can avail them, that Satan and his ministers labor to discredit the authority of God and of his servants. Though these false prophets insinuate themselves, though they may set up themselves against the true and faithful servants of God, yet let dreams, that is, prophetic revelations, retain their weight, and let him with whom is God's word, speak the word of God, so that it may be heard. This clause refers to the hearers; they were not to desist from rendering obedience to the Law, how much soever Satan might strive to subvert their faith by attempting to destroy its unity.

It afterwards follows, What is the chaff to the wheat? This addition was also wholly necessary, for many might have again objected and said, that they had no sufficient judgment to distinguish between the true and false prophets. God here gives the answer, that the difference between true and false doctrine was nothing less to him who made a careful examination than between wheat and chaff And by this comparison he shews how foolishly and absurdly many detract from the authority of the Law on this pretense, that there are many who falsely interpret it. For when any one rejects the wheat because it is covered with chaff, does he not deserve to perish through hunger? and who will pity him who says that he has indeed wheat on his floor, but that it is mixed with chaff, and therefore not fit for food? Why, then, thou silly man, dost not thou separate the chaff from the wheat? But thou choosest to perish through want, rather than to cleanse the wheat that thou mayest have it for thy food. So also in the Temple the wheat is often mixed with the chaff, the pure truth of God is often defiled with many glosses and vain figments; and yet, except it be our own fault, we shall be able to distinguish between the wheat and the chaff. [111] But if we be negligent, and think that it is a sufficient excuse for despising the word of God, because Satan brings in his fallacies, we shall perish in our sloth like him who neglects to cleanse his wheat that he might turn it to bread. But the time will not allow me to say more.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou art graciously pleased daily to set before us thy sure and certain will, we may open our eyes and cars, and raise all our thoughts to that which not only reveals to us what is right, but also confirms us in a sound

[111] The difference between the chaff and the wheat is what the Sept. and Vulg. intimate, "What is the chaff to the wheat?" But the Syr. has another idea, "Why mingle ye the chaff with the wheat?" The literal rendering of the Hebrew is, "Why to the chaff the wheat?" The mixture is what seems to be intended. So thought Gataker and Blayney, who rendered it, "What has the chaff to do with the wheat?" that is, why do you mix them together? And so does Adam Clarke view the phrase. Venema, Henry, Scott, and Lowth take the first meaning, which is also that of our version; but the other is more agreeable to the original. — Ed

mind, so that we may go on in the course of true religion, and never turn aside, whatever Satan and his ministers may devise against us, but that we may stand firm and persevere, until having finished our warfare, we shall, at length come unto that blessed rest which has been prepared for us in heaven by Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Ninetieth

We saw yesterday that though the false prophets corrupted the true doctrine, yet the prophetic office remained in its honor without any loss to its authority. Hence Jeremiah said that all their fallacies ought not to be an hinderance to the faithful, so as to prevent them to proceed in the course of their calling, and that no one should object and say, that in so confused a state of things he could not know what to avoid and what to follow; he said that the difference between wheat and chaff was easily perceived, provided men were not wilfully blind. He now adds, ---

Jeremiah 23:29

29 Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

29. An non ut sit sermo meus quasi ignis (hoc est, an non sermo meus tanquam ignis) dicit Jehova? Et tanquam malleus conterens saxum (vel, rupem.)

He confirms what he said of the chaff and the wheat, but in different words. It was a fit comparison when Jeremiah compared God's word to wheat, and the figments of men to chaff. But as the Jews, through their ingratitude, rendered the word of God ineffectual, so it did not become to them a spiritual support, the Prophet says that it would become like a fire and like a hammer, [112] as though he had said, that though the Jews were void of judgment, as they had become hardened in their wickedness, yet the word of God could not be rendered void, or at least its power could not be taken away; for as Paul says,

``If it is not the odor of life unto life, it is the odor of death unto death to those who perish,'' (2 Corinthians 2:16)

and so also the same Apostle says in another place, that God's servants had vengeance in their power, for they bear the spiritual sword, in order to cast down every height that exalteth itself against Christ; but he adds,

``After the obedience'' of the faithful ``had been completed.''
(2 Corinthians 10:6)

The first and as it were the natural use of God's word is to bring salvation to men; and hence it is called food; but it turns into poison to the reprobate: and this is the reason for so great a diversity.

He said, first, that God's word was wheat, because souls are nourished by it unto a celestial life; and nothing can be more delightful than this comparison. But now he declares it to be fire and a hammer There is in these terms some appearance of contradiction; but there is a distinction to be made as to the hearers, for they

[112] The particle {כה at the beginning of this verse, rendered ut by Calvin, seems to be without meaning. It is omitted by the Vulg., and rendered ``behold'' by the Sept. and Syr., as though it was .{חנה} Venema regarded it either as a noun, burning, from ,{כוה} to burn, or a misprint for ,{כח} strength, vigor, power. The last is adopted by Blayney, and approved by Horsley, and is countenanced by the Targ., ``Are not all my words strong as fire?'' Blayney's version is, --- Is not the power of my word like fire? This is the most probable meaning; though there is no different reading, yet the difference between the two letters is very small. --- Ed.

who reverently embrace the word of God, as it becomes them, and with genuine docility of faith, find it to be food to them; but the ungodly, as they are unworthy of such a benefit, find it to be far otherwise. For the word which is in itself life-giving, is changed into fire, which consumes and devours them; and also it becomes a hammer to break, to tear them in pieces, and to destroy them.

The import of the whole is, that God's word ever retains its own dignity; for if it happens to be despised by men, it cannot yet be deprived of its vigor and efficacy; if it be not wholesome for food, it will be like fire or like a hammer. Then these two comparisons belong to the wicked, for God's word has another sense when called fire with reference to the faithful, even because it dries up and consumes the lusts of the flesh, as silver and gold are purified by fire. Hence the word of God is properly and fitly called fire, even with regard to the faithful; but not a devouring but a refining fire. But when it comes to the reprobate, it must necessarily destroy them, for they receive not the grace that it offers to them. It may also be called a hammer, for it subdues the depraved affections of the flesh and such as are opposed to God even in the elect; but it does not break the elect, for they suffer themselves to be subdued by it.

But this hammer is said to break the stone or the rock because the reprobate will not hear to be corrected; they must, therefore, be necessarily broken and destroyed. For this reason Paul also, while speaking of the refractory, says,

``Let him who is ignorant be ignorant.''
(1 Corinthians 14:38)

For by these words he means that they will at last find how great is the hardness of that word with which they dare to contend through the perverseness of their heart. But that passage which I have before quoted well explains what is here said by Jeremiah, even that truth in itself is wholesome, but that it turns into an odor of death unto death to those who perish. (2 Corinthians 2:16.) Paul, indeed, speaks of the Gospel, but this may be also applied to the Law. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 23:30-32

30. Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that steal my words every one from his neighbour.

30. Propterea ecce ego ad (vel, super) prophetas, dicit Jehova, qui furantur sermones meos, quisque a socio suo:

31. Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the LORD, that use their tongues, and say, He saith.

31. Ecce ego ad (vel, super, vel, contra) prophetas, dicit Jehova, qui mollificant (vel, tollunt) linguam suam, et dicunt, sermo (vel, dictio:)

32. Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD.

32. Ecce ego super (vel, ad, vel, contra) prophetantes somnia mendacii, dicit Jehova, et narrant illis et decipiunt populum meum in mendaciis suis et levitate sua; et ego (hoc est, quanquam ego) non miserim ipsos, neque mandaverim illis, et utilitate

non proderunt (proficiendo non afferent utilitatem) populo huic, dicit Jehova.

Jeremiah returns again to the false teachers, who were the authors of all the evils; for they fascinated the people with their flatteries, so that every regard for sound and heavenly doctrine was almost extinguished. But while God declares that he is an avenger against them, he does not exempt the people from punishment. We indeed know that a just reward was rendered to the reprobate, when God let loose the reins to the ministers of Satan with impunity to deceive them. But as the people acquiesced in those false allurements, while Jeremiah so severely reproved the false teachers, he reminds the people how foolishly they betook themselves under the shadow of those men, thinking themselves to be safe.

He says, first, Behold, I am, against the prophets, who steal my words every one from his neighbor. Many explain this verse as though God condemned the false prophets, who borrowed something from the true prophets, so that they might be their rivals and as it were their apes; and no doubt the ungodly teachers had ever from the beginning made some assumptions, that they might be deemed God's servants. But it seems, however, a forced view, that they stole words from the true prophets, for the words express what is different, that they stole every one from his friend Jeremiah would not have called God's faithful servants by this name. I rather think that their secret arts are here pointed out, that they secretly and designedly conspired among themselves, and then that they spread abroad their own figments according to their usual manner. For the ungodly and the perfidious, that they might obtain credit among the simple and unwary, consulted together and devised all their measures craftily, that they might not be immediately found out; and thus one took from the other what he afterwards announced and published. And this is what Jeremiah calls stealing, because they secretly consulted, and then declared to the people what they agreed upon among themselves; and they did this as though every one had derived his oracle from heaven. I have, therefore, no doubt but that the Prophet condemns these hidden consultations when he says that every one stole from his neighhour. [113]

We indeed see the same thing now under the Papacy, for the monks and unprincipled men of the same character have their own false doctrines; and when they ascend the pulpit, every one speaks as though he was endued with some special gift; and yet they steal every one from his friend, for they are like the soothsayers or the magi, who concocted among themselves their own falsehoods, and only brought out what they deemed necessary to delude the common people. This, then, was one of the vices which the Prophet shews prevailed among the false teachers, --- that no one attended to the voice of God, but that every one took furtively from his friend

[113] Various have been the expositions of this sentence: they adopted the manner of the true prophets, as some say, and used their words, an instance of which is found in Jeremiah 28:1-4; and this is the view of Scott; others hold that the imitation in saying, "Thus saith the Lord," is what is referred to. It has also been suggested that they are intended — who, knowing the truth, withheld it from the people; and that to withhold what they knew, is represented here as stealing. But none of these views sufficiently account for the words here used, "who steal my words every one from his neighbor." They were God's words committed to the people, and these prophets stole them, that is, by rendering them void by their falsehoods and vain dreams, as Satan is said to steal the seed sown in the heart of the way-side hearer. This is the view taken by Grotius, Venema, and Gataker. — Ed.

what he afterwards openly proclaimed.

He adds, secondly, Behold, I am against the prophets, who mollify their own tongue Almost all interpreters take {לקה}, lekech, as signifying to render sweet or soft; and they understand that the false prophets are condemned, because they flattered the wicked for the sake of gain; for had they offended or exasperated them, they could not have attached them to themselves. They then think that to mollify their tongue means here that they used their tongue in speaking smooth and flattering things. But others give another explanation, --- that they mollified their tongue because they polished their words in imitation of God's servants, so that their speech was sweeter than honey. But as {לקה}, lekech, means to receive and to take, and sometimes to raise on high, and sometimes to carry, I see not why it should not be taken in its proper meaning. I certainly see no reason to turn its meaning to a metaphor, when it can be taken in its plain sense of raising their tongue; they elevated themselves, and in high terms boasted that the office of teaching had been committed to them, for we know how haughtily false teachers elevate themselves. Therefore the verse may be taken thus, that God would punish those impostors who raised their tongue, that is, who proudly boasted and boldly arrogated to themselves authority, as though they were messengers from heaven. [114]

It afterwards follows, And they say, {נאם}, nam, he saith. We know that it was a common thing for all the prophets to add, {יהוה} {נאם}, nam Jeve, the saying of Jehovah, or the word of Jehovah, in order to shew that they said nothing but what they had received from above. And if we read this verse as connected together, we shall find true what I have said --- that the verb {לקה}, lekech, does not mean the smoothness or adulation used, but, the lofty vaunting of the false teachers, who wished to be deemed the organs of the Holy Spirit, and assumed to themselves all the authority of God. For their elation was this, that they confidently boasted that God himself had spoken, and said that it was the word; and they did this, that whatever they prattled might appear indisputed, though it was sufficiently evident that they falsely pretended the name of God.

He adds, thirdly, Behold, I am against those who prophesy dreams of falsehood It was indeed necessary to say here, that though the false teachers arrogated to themselves what alone belonged to the servants of God, they were yet mendacious. He afterwards adds, They narrate them, and cause my people to err by their falsehoods and their levity The meaning is, that however proudly they might, have pretended the name of prophets, they were yet impostors, who deceived the people by narrating to them their false dreams. The word dream is taken here in a good sense, but the word added to it, shews that they boasted of dreams which were only their own; and this is again confirmed when Jeremiah says, that they deceived the people by their

[114] There are those who, with Houbigant, suppose a transposition in the word, the {{ן being put last instead of being first; and then it would mean to render smooth. But this does not suit the passage. The probable idea is what is given paraphrastically by the Sept., ``who send forth the prophecies of the tongue;'' they derived their prophecies from their own hearts and their own tongues, and said that they came from God. They took or used their tongues only, and at the same time professed to speak God's words. Or we may consider the taking or using the tongue as meaning only profession, as though it was said, ``who profess and say, `He saith.'" The Syr. is, ``who pervert their own tongues,'' which means that they used them falsely; and the Targ., ``who prophesy according to the will of their own heart.'' --- Ed.

falsehoods; and he adds, by their levity, [115] which some render ``flattery.'' I doubt not but that it means their inventions, which were vain, because they proceeded only from vain presumption.

He adds, Though I sent them not nor commanded them This negation ought especially to be noticed; for God shews how we are to form a judgment, when a question is raised respecting true and false teachers. Whatever, therefore, is without God's command is like the wind, and will of itself vanish away. There is, then, no solidity in anything but in God's command. Hence it follows, that all those who speak according to their own fancies are mendacious, and that whatever they bring forward has no weight in it; for God sets these two things in opposition the one to the other; on the one side are falsehood and levity, and on the other, his command and his call. It hence follows, that no one, except he simply obeys God and faithfully declares what he has received from him, can be of any account; for his whole weight is lighter than a feather, and all his apparent wisdom is falsehood.

At last he says, that they would not profit his people In which words he warns the people to shun them as the plague. But we see how the world indulges itself in this respect; for they who are drowsy seek to absolve themselves on the plea of ignorance, and throw the blame on their pastors, as though they were themselves beyond the reach of danger. But the Lord here reminded the people, that the teachers whom they received were pestilent; though for another reason he testified that they were useless, and that in order that he might shake off the vain confidence of the Jews, who were wont to set up this shield against all God's threatenings, that their false teachers promised them wonderful things. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 23:33

33. And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the LORD? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD.

33. Quod si interrogaverint to populus hic, vel Propheta, vel Sacerdos, dicendo. Quod onus Jehovae? Tunc dices illis, Quod onus? Derelinquam vos, inquit Jehova.

It appears sufficiently evident from this passage, --- that the contumacy of the Jews was so great, that they sought from every quarter some excuse for their insensibility, as though they could with impunity despise God when they rejected his word. For the devil by his artifice fascinates the reprobate, when he renders God's

[115] The word is rendered “errors,” by the Sept.; “miracles,” by the Vulg.; “lasciviousness,” by the Syr.; and “rashness,” by the Targ. It comes from a verb which means to swell, to overflow. As a feminine noun it is only found here, and as a participial noun in two places, Judges 9:4, and Zephaniah 3:4, in which places it evidently means licentious persons; and I once thought that as used here it means licentiousness; see Note on Zephaniah 3:4, in vol. 4 on the Minor Prophets: but I now think that the meaning most suitable here is excess or overflowing in words — vaunting boasting. The false prophets boasted that they were prophesying in God’s name; they were telling lies, and boasting that they were sent by God. In this way they succeeded in leading astray the people, Venema renders it “vain boasting.” Behold, I am against those who prophesy Lying dreams, saith Jehovah; And who declare them, that they may lead astray My people by their lies and by their vauntings. Then follows a virtual denial of their vauntings, for God had “not sent’ nor “commanded” them; and the conclusion of the verse refers to their lies, for what they said would “not profit” the people. Thus we see a perfect correspondence between what is said in this and in the following verse, and the order is according to the usual style of the Prophets, it being reversed in the latter instance; their vauntings were false, because God did not send them; and their lies were vain, for they would not profit the people. — Ed.

word either hateful or contemptible; and whenever he can exasperate their minds, so that they hear not God's word except with disdain and bitterness, he gains fully his object. The Jews, then, were led into such a state of mind, that they regarded God's word with hatred; and they were thus alienated from all docility and from every care for religion. In short, the prophets, as it is well known, everywhere employ the word {משא}, mesha, which means a burden.

Now, a burden means a prophecy, which terrifies the despisers of God by threatening them with vengeance. As, then, their minds were exasperated, they called through hatred the word of God a burden, and used it as a proverbial saying, ``It is a burden, a burden.'' They ought to have been moved by God's threatenings, and to have trembled on hearing that he was angry with them. The word burden, then, ought to have humbled them; but, on the contrary, they became exasperated, first, through haughtiness, then through an indomitable contumacy, and thirdly, they kindled into rage. We hence see how the expression arose, that the prophets called their prophecies burdens. God now severely condemns this fury, because they hesitated not thus openly to shew their insolence. It was surely a most shameful thing, that the word of God should be thus called in disdain and contempt, in the ways and streets; for they thus acted disdainfully and insolently against God; for it was the same as though they treated his word with open contempt. It was then no wonder that he reproved this fury with so much vehemence, by saying, But if this people ask thee, What is the burden of Jehovah?

This manner of asking was altogether derisive, when they said to Jeremiah and to other servants of God, ``What is the burden?'' that is, ``What dost thou bring to us, what trouble is to come on us?'' They thus not only spoke contemptuously of God's word, but, as though this wickedness was not sufficient, they became, as I have said, irritated and exasperated. If, then, they ask thee, What is the burden? And he speaks not only of the common people, but of the very prophets and priests.

We hence learn how great a contempt for God then prevailed, so that there was no integrity either in the priestly or the prophetic order. It is indeed wonderful with what impudence they dared to boast themselves to be God's servants, while they spoke with so much insolence! But the same thing happens in the world in our day; for we see that the ministers of Satan in no other way hold the world under their power, than by alluring the minds of the ungodly; and at the same time they cause God's word to be hated, and say that it brings not only troubles, but also torments. Since, then, these unprincipled men, who thus lead with hatred and disdain the true doctrine, occupy pulpits, we need not wonder that the same evil prevailed in the ancient Church.

It follows: If a prophet or a priest ask thee, What is the burden of Jehovah? thou shalt say to them, What burden? I will forsake thee, saith Jehovah. This was a most grievous threatening, but it has not been well considered and rightly understood; for interpreters have overlooked the implied contrast between the presence and the absence of God. Nothing could have been more acceptable to the Jews than God's silence. And yet in no other way does he more clearly show that he is a Father to us, caring for our salvation, than by familiarly addressing us. Whenever, then, the

prophetic word is announced, we have a sure and a clear evidence of God's presence, as though he wished to be connected with us. But when the ungodly not only reject so remarkable a benefit, but also furiously repel, as far as they can, such a favor, they desire and seek the absence of God. Therefore God says, ``Ye cannot bear my word, by which symbol I shew that I am present with you; I will forsake you;'' that is, ``I will no longer endure this indignity, but I will depart from you; there shall be hereafter no prophecy.'' [116]

At the first view this was not deemed grievous to the Jews; for as I have said, the ungodly desire nothing more than that God should be silent, and they thought that they had gained their greatest happiness, when with consciences lulled to sleep they indulged themselves in their filth. It was then their chief wish that God should depart from them. But yet there was nothing more to be dreaded. The Prophet then shews here that they were extremely infatuated and wholly fascinated by the devil, for they could desire nothing more dreadful than that God should depart from them; as though he had said, ``My word is a weariness to you, and I in my turn will now avenge myself, for I am weary of forbearing you, when I see that you can by no means be healed; and as I have been hitherto assiduous in instructing you, and have found you unteachable, I will now in my turn leave you.'' It follows, ---

Jeremiah 23:34

34. And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house.

34. Et propheta et sacerdos et populus qui dixerit, Onus Jehovae, visitabo super virum illum (hoc est, quicunque fuerit, sive propheta, sive sacerdos, sive homo quispiam vulgaris, visitabo super virum illum,) et super domum ejus.

Prophecy might indeed have been called a burden, when anything sad was announced; but it might also have been so called, when men were aroused to fear God, or when they were exhorted to repent. But God has a reference here to that wicked impiety, when men dared in ridicule to call any prophecy a burden. And hence it appears, that they were all so given up to their sins, that the very name of God's judgment was hated by them. We now then perceive the Prophet's meaning when he said, that God would punish all those who called his word a burden; for the Prophets themselves were wont to speak thus; and we find that Jeremiah in many places used this word. He does not then speak here generally, but points out, as by the finger, a vice which prevailed; for the Jews had so hardened themselves in hatred to sound doctrine, that they said, ``He! these Prophets do nothing but terrify us by threatenings and by denouncing ruin on us; and what will be the end of all this?'' God says, that he would take punishment on all who thus spoke and on all their families.

[116] The latter part of the verse is rendered by the Septuagint, "Ye are the assumption. ({λῶμμα},) I will dash you to pieces, saith the Lord;'' by the Vulgate, ``Ye are the burden, I will surely cast you away, saith the Lord;'' by the Syriac, ``This is the word of the Lord; I will pluck you up, saith the Lord;'' and by the Targum, ``Such is the prophecy; I will cast you away, saith the Lord.'' Blayney considers that these words {נתז}-{את} {משא} ought to be thus arranged {אתם} ,{המשא} consistently with all the Versions and the Targum; the letters are the same, only differently connected. This, doubtless, is the right reading, though not found in any MS.; both the Versions and the sense being in its favor. Then as to the verb, the most suitable meaning here is to cast off, as Blayney renders it. The verse then would read as follows, --- 33. And when ask thee shall this people, Or a prophet or a priest, saying, ``What is the burden of Jehovah?'' Then say to them, ``Ye are the burden;'' And I will cast you off; saith Jehovah. It was a suitable answer to mockers, who made, as it were, a sport of the true Prophets. --- Ed.

It hence appears how much he abominated this blasphemy; and hence also we see how precious to God is the honor of his word; for it is not of every kind of sin that God speaks when he extends his vengeance to posterity. It is the same thing as though Jeremiah had said, ``It is altogether intolerable, when men became irritated and exasperated against God's word.'' And yet this evil is not an evil of one age only. We see that the Israelites ever complained of God's rigor; hence that saying,

``The ways of the Lord are not tortuous, but rather your ways, O house of Israel.'' (Ezekiel 18:25.)

And here we must notice the wickedness of the human mind; for God, as it has been before stated, has nothing else in view by calling us to himself, but to make us partakers of eternal life and salvation. It is then God's design to receive us for the purpose or saving us; this is the end intended by, all the prophets; and hence the Prophet called before the word of God wheat; but what is done by men? They despise this favor; and not only so, but turn food into poison and cease not to provoke God's wrath. He was, therefore, constrained to threaten them. When he finds us teachable, he allures us to himself even with paternal kindness. But when we provoke him to wrath, we in a manner force him to put on another character, according to what he says, that he will be refractory towards the refractory. (Psalm 18:26.) Yet we complain when God deals rigidly with us. We cease not to carry on war with him; but when he restrains and checks our insolence, we immediately expostulate with him, as though he were too severe and his word offended us. Whence is this offense? even from our obstinate wickedness. Were men to put an end to their sinful course, the Lord would change his manner of dealing with them, and gently treat them and foster them as chickens under his wings; but this they suffer not; nay, they reject such a treatment as much as they can. Hence it is, that they abhor the name of God and his word. What then is the excuse for the complaint, when they say that God is too rigorous, as though his word were a burden? There is none; for they are themselves refractory against God, and thus his word becomes a hammer to break their heads, to shatter and destroy them. We now see the reason why God not only declares that he was angry with these ungodly despisers of his word, but also denounces the same vengeance on their posterity. [117]

Jeremiah 23:35

35. Thus shall ye say every one to his neighbour, and every one to his brother, What hath the LORD answered? and, What hath the LORD spoken?

35. Sic dicetis quisque ad socium suum, et quisque ad fratrem suum, Quid respondit Jehova? Et quid loquutus est Jehova?

Here the Prophet explains himself more clearly; he shews why God would not have his word to be called a burden. Why so? because they in a manner closed the way, so that they derived no benefit from God's word, while they regarded it

[117] The beginning of this verse will read better in connection with the last, in apposition with "you" whom the Lord threatened to cast off, — Then say to them, "Ye are the burden;" And I will cast you off, saith Jehovah — 34. Even the prophet and the priest and the people: Who will say, "The burden of Jehovah," Yea, I will punish that man and his house. Notice here the change of order in the words; in the preceding verse we find "the people and the prophet and the priest;" but here, "the prophet and the priest and the people." Whoever he might be, whether a prophet or a priest or one of the people," that man was to be punished. — Ed.

with disdain and hatred; for the word burden was an obstacle, so that they gave no access to God, nor opened their ears to hear his word. God then bids them to come with empty and sincere hearts; for it is a real preparation for a teachable spirit, when we acknowledge that we ought to believe in God's word, and also when we are not possessed by a perverse feeling which forms a prejudice and in a manner holds us bound, so that we are not free to form a right judgment.

The import of the passage then is this, that the Jews, renouncing their blasphemies, were to prepare themselves reverently to hear God's word, for hearing is due to God; and then that this word was to be heard with sincere hearts, so that no weariness, nor pride, nor hatred, nor any depraved feeling, might hinder his word from being believed and reverently heard by all. This then is what the Prophet means when he says, ``Ye shall hereafter change your impious expression, and shall say, What has Jehovah answered? what has Jehovah spoken?'' That is, they shall not themselves close the door, but willingly come to the school of God, being meek and teachable, so that nothing would hinder them from rendering honor to God and from embracing his word, that they might be terrified by his threatenings, and that being allured by his promises they might devote themselves wholly to him.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as nothing is better for us or more necessary for our chief happiness, than to depend on thy word, for that is a sure pledge of thy good will towards us, --- O grant, that as thou hast favored us with so singular a benefit, which thou manifest to us daily, we may be attentive to hear thee and submit ourselves to thee in true fear, meekness, and humility, so that we may be prepared in the spirit of meekness to receive whatever proceeds from thee, and that thus thy word may not only be precious to us, but also sweet and delightful, until we shall enjoy the perfection of that life, which thine only-begotten Son has procured for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture Ninety-First

Jeremiah 23:36

36. And the burden of the LORD shall ye mention no more: for every man's word shall be his burden; for ye have perverted the words of the living God, of the LORD of hosts our God

36. Et oneris, Jehovae non recordabimini amplius, quia onus erit cuique sermo ejus; et pervertistis sermones Dei vivi, Jehovae exercituum, Dei nostri.

Jeremiah goes on with the same subject, that every one ought calmly and meekly to hear God speaking, he said, as we saw yesterday, that the prophets were to be asked as to what God had spoken and what he had answered; he thereby intimated that there must be docility, in order that God's word may obtain credit, authority, and favor among us. He again repeats, that the word burden could not be endured by God; for, as we explained yesterday, this word was used commonly by the Jews as expressive of hatred or disdain, being as they were unwilling to receive sound doctrine.

In forbidding them to mention the word burden, it was the same thing as though he had said, ``Let not this form of speaking be any longer in use among you.'' He

then adds, For to every one his word shall be his burden. By these words he shews that what is bitter in prophecies is as it were accidental; for God has nothing else in view in addressing men, but to call them to salvation. The word of God then in itself ought to be deemed sweet and delightful. Whence then is this bitterness and hatred towards it? even from the wickedness of men alone. As when a sick person, eating the most wholesome food finds it turned into poison, the cause being in himself; so it is with us, it is our own fault that the word of God becomes a burden. It was, moreover, the Prophet's design to shew that the Jews had no reason to complain that prophecies were grievous to them, and always announced some trouble; for God wishes to address men with lenity and kindness, but he is forced by their wickedness to deal sharply with them. The Prophet seems, however, to go still farther, as though he had said, ``Though prophecies should cease, yet every one shall be a prophet to himself; for as they murmur against God, and cannot bear his judgment, however silent God's ministers may be, they will yet afford a sufficient cause for condemnation, who dare thus to rise up against God.''

We now see the design of the Prophet in saying, Ye shall no more mention the burden of Jehovah; that is, ``This shameful proverb, which brands God's word with disgrace, shall no more be used by you; this wicked practice shall cease, for else to every one of you; his word shall be a burden;'' so the causal particle {כי}, ki, is to be rendered. But if another sense be preferred, I feel no objection, that is, that they ought to have considered the reason why God did not deal more mildly with them; which was, because they were of a perverse disposition, and thus they refused the paternal kindness which he was prepared to shew, provided they received it. [118]

This passage is entitled to special notice, for we see how the greater part cannot bear threatenings and terrors when announced to them. Hence they entertain contempt and hatred towards heavenly doctrine; and yet none consider why God so often threatens and terrifies them in his word. For if men ceased to sin, God would cease to contend with them; but when they continually provoke him, is he to be silent? and further, are his prophets to suffer everything just to be violated, and God himself to be despised? Let us then know that the fault is in us when God seems to deal rigidly with us, for we do not allow him to use such a paternal language as he always would, were it not that we put a hinderance in the way.

The Prophet also adds, For ye have corrupted the words of the living God, of Jehovah of hosts our God So ought the words to be rendered. Here he justly ac-

[118] This sentence, as given by the Sept. and Vulg., bears the meaning first mentioned by Calvin, but another, as given by the Syr., "for the word, let it be to man his prophecy," that is, the Lord's prophecy. The meaning of which seems to be, that the burden, or prophecy, ought to be deemed by every man as the word of God, or ought to be called his word; it was no longer to be called burden, but God's word. According to Calvin and many others, the meaning is, "the word, or the phrase," the burden of the Lord, "which ye use in derision, shall really be a burden to you." The {{כי in this case must be rendered else or otherwise. But the following words do not well connect; and as punishment in case of disregarding the injunction here given is afterwards especially specified, to mention it here seems improper. I am therefore inclined to regard the two last clauses as including reasons for the prohibition; and I give this version, 36. And ``the burden of Jehovah'' ye shall no more mention; For the burden, it is become to every one his word; And ye have perverted the words of the living God, Of Jehovah of hosts, our God. The word burden was used by all, it had become a common word; and by using it in derision, they turned the words of the living God into contempt, instead of receiving them as his words and obeying them. This was the process, they first ridiculed them, and then despised and neglected them. Hence God prohibited the use of the expression, ``the burden of Jehovah.'' The only objection to the rendering above is, that ,{היה} a future, is rendered as a present, ``it is become;'' but this is what is often done. Besides, {כי} is sometimes conversive as well as the .{ו} --- Ed

cuses them, that they perverted the words of God, and in two ways, because they constrained God by their wickedness to speak otherwise than he wished, and also, because they were preposterous interpreters of his dealings. For though God may severely chastise us, yet it is our duty to receive his reproofs with a meek spirit, as they are necessary for us; but when we murmur and become refractory, we pervert the word of God. We hence see that the word of God is not only perverted in one way, but when we furiously oppose him, we prevent him to deal gently and kindly with us; and we do the same when we submit not to his reproofs, but rage against him whenever he summons us to judgment. And as their wantonness was in this instance so great, the Prophet here sets up against them in express terms the power of God.

He says first, that he is the living God; and by this term he reminded them that the ungodly, who vomited thus their blasphemies against him, would not go unpunished; ``See,'' he says, ``with whom ye have to do; for you contend with the living God; this audacity will rebound on your own heads; ye then carry on a fatal war.'' He, secondly, adds, that he is Jehovah of hosts; by which expression he again shews his power. And, thirdly, he says, that he is the God of that people; as though he had said, that not only their impiety was madness in daring to contend with God, but that it was also connected with ingratitude; for God had adopted them as his people, and had promised to be their God.

We now then see the design of the Prophet; he first warned them not to entertain hatred in their hearts to prophetic doctrine; secondly, he shewed that the whole fault was in themselves, as they constrained God to deal severely with them; and further, that they perverted the word of God, being false interpreters of it, and closing the door against his kindness when he invited all the pious and the teachable; and lastly, he exalts God's power and commends his goodness, that he might thus aggravate the sin of the people in daring to carry on war with God himself, and in despising the favor conferred on them. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 23:37

37. Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, What hath the LORD answered thee? and, What hath the LORD spoken?

37. Sic dices Prophetae, Quid respondit tibi Jehova? Et quid loquutus est tibi Jehova?

He repeats what we noticed yesterday, and almost in the same words. The meaning is, that if we desire to profit in God's school, we must beware lest our minds be preoccupied by any corrupt feeling. For whence is it that God's word is not savored by us, or excites in us a bitter spirit? even because we are infected by some sinful lust or passion which wholly corrupts our judgment. God then would have us to come to him free from every vicious disposition, and to be so teachable as to inquire only what he teaches, what he may answer to us; for whosoever becomes thus disentangled and free, will doubtless find the prophetic doctrine to be for his benefit. There is then but one cause why God's word does not profit us, but on the contrary is injurious and fatal to us, and that is, because we seek not what God speaks, that is, because we are not teachable, nor come to learn, but either sloth, or contempt,

or ingratitude, or perverseness, or something of this kind, bears rule in us.

Now he says here, that the prophets ought to be asked as to what God speaks, or as to what he may answer [119] In these words he exculpates God's faithful servants; for if a hearer is ready to obey, he will find from a faithful teacher what may justly please and do him good. In short he shews that there is nothing wrong in the prophets when their doctrine does not please us, but that this happens because we do not regard what Jeremiah here reminds us of, that we ought to hear God that we may learn, and that we may obey his voice. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 23:38-39

38. But since ye say, The burden of the LORD; therefore thus saith the LORD, Because ye say this word, The burden of the LORD, and I have sent unto you, saying, Ye shall not say, The burden of the LORD;

38. Quod si onus Jehovae dixeritis, propterea sic dicit Jehovah, Ne dicatis hoc verbum (hoc est, ne proferatis hunc sermonem) onus Jehovae; et misi ad vos (sed debet resolvi oratio, quum miserium ad vos,) et ne dicatis, onus Jehovae:

39. Therefore, behold, I, even I, will utterly forget you, and I will forsake you, and the city that I gave you and your fathers, and cast you out of my presence:

39. Propterea ecce ego et tollam vos tollendo (vel, obliviscar vestri obliviscendo, ut alii vertunt; tertia est sententia, obliviscar vestri, ut tollam, vel, ad tollendum,) et evellam vos (vel, projiciam, melius; alii vertunt, relinquam, male,) et urbem hanc, quam dedi vobis et patribus vestris, a facie mea.

Here the Prophet confirms what he had said, for God might have seemed to be too indignant, having been so grievously offended at one short expression. The Jews had borrowed from the prophets themselves, when they called prophecies burdens, as we have already said, and as we find in many places. Now as the lubricity of language is great, though the Jews might have done wrong as to one word, it might yet have appeared an insufficient reason for the punishment which God threatened to inflict. But the Prophet here shews that God was justly angry with them, for he had sent to them, and often warned them not to use this form of speaking, which was a manifest evidence of their impiety. As then they had thus disregarded God and his warnings, was it an excusable mistake? In short, Jeremiah shews that they had not erred inconsiderately, as it often happens as to those who speak rashly and thoughtlessly, but that this perverted way of speaking proceeded from determined wickedness, from a wish to affix some mark of disgrace to God's word; and thus they acted in disdain towards God himself. This then is the import of the words.

If ye shall say, even when I warn you not to speak in this manner; if then ye persevere in this obstinacy, Behold I, etc.; God here declares that he would take vengeance. As to this sentence, most interpreters derive the verb from {נשה}, nushe, making {ה}, he, the final letter; but I doubt the correctness of this; yet if this explanation be adopted, we must still hold that the Prophet alludes to the verb, to take away, which immediately follows. But I am disposed to take another view, that God would by removing remove them. It must be noticed that the word {משא},

[119] "Thus shalt thou say to the Prophet," that is, every one of you. The singular is used, as is the case often, instead of the plural. The Syr. indeed adopts the plural, "Thus shall ye say," etc. They are here directed how to address a Prophet. — Ed.

mesha, which has often been mentioned, comes from the same root; {משא}, mesha, a burden, is derived from {נשא}, nusha, to remove or take away. As therefore this proverb was commonly used, that prophetic doctrine ever brought some burden and trouble, God answers, ``I will take you away;'' that is, ``ye shall find by experience how grievous and burdensome your wickedness is to me, it shall rebound on your heads; ye have burdened and treated with indignity my word, and I will treat you with indignity,'' but in what manner? I will take you away even by taking you away. If any one approves more of the sense of forgetting, let him follow his own judgment; but that explanation appears to me unmeaning, ``I will forget you,'' except {נשא}, nusha, be taken in the second place as signifying to take away. ``I will forget you, that I may take you away.'' [120]

He adds, And I will pluck you up; which some render, ``I will forsake you,'' but they seem not to understand what the Prophet intended; for he declares something more grievous and more dreadful than before, when he says, I will pluck you up; and yet this sense does not satisfy me. The verb {נטש}, nuthash, means to extend, and metaphorically to cast far off; and casting off or away seems to suit the passage best. God then would not only remove or take away the Jews from their own place, but would also cast them far off into distant countries. He thus denounces on them an exile, by which they were to be driven as it were into another world. For had they dwelt in the neighborhood, it would have been more tolerable to them, but as they were to be driven away, as by a violent storm to the farthest and remotest regions, it was much more grievous.

He afterwards says, And the city also which I gave to you and to your fathers The verbs, to cast away and to pluck up, do not well suit stones; but as to the sense, it may rightly be said that God would take away the city with its inhabitants, as though they were driven away by the wind. And this was added designedly, for the Jews relying on this promise, ``This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell,'' thought it impossible that the sanctuary of God would ever be destroyed. As then this vain confidence deceived them, that the city which God had chosen as his habitation would stand always, the Prophet expressly adds that the city itself would perish.

And it is also added, that it was given to them and their fathers He anticipates all objections, and shakes off from the Jews the vain hope by which they were inebriated, even that the city was given perpetually to them, and that God resided there to defend them; ``This donation,'' he says, ``will not keep you nor the city itself from destruction.'' He adds, From my presence; for it was customary for them to pretend

[120] The variety in the Versions as to this clause, and the different constructions given of it by expositors, seem to intimate some derangement in the text, and the text itself as it now exists, (and there are no different readings,) is not according to the Hebrew idiom; for {,הנני ``behold me,'' is commonly, if not uniformly, followed by a participle and then by a verb, preceded by {ו} conversive in the past tense. See Jeremiah 9:7; Jeremiah 10:18; Jeremiah 16:16. This is not the case here. Besides, when a verb, and the same verb as a gerund are put together, which is no uncommon thing, the gerund in general, if not always, precedes the verb; not so here, if we take ,{נשיתי} as most do, to be from .{נשא} These anomalies are evident in the text as it now stands. Suppose the misplacing of one word, and put {נשא} after ,{הנני} and the sentence will be perfectly grammatical, and the version would be as follows, --- Therefore, behold, I will carry off and let you go; Yea, I will dismiss you and the city, Which I gave to you and to your fathers, From my presence. Alluding to burden, he says that he would carry them off as one carries a burden, and then let them go, or throw them down: the verb {נשה} means to loosen, to disengage one's self from a thing, to remit, to let go. Then {נמש} has a similar meaning, to set loose, to relax, to set free, to dismiss, to cast off; which intimates that he would not suffer them to continue as it were in his presence. It is the same verb as in Jeremiah 23:33 --- Ed

God's name, when they sought to harden their hearts against the threatenings of the prophets; but God here answers them and says, from my presence; as though he had said, ``In vain do ye harbor the thought respecting the perpetuity of the city and the Temple; for this depends on my will and good pleasure. As ye then stand or fall as it seems right to me, I now declare that ye shall be ejected and wholly removed from my presence.'' It follows, ---

Jeremiah 23:40

40. And I will bring an everlasting reproach upon you, and a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten.

40. Et ponam super vos opprobrium aeternum, et opprobria (est quidem aliud verbum, dedecora) aeterna, quod oblivioni non tradetur (potest referri ad utrunque membrum: nam in plurali numero ponit {כלמות}, [121] et postea addit verbum singulare, oblivioni non tradetur; sed potest, quemadmodum dixi, hoc extendi ad totum complexum.

What is here contained is, that though the Jews justly gloried for a time in being the peculiar people of God, yet this would avail them nothing, as they had divested themselves of that honor in which they had excelled, by the abnegation of true religion. Here then the Prophet strips the Jews of that foolish boasting with which they were inflated when they said that they were the people of God, and threatens that God having taken away their glory would make them lie under perpetual shame.

We at the same time know, that such threatenings are to be restricted as to time, they extend only to the coming of Christ; for the Church of God could not have been doomed to eternal reproach. But as to hypocrites, as there was no repentance, so they never obtained pardon; but God delivered his own from eternal reproach when Christ the Redeemer appeared; yet these words are to be understood as rightly addressed to the ungodly despisers of God. Now follows, ---

[121] It is singular in three MSS., and in all the early Versions, and the Targum; and the verb which follows requires it to be so, — 40. And I will bring on you a perpetual reproach, And a perpetual shame, which shall not be forgotten. The word for “shame” is stronger than that for “reproach,” as Parkhurst tells us; but shame is the feeling, and is rendered sometimes confusion, and reproach is what is outwardly disgraceful. The Sept. and Vulg. have reproach and disgrace, by which the distinction is not marked. The reproach or disgrace was to be such as to create such a shame as would never be forgotten. The outward reproach is mentioned first, and then the shame that it would occasion. — Ed

Jeremiah 24

CHAPTER 24

Jeremiah 24:1-2

1. The LORD shewed me, and, behold, two baskets of figs were set before the temple of the LORD, after that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon had carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, with the carpenters and smiths, from Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon.

1. Videre me fecit (ostendit mihi visionem) Jehova, et ecce duo calathi ficuum positi coram Templo Jehovae, postquam transtulerat Nebuchadne-zer, rex Babylonis, Jechoniam, filium Joakim, regem Jehudah, et principes Jehudah, et artificem et inclusorem (vel, sculptorem) [122] e Jerusalem, et ab-duxerat eos Babylonem:

2. One basket had very good figs, even like the figs that are first ripe: and the other basket had very naughty figs, which could not be eaten, they were so bad.

2. Calathus unus ficuum bonarum valde, sicuti sunt ficus praecoces; et alter calathus ficuum malarum valde, quae non comederentur propter malitiam (hoc est, adeo malae erant.)

The meaning of this vision is, that there was no reason for the ungodly to flatter themselves if they continued in their wickedness, though God did bear with them for a time. The King Jeconiah had been then carried away into exile, together with the chief men and artisans. The condition of the king and of the rest appeared in-

[122] What this word exactly means it is difficult to know; it is rendered differently in the Versions and in the Targ. It is rendered here by the Sept. “prisoners,” and in 2 Kings 24:14 and 16, “encloser, or joiner — {συγκλείς};'' by the Vulg. in three places, ``clausor,'' and ``inclusor --- closer and incloser,'' and also in Jeremiah 29:2. The word is not found elsewhere. The Targ. renders it ``porters,'' and the Syr. ``soldiers.'' As the word ``artificer,'' or mechanic, includes workers in wood and iron, that is, carpenters and smiths, it is probable that {חרשׁ} means workers in embroidery, sculpture, and jewellery, Parkhurst was disposed to render it a setter, or incloser of precious stones; but Blayney renders it an armourer, who made the coats of mail which inclosed the body, as the word from which it comes means to inclose. It probably includes all engaged in the curious works of art, especially the three branches before mentioned. Perhaps the best modern word for it would be, the artist, --- ``after Nebuchadrezar, the king of Babylon, removed Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, and the mechanic and the artist, from Jerusalem, and brought them to Babylon.'' --- Ed.

deed much worse than that of the people who remained in the country, for they still retained a hope that the royal dignity would again be restored, and that the city would flourish again and enjoy abundance of every blessing, though it was then nearly emptied; for everything precious had become a prey to the conqueror; and we indeed know how great was the avarice and rapacity of Nebuchadnezzar. The city then was at that time almost empty, and desolate in comparison with its former splendor. They however who remained might indeed have hoped for a better state of things, but those who had gone into exile were become like dead bodies. Hence miserable Jeconiah, who was banished and deprived of his kingdom, was apparently undergoing a most grievous punishment, together with his companions, who had been led away with him; and the Jews who remained at Jerusalem no doubt flattered themselves, as though God had dealt more kindly with them. Had they really repented, they would indeed have given thanks to God for having spared them; but as they had abused his forbearance, it was necessary to set before them what this chapter contains, even that they foolishly reasoned when they concluded, that God had been more propitious to them than to the rest.

But this is shewn by a vision: the Prophet saw two baskets or flaskets; and he saw them full of figs, and that before the temple of God; but the figs in one were sweet and savory; and the figs in the other were bitter, so that they could not be eaten. By the sweet figs God intended to represent Jeconiah and the other exiles, who had left their country: and he compares them to the ripe figs; for ripe figs have a sweet taste, while the other figs are rejected on account of their bitterness. In like manner, Jeconiah and the rest had as it were been consumed; but there were figs still remaining; and he says that the lot of those was better whom God had in due time punished, than of the others who remained, as they were accumulating a heavier judgment by their obstinacy. For since the time that Nebuchadnezzar had spoiled the city and had taken from it everything valuable, those who remained had not ceased to add sins to sins, so that there was a larger portion of divine vengeance ready to fall on them.

We now see the design of this vision. And he says that the vision was presented to him by God; and to say this was very necessary, that his doctrine might have more weight with the people. God, indeed, often spoke without a vision; but we have elsewhere stated what was the design of a vision; it was a sort of seal to what was delivered; for in order that the Prophet might possess greater authority, they not only spoke, but as it were sealed their doctrine, as though God had graven on it, as it were by his finger, a certain mark. But as this subject has been elsewhere largely handled, I shall now pass it by.

Behold, he says, two baskets of figs set before the temple. [123] The place ought to be noticed. It may have been that the Prophet was not allowed to move a step from his own house; and the vision may have been presented to him in the night, during thick darkness: but the temple being mentioned, shews that a part of the people had not been taken away without cause, and the other part left in the city;

[123] Blayney's rendering is "offered according to law before the temple." See Deuteronomy 26:2. — Ed.

for it had proceeded from God himself. For in the temple God manifested himself; and therefore the prophets, when they wished to storm the hearts of the ungodly, often said,

``Go forth shall God from his temple.'' (Isaiah 26:21; Micah 1:3.)

The temple then is to be taken here for the tribunal of God. Hence, he says, that these two baskets were set in the temple; as though he said, that the whole people stood at God's tribunal, and that those who had been already cast into exile had not been carried away at the will of their enemies, but because God designed to punish them.

The time also is mentioned, After Yeconiah the son of Jehohoiakim had been carried away; for had not this been added, the vision would have been obscure, and no one at this day could understand why God had set two baskets in the presence of Jeremiah. A distinction then is made here between the exiles and those who dwelt in their own country; and at the same time they were reduced to great poverty, and the city was deprived of its splendor; there was hardly any magnificence in the Temple, the royal palace was spoiled, and the race of David only reigned by permission. But though the calamity of the city and people was grievous, yet, as it has been said, the Jews who remained in the city thought themselves in a manner happy in comparison with their brethren, who were become as it were dead; for God had ejected the king, and he was treated disdainfully as a captive, and the condition of the others was still worse. This difference then between the captives and those who remained in the land is what is here represented.

He now adds, that one basket had very good figs, and that the other had very bad figs. If it be asked whether Jeconiah was in himself approved by God, the answer is easy, --- that he was suffering punishment for his sins. Then the Prophet speaks here comparatively, when he calls some good and others bad. We must also notice, that he speaks not here of persons but of punishment; as though he had said, ``ye feel a dread when those exiles are mentioned, who have been deprived of the inheritance promised them by God: this seems hard to you; but this is moderate when ye consider what end awaits you.'' He then does not call Jeconiah and other captives good in themselves; but he calls them good figs, because God had chastened them more gently than he intended to chastise Zedekiah and the rest. Thus he calls the Jews who remained bad figs, not only for this reason, because they were more wicked, though this was in part the reason, but he had regard to the punishment that was nigh at hand; for the severity of God was to be greater towards those whom he had spared, and against whom he had not immediately executed his vengeance. We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet. The rest we shall defer to the next Lecture.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou delayest with so much forbearance the punishments which we have deserved, and daily draw on ourselves, --- O grant, that we may not indulge ourselves, but carefully consider how often, and in how many different ways we have provoked thy wrath against us, that we may thus learn humbly to present ourselves to thee for pardon, and with true repentance so implore thy mercy, that we may from the heart desire wholly to submit ourselves to thee, that

whether thou chastisest us, or, according to thine infinite goodness, forgivest us, our condition may be ever blessed, not by flattering ourselves in our torpitude, but by finding thee to be our kind and bountiful Father, being reconciled to us in thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Ninety-Second

Jeremiah 24:3-5

3. Then said the LORD unto me, What seest thou, Jeremiah? And I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the evil, very evil, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil.

3. Et dixit Jehova ad me, Quid tu vides Jeremiah? et dixi, Ficus, ficus bonas, bonas valde; et malas, malas valde, quae non comedantur propter malitiam.

4. Again the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

4. Et fuit sermo Jehovae ad me, dicendo,

5. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Like these good figs, so will I acknowledge them that are carried away captive of Judah, whom I have sent out of this place into the land of the Chaldeans for their good.

5. Sic dicit Jehova, Deus Israel, Sicuti ficus bonae istae, sic agnoscam captivitatem Jehudah, quem emisi ex hoc loco in terram Chaldaeorum ad beneficentiam.

In the last Lecture we began to explain the meaning of the vision which the Prophet relates. We said that the miserable exiles whose condition might have appeared to be the worst, are yet compared to good figs, and that those who still remained in the country are compared to bad and bitter figs. We have explained why God shewed this vision to his servant Jeremiah, even because the captives might have otherwise been driven to despair, especially through the weariness of delay, for they saw that their brethren were still in possession of the inheritance granted them by God, while they were driven into a far country, and as it were disinherited, so that no one could regard them as God's people. As then despair might have overwhelmed their minds, God designed to give them some comfort. On the other hand, those who remained in the land not only exulted over the miserable exiles, but also abused the forbearance of God, so that they obstinately resisted all threatenings, and thus hardened themselves more and more against God's judgment, hence God declares what was remotest from what was commonly thought, that they had a better lot who lived captives in Babylon than those who remained quietly as it were in their own nest.

We have said that the badness of the figs is not to be explained of guilt, but of punishment: and this is what Jeremiah confirms, when he says, As these good figs, so will I acknowledge the captivity for good, or for beneficence, {טובה}, thube. It is well known that captivity means the persons led captive, it being a collective word. Then he says,

``I will acknowledge the captives of Judah, whom I have driven from this people, so as to do them good again.'' [124]

As this doctrine was then incredible, God calls the attention of the Jews to the final issue; as though he had said, that they were mistaken who took only a present

[124] The word “acknowledge,” or own, would lead us to attach rather a different meaning to this expression: God would own them “good,” as the good figs. The next verse refers to God’s purpose to do them good. — Ed.

view of things, and did not extend their thoughts to the hope of mercy. For they thus reasoned, ``It is better to remain in the country where God is worshipped, where the Temple is and the altar, than to live among heathen nations; it is better to have some liberty than to be under the yoke of tyranny; it is better to retain even the name of being a separate people than to be scattered here and there, so as not to be a community at all.'' Hence, according to their state at that time, they thought their condition better: but God corrected this wrong judgment; for they ought to have looked to the end, and what awaited the exiles and captives as well as those whom the king of Babylon had for a time spared. Though, indeed, it was the Prophet's object to alleviate the grief of those who had been led away into Chaldea, yet he had a special regard to the people over whom he was appointed an instructor and teacher. He was then at Jerusalem; and we know how perverse were those whom he had to contend with, for none could have been more obstinate than that people. As God had delayed his punishment, they supposed that they had wholly escaped, especially as they had an uncle as a successor to their captive king.

Hence, then, was their contempt of threatenings; hence was their greater liberty in sinning: they thought that God had taken vengeance on the exiles, and that they were saved as being the more excellent portion of the community. The Prophet, therefore, in order to break down this presumption, which he could not bend, set before them this vision, which had been given him from above. We now, then, see that the doctrine especially set forth is, that God would remember the captives for the purpose of doing them good, as though he had said that a wrong judgment was formed of the calamity of a few years, and that the end was to be looked to. It follows ---

Jeremiah 24:6

6. For I will set mine eyes upon them for good, and I will bring them again to this land: and I will build them, and not pull them down; and I will plant them, and not pluck them up.

6. Et ponam (vel, adjiciam) oculum meum super eos in beneficentiam, et reducam eos ad terram hanc, et aedificabo eos et non diruam, et plantabo eos et non evellam.

He confirms what he said in the last verse, but in other words, for it was difficult to persuade them that they were happier who were apparently lost, than those who still enjoyed some measure of safety. He had said that he would acknowledge them; but he now adds, I will set my eye upon them He uses a metaphor which often occurs in Scripture, for God is said to turn away his face when he hides his favor; and in the same sense he is said to forget, to depart, not to care, to despise, to cast away. Then, as God might have seemed to have no more any care for this people, he says, ``I will set my eyes on them.'' But he goes even farther, for he refers to the sentence announced in the last verse --- he had said that he was the author of their exile, ``I have cast them into the land of the Chaldeans'' but he now confirms the same thing, though in other words, when he says, ``Mine eyes will I set on them for good.'' For God is said to visit men, not only when he manifests his favor towards them, but also when he chastises them and punishes them for their sins. He had then set his eyes on them to execute punishment; he says now that he would act differently, that he

would kindly treat the miserable.

He afterwards says, I will restore them For, as he had sent them away, it was in his power to restore them. As, then, he could heal the wound inflicted by his own hand, this promise ought to have been sufficient to dispel every doubt from the minds of the captives as to their return; and further, the Jews, who as yet remained in Jerusalem and in the land of Judah, ought to have known that they in vain boasted in their good lot, as though God treated them better than their captive brethren, for it was in his power to restore those whom he had banished.

And he adds, I will build and not pull them down, I will plant and not pluck them up This mode of speaking would not be so significant either in Latin or in Greek; but such a repetition, as it is well known, often occurs in Hebrew. But whenever a negative is added to an affirmative, such form of expression is to be thus interpreted, ``I shall be so far from plucking them up, that I will plant them; I shall be so far from pulling them down, that I will build them up;'' or, ``since I had pulled them down, I will now build them up; since I had plucked them up, I will now plant them:'' or a perpetuity may be meant, as though God had said, ``I will plant them, so as not to pluck them again; I will build them, so as not to pull them down again.'' But the most frequent import of such expressions is what I first mentioned, ``I will not pull them down, but on the contrary build them up; I will not pluck them up, but on the contrary plant them.''

The meaning of the whole is, that however sad might be the calamities of the people in Chaldea, they being as exiles reduced to a desolate condition, yet God could collect them again, like one who plants a tree or builds a house. The metaphor of building is common in Scripture, and also that of planting. God is said to plant men, when he introduces a certain order among them, or when he allots to them a certain place to dwell in, or when he grants them peace and quietness. God is said in Psalm 44:2, to have planted his people; but I will not refer to the many passages which are everywhere to be met with. God often says that he had planted his vineyard. (Isaiah 5:2, etc.) And then well known is this passage,

``The branch of the Lord, and the planting for his glory.''
(Isaiah 60:21)

This is said of the preservation of the Church.

The meaning then is, that though God severely chastised the exiles who had been led into Chaldea, yet their condition was not to be estimated by one day, or a month, or a few years, but that a happy end was to be expected. And as God intended at length to shew himself reconcilable and propitious, it follows that the calamity which had happened to them was lighter than that which awaited the rest, who resolutely despised God and his prophets, and thus increased the vengeance which had been already denounced on them. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 24:7

7. And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the LORD: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.

7. Et dabo illis cor ad cognoscendum me, quod ego sum Jehova; et erunt mihi in

populum, et ego ero ipsis in Deum, quia revertentur ad me in toto corde suo.

Here is added the main benefit, that God would not only restore the captives, that they might dwell in the land of promise, but would also change them inwardly; for except God gives us a conviction as to our own sins, and then leads us by his Spirit to repentance, whatever benefit he may bestow on us, they will only conduce to our greater ruin. The Prophet has hitherto spoken of the alleviation of punishment, as though he had said, ``God will stretch forth his hand to restore his people to their own country.'' Then the remission of punishment is what has been hitherto promised; but now the Prophet speaks of a much more excellent favor, that God would not only mitigate punishment, but that he would also inwardly change and reform their hearts, so that they would not only return to their own country, but would also become a true Church, a name of which they had vainly boasted. For though they had been chosen to be a peculiar people, yet, as they had departed from true religion, they were only a Church in name. But now God promises that he would bring them, not only to enjoy temporal and fading blessings, but also eternal salvation, for they would truly fear and serve him.

And this is what we ought carefully to observe, for the more bountiful God is towards men, the more is his vengeance kindled by ingratitude. What, then, would it avail us to abound in all good things, except we had evidences of God's paternal favor towards us? But when we regard this end, that God testifies to us that he is our Father by his bounty towards us, we then make a right use of all his blessings; and God's benefits cannot conduce to our salvation except we regard them in this light. Hence Jeremiah, after having spoken of the people's restoration, justly exalts this favor above everything else, that the people would repent, so that they would not only fully partake of all the blessings they could expect, but would also worship God in sincerity and truth.

Now, God says that he would give them a heart to know him The word heart is to be taken here for the mind or understanding, as it means often in Hebrew. It, indeed, means frequently the seat of the affections, and also the soul of man, as including reason or understanding and will. But though the heart is taken often for the seat of the affections, it is yet applied to designate the other part of the soul, according to these words,

``Hitherto God has not given thee a heart to understand.'' (Deuteronomy 29:4)

The Latins sometimes take it in this sense, according to what Cicero shews when he quotes these words of Ennius, ``Catus AElius Sextus was a man remarkable in understanding.'' (Egregie cordatus; Cic. 1 Tuscul.) Then, in this passage, the word heart is put for the light of the understanding. Yet another thing must be stated, that a true knowledge of God is not, as they say, imaginary, but is ever connected with a right feeling.

From the words of the Prophet we learn that repentance is the peculiar gift of God. Had Jeremiah said only that they who had been previously driven by madness into ruin, would return to a sane mind, he might have appeared as one setting up free-will and putting conversion in the power of man himself, according to what the Papists hold, who dream that we can turn to either side, to good as well as to evil; and thus

they imagine that we can, after having forsaken God, of ourselves turn to him. But the Prophet clearly shews here, that it is God's peculiar gift; for what God claims for himself, he surely does not take away from men, as though he intended to deprive them of any right which may belong to them, according to what the Pelagians hold, who seem to think that God appears almost envious when he declares that man's conversion is in his power; but this is nothing less than a diabolical madness. It is, then, enough for us to know, that what God claims for himself is not taken away from men, for it is not in their power.

Since, then, he affirms that he would give them a heart to understand, we hence learn that men are by nature blind, and also that when they are blinded by the devil, they cannot return to the right way, and that they cannot be otherwise capable of light than by having God to illuminate them by his Spirit. We then see that man, from the time he fell, cannot rise again until God stretches forth his hand not only to help him, (as the Papists say, for they dare not claim to themselves the whole of repentance, but they halve it between themselves and God,) but even to do the whole work from the beginning to the end; for God is not called the helper in repentance, but the author of it. God, then, does not say, ``I will help them, so that when they raise up their eyes to me, they shall be immediately assisted;'' no, he does not say this; but what he says is, ``I will give them a heart to understand.'' And as understanding or knowledge is the main thing in repentance, it follows that man remains wholly under the power of the devil, and is, as it were, his slave, until God draws him forth from his miserable bondage. In short, we must maintain, that as soon as the devil draws us from the right way of salvation, nothing can come to our minds but what sinks us more and more in ruin, until God interposes, and thus restore us when thinking of no such thing.

This passage also shews, that we cannot really turn to God until we acknowledge him to be the Judge; for until the sinner sets himself before God's tribunal, he will never be touched with the feeling of true repentance. Let us then know that the door of repentance is then opened to us, when God constrains us to look to him. At the same time there is more included in the term Jehovah than the majesty of God, for he assumes this principle, which ought to have been sufficiently known to the whole people, that he was the only true God who had chosen for himself the seed of Abraham, who had published the Law by Moses, who had made a covenant with the posterity of Abraham. There is then no doubt but that the Prophet meant that when the Jews became illuminated, they would be convinced of what they had forgotten, that is, that they had departed from the only true God. This mode of speaking then means the same as though he had said, ``I will open their eyes, that they may at length acknowledge that they are apostates, and be thus humbled when made sensible how grievous was their impiety in forsaking me the fountain of living waters.''

He afterwards adds, that they should be to him a people, and that he in his turn would be to them a God; for they would return to him with the whole heart By these words the Prophet shews more clearly what he had before referred to, that God's blessings would be then altogether salutary when they regarded their giver. As long

then as we regard only the blessings of God, our insensibility produces this effect, that the more bountiful he is towards us, the more culpable we become. But when we regard God's bounty and paternal kindness towards us, we then really enjoy his blessings. This is the meaning of the Prophet's words when he says,

``I shall be to you a God, and ye shall be to me a people.''

What this mode of speaking means has been stated elsewhere.

Though God rules the whole world, he yet declares that he is the God of the Church; and the faithful whom he has adopted, he favors with this high distinction, that they are his people; and he does this that they may be persuaded that there is safety in him, according to what is said by Habakkuk,

``Thou art our God, we shall not die.'' (Habakkuk 1:12.)

And of this sentence Christ himself is the best interpreter, when he says, that he is not the God of the dead, but of the living, (Luke 20:38;) he proves by the testimony of Moses, that Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, though dead, were yet alive. How so; because God would not have declared that he was their God, were they not living to him. Since then he regards them as his people, he at the same time shews that there is life for them laid up in him. In short, we see that there is here promised by God not a restoration for a short time, but he adds the hope of eternal life and salvation; for the Jews were not only to return to their own country, when the time came to leave Chaldea, and a liberty granted them to build their own city; but they were also to become the true Church of God.

And the reason is also added, Because they will return to me, he says, with their whole heart He repeats what we have already observed, that they would be wise (cordatos) and intelligent, whereas they had been for a long time stupid and foolish, and the devil had so blinded them, that they were not capable of receiving sound doctrine. But these two things, the reconciliation of God with men and repentance, are necessarily connected together, yet repentance ought not to be deemed as the cause of pardon or of reconciliation, as many falsely think who imagine that men deserve pardon because they repent. It is indeed true that God is never propitious to us, except when we turn to him; but the connection, as it has been already stated, is not such that repentance is the cause of pardon, nay, this very passage clearly shews that repentance itself depends on the grace and mercy of God. Since this is true, it follows that men are anticipated by God's gratuitous kindness.

We hence further learn, that God is not otherwise propitious to us than according to his good pleasure, so that the cause of all is only in himself. Whence is it that a sinner returns to the right way and seeks God from whom he has departed? Is it because he is moved to do so of himself? Nay, but because God illuminates his mind and touches his heart, or rather renews it. How is it that God illuminates him who has become blind? Surely for this we can find no other cause than the gratuitous mercy of God. When God then is propitious to men, so as to restore them to himself, does he not anticipate them by his grace? How then can repentance be called the cause of reconciliation, when it is its effect? It cannot be at the same time its effect and cause.

We ought therefore carefully to notice the context here, for though the Prophet

says that the Jews, when they returned, would be God's people, because they would turn to him with their whole heart, he yet had before explained whence this turning or conversion would proceed, even because God would shew them mercy. They who pervert such passages according to their own fancies, are not so acquainted with Scripture as to know that there is a twofold reconciliation of men with God: He is first reconciled to men in a hidden manner, for when they despise him, he anticipates them by his grace, and illuminates their minds and renews their hearts. This first reconciliation is what they do not understand. But there is another reconciliation, known by experience, even when we feel that the wrath of God towards us is pacified, and are indeed made sensible of this by the effects. To this the reference is made in these words,

``Turn ye to me, and I will turn to you,'' (Zechariah 1:3)

that is, ``I appear severe and rigid to you; but whence is this? even because ye cease not to provoke my wrath; return to me, and you shall find me ready to spare you.'' God therefore did not then first begin to pardon sinners, when he does them good, but as he had been previously pacified, hence he turns them to himself, and afterwards shews that he is really reconciled to them.

By the whole heart, is intimated sincerity or integrity, as by a double heart, or a heart and a heart, is signified dissimulation. It is certain that no one turns to God in such a manner that he puts off all the affections of the flesh, that he is renewed at once in God's image, so that he is freed from every stain. Such a conversion is never found in man. But when the Scripture speaks of the whole heart, it is in contrast with dissimulation;

``with my whole heart have I sought thee,'' says David; ``I have hid thy words and will keep them: I have prayed for thy favor; I will ask,'' etc., (Psalm 119:10-16;)

``They will seek me,'' as Moses says, ``with their whole heart.''
(Deuteronomy 4:29; Deuteronomy 10:12)

David did not divest himself of everything sinful, for he confesses in many places that he was laboring under many sins; but the clear meaning is, that what God requires is integrity. In short, the whole heart is integrity, that is when we deal not hypocritically with God, but desire from the heart to give up ourselves to him.

As we have before refuted the error of those who think that repentance is the cause why God becomes reconciled to us, so now we must know that God will not be propitious to us except we seek him. For there is a mutual bond of connection, so that God anticipates us by his grace, and also calls us to himself; in short, he draws us, and we feel in ourselves the working of the Holy Spirit. We do not indeed turn, unless we are turned; we do not turn through our own will or efforts, but it is the Holy Spirit's work. Yet he who under pretext of grace indulges himself and cares not for God, and seeks not repentance, cannot flatter himself that he is one of God's people; for as we have said, repentance is necessary. It follows, --- but I cannot to-day finish this part, for he speaks of the badness of the figs, and of the remnant which still remained.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are placed in this world, that while daily receiving

so many blessings, we may so pass our time as to regard our end and hasten towards the goal, --- O grant, that the benefits and blessings by which thou invitest us to thyself, may not be impediments to us, and keep us attached to this world, but on the contrary stimulate us to fear thy name as well as to appreciate thy mercy, so that we may thus know thee to be our God, and strive on our part to present ourselves to thee as thy people, and so consecrate ourselves and all our services to thee, that thy name may be glorified in us, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Ninety-Third

Jeremiah 24:8

8. And as the evil figs, which cannot be eaten, they are so evil; surely thus saith the LORD, So will I give Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue of Jerusalem, that remain in this land, and them that dwell in the land of Egypt:

8. Et sicut ficus malae, quae non comeduntur prae malitia (id est, amaritudine,) sic certe (est {כי}, sed abundat, certe sic,) dicit Jehova, ita ponam Zedekiam, regem jehudah, et principesejus, et reliquias Jerusalem, quae residuae sunt in terra hac, et eos qui habitant in terra AEgypti.

God, after having promised to deal kindly with the captives, now declares that he would execute heavier punishment on King Zedekiah, and the whole people who yet remained in their own country. We have stated why God exhibited this vision to the Prophet, even that he might support their minds who saw nothing but grounds of despair, and that also, on the other hand, he might correct their pride who flattered themselves in their own lot, because God had deferred his vengeance as to them. Then the Prophet, having given comfort to the miserable exiles, now speaks against Zedekiah and his people, who boasted that God was propitious to them, and that they had not only been fortunate, but also wise in continuing in their own country.

He then says that Zedekiah and his princes, and all who remained in Judea, were like the bad figs, which could not be eaten on account of their bitterness. I have said that this is to be referred to punishment and not to guilt. They had sinned, I allow, most grievously; but we are to regard the design of the Prophet. The meaning then is, that though the condition of those who had been driven into captivity was for the present harder, yet God would deal more severely with those who remained, because he had for a time spared them, and they did not repent, but hardened themselves more and more in their wickedness.

Now we know that Zedekiah was set over the kingdom of Judah, when Jeconiah surrendered himself to Nebuchadnezzar: he was the uncle of Jeconiah, and reigned eleven years; and during that time he ought to have been at least wise at the expense of another. For Eliakim, who was also called Jehoiakim, had been chastised, and that not only once; but Nebuchadnezzar, after having spoiled the temple, rendered him tributary to himself, on his return to Chaldea. At length, after having been often deceived by him, he became extremely displeased with him; and his son, who had reigned with his father, three months after his death, voluntarily surrendered himself into the power and will of the conqueror. Mathaniah afterwards reigned, of whom the Prophet speaks here. So, he says, will I render [125] Zedekiah (called previously

[125] Rather "make." The verb {,{נת to give, means often to make, to constitute; and such is its meaning evidently

Mathaniah) the king of Judah, and his princes, and the remnants of Jerusalem, who remain in this land, (for the greater part had been led into exile,) and those who dwell in the land of Egypt, for many had fled thither; and we know that they were confederates with the Egyptians, and that through a vain confidence in them they often rebelled.

And this was also the reason why the prophets so sharply reproved them: they relied on the help of Egypt, and took shelter under its protection. When, therefore, they found themselves exposed to the will of their enemies, they fled into Egypt. But Nebuchadnezzar afterwards, as we shall see, conquered Egypt also. Thus it happened that they were only for a short time beyond the reach of danger. But as fugitive slaves, when recovered, are afterwards treated more severely by their masters, so also the rage of King Nebuchadnezzar became more violent against them. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 24:9

9. And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them.

9. Et ponam eos in commotionem (vel, strepitum, vel, perturbationem, alii concussionem vertunt) in malum omnibus regnis terrae, in probrum, et parabolam, et proverbium, et execrationem in omnibus locis quo ejecero ipsos (vel, expulero.)

Here the Prophet borrows his words from Moses, in order to secure authority to his prophecy; for the Jews were ashamed to reject Moses, as they believed that the Law came from God: it would at least have been deemed by them an abominable thing to deny credit to the Law. And yet they boldly rejected all the prophets, though they were but faithful interpreters of the Law, as the case is with the Papists of the present day, who, though they dare not deny but that the Scripture contains celestial truth, yet furiously reject what is alleged from it. Similar was the perverseness of the Jews. Hence the prophets, in order to gain more credit to their words, often borrowed their very words from Moses, as though they had recited from a written document what had been dictated to them. For in Deuteronomy and in other places Moses spoke a language of this kind, --- that God would give up the people to a concussion or a commotion, for a reproach, for a proverb, for a taunt, to all the nations of the earth. (Deuteronomy 28:37; 1 Kings 9:7.)

It is then the same as though Jeremiah had said, that the time would at length come when the Jews would find that so many maledictions had not been pronounced in vain by Moses. They no doubt read Moses; but as they were so stupid, no fear, no reverence for God was felt by them, even when he terrified them with such words as these. The Prophet then says, that the time was now near when they should know by experience that God had not in vain threatened them.

I will set them for a commotion The verb {זוּע}, zuo, means to move and to be noisy. Many render the noun here ``noise,'' others ``perturbation,'' and others, ``the

here. As the figs were bad, unfit for eating; so God would make Zedekiah, the princes, etc., like them. The previous words, ``yea, thus saith Jehovah,'' would be better included in a parenthesis: 8. But like the bad figs, which cannot be eaten, they being so bad, (yea, thus saith Jehovah,) so will I make Zedekiah, etc. --- Ed.

shaking of the head;'' for we are wont to shake the head in scorn. [126]

However this may be, we are to read in connection with this the following words, --- that they would be for a reproach, and a terror, and a taunt, and an execration, to all nations It is then said, on account of evil: for the preposition {ל}, lamed, is to be taken here in different senses: before ``commotion,'' it means ``for;'' but here it is causal, ``on account of.'' The severe and dreadful vengeance of God would be such, that it would move and disturb all nations. He indeed mentions all kingdoms, but the meaning is the same. He then adds reproach, that is, that they would be subjected to the condemnation of all nations. They had refused to submit to God's judgment, and when he would have made them ashamed for their good, they had wickedly resisted. It was therefore necessary to subject them to the reproach of all people.

It is added, for a proverb and for a tale, or as some read, ``for a parable and for a proverb.'' The word {משל}, meshel, means a common saying; but here it signifies a scoff, and a similar meaning must be given to, {שנינה}, shenine, a tale or a fable. By both words he means, that when the heathens wished to describe a most grievous calamity, they would take this example, ``Yes, it is all over with the Jews, no nation has become so wretched.'' The same view is to be taken of execration; for he intimates that they would become a type and a pattern of a curse, ``Yes, may you perish like the Jews; may God execute vengeance on you, as he has done on the Jews.'' He then adds, that this would happen to them in all places wherever God would drive them; as though the Prophet had said, that God would not be satisfied with their exile, though that was to be grievous and bitter; but that when driven to distant lands they would become objects of reproach, so that all would point at them with the finger of scorn, accompanied with every mark of reproach, and would be also taking them as an example of execration. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 24:10

10. And I will send the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, among them, till they be consumed from off the land that I gave unto them and to their fathers.

10. Et mittam in ipsos gladium, famem et pestem, usque dum consumantur e superficie terrae, quam dedi ipsis et patribus ipsorum.

He confirms the former verse, --- that God would then with extreme rigor punish them, by allowing the city and the inhabitants who remained, to be given up to the will of their enemies. And Jeremiah still speaks as from the mouth of Moses, that his prophecy might be more weighty, and that he might frighten those men who were so refractory. There are here three kinds of punishments which we often meet with, under which are included all other punishments. But as God for the most part punishes the sins of men by pestilence, or by famine, or by war, he connects these three together when his purpose is to include all kinds of punishment.

[126] "Vexation," as rendered by the Vulg., and in several places in our version, is the best word. The word which follows is of a similar import, "for evil," that is, annoyance. The verse is as follows, — 9. And I will make them a vexation, an evil, To all the kingdoms of the earth, — A reproach and a proverb, A taunt and an execration, In all the places where I shall drive them. The word for "taunt" is rendered in other places "a byword:" it denotes what is sharp and cutting. They were to be objects and subjects of these things. Being a vexation and an evil, or an annoyance to others, they would become objects of reproach and execration, and subjects of proverbs and of taunts. See a note on Jeremiah 15:4; vol. 2 — Ed.

He adds, Until they be consumed from the face of the land; he says not ``until they be consumed in the land,'' but from the face of it, {מעל}, mol, from upon it: for the Jews were not consumed in their own country; but he consumed them by degrees elsewhere, so that they gradually pined away: they were driven into exile, and that was their final destruction. [127] What this clause means I have explained in another place.

The Prophet adds, which I gave to them and to their fathers. His object here was to shake off from the Jews that foolish confidence with which they were inebriated: for as they had heard of the land in which they dwelt, that it was the rest of God, and as they knew that it had been given to them by an hereditary right, according to what had been promised to their fathers, they thought that it could never be taken away from them. They therefore became torpid in their sins, as though God was bound to them. The Prophet ridicules this folly by saying, that the promise and favor of God would not prevent him from depriving them of the land and of its possession, and from rejecting them as though they were aliens, notwithstanding the fact, that he had formerly adopted them as his children.

We now see the meaning of both parts of this vision. For the Prophet wished to alleviate the sorrow of the exiles when he said, that their state at length would be better; and so he promised that God would be reconciled to them after having for a time chastised them. Thus it is no small comfort to us when we regard the end; for as the Apostle says to the Hebrews, when we feel the scourges of God, sorrow is a hinderance to a patient suffering, as chastisement is for the present grievous, bitter, and difficult to be endured. (Hebrews 12:11.) It is therefore necessary, if we would patiently submit to God, to have regard to the issue: for until the sinner begins to taste of God's grace and mercy, he will fret and murmur, or he will be stupid and hardened; and certainly he will receive no comfort. Afterwards the Prophet shews, on the other hand, that though God may spare us for a time, there is yet no reason for us to indulge ourselves, for he will at length make up for the delay by the heaviness of his punishment: the more indulgently he deals with us, the more grievous and dreadful will be his vengeance, when he sees that we have abused his forbearance. Now follows ---

[127] The “sword” means war, and by war they were led captive. But their consumption in captivity is not what is here related; but their removal from their own land, and the means employed for that purpose. He had spoken before of what they would become in exile; but here he goes back as it were to describe their misery at the time of their captivity; they would be removed from their own land either by captivity, signified by the sword, or by famine, or by pestilence. — Ed.

Jeremiah 25

CHAPTER 25

Jeremiah 25:1

1. The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the people of Judah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that was the first year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon;

1. Sermo qui fuit ad Jeremiam, ad omnem populum Jehudah (sed {לע} accipitur etiam hic diverso sensu: sermo enim directus fuit ad Jeremiam ut esset illius testis ac proeco, deinde ad populum ut tandem perveniret ex ore Jeremioe ad omnes Judoeos quod uni dictum fuerat) anno quarto Joakim filii Josiae regis Jehudah: hic est annus primus Nebuchadnezer regis Babel.

his prophecy no doubt preceded the vision which we have just explained, and which had just been presented to Jeremiah when Jehoiakim died, and when Zedekiah reigned in the place of Jeconiah; who, being the last king, was substituted for his nephew Jeconiah. But related now is the prophecy which Jeremiah was bidden to proclaim in the fourth year of Jehoiakim; and he reigned, as we shall hereafter see, eleven years. We hence conclude that his book is composed of various addresses, but that the order of time has not always been preserved. Now the sum of the whole is, that when God found that the people could not be amended and restored to a right mind by any warnings, he denounced final ruin both on the Jews and on all the neighboring nations: but why he included the heathens we shall hereafter see.

He then says, that this prophecy was committed to him in the fourth year of Jehoiakim; and he adds, that the same year was the first of King Nebuchadnezar This seems inconsistent with other places, where the third of Jehoiakim is mentioned for the fourth year; and hence a long time is allotted for the first year of Nebuchadnezar. But a solution of this is not difficult, if we consider that Nebuchadnezar suddenly returned into Chaldea to settle his affairs at home, when the report of his father's death was brought to him; for he feared, lest in his absence a tumult should arise, as

it often happened. He was therefore anxious to secure his own affairs; and having settled things at home, he brought Jehoiakim into subjection, and in the fourth year of his reign he compelled him to open his treasures, and also led away captive those whom he wished. And it was at this time that Daniel and his companions were led away into exile, and the precious vessels of the Temple were removed. As to the first year of Nebuchadnezar's reign, he reigned first with his father; and then when he reigned alone, the beginning of a new reign is justly mentioned as the first year. Though then he was made king, yet as he did not exercise the chief power until his father's death, it was not until that event that he was really king; this is the reason why mention is made of his first year. But we ought especially to notice what the Prophet says, --- that the word came to him, not for his own sake, but that he might be the public herald of God. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:2

2. The which Jeremiah the prophet spake unto all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying,

2. Quem sermonem protulit Jeremias Propheta ad totum populum Jehudah, et ad omnes habitatores Jerosolymae, dicendo.

He shews more clearly in this verse what he had just said, --- that he was not taught from above, that he might suppress what he had heard, but that he might proclaim it as from the mouth of God; and hence he gives himself the honorable title of a Prophet, as though he had said, that he came furnished with the indubitable commands of God, and was at the same time honored with the office of a Prophet; and he came thus, that no one might dare despise his doctrine. Now follows his sermon, ---

Jeremiah 25:3-5

3. From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon king of Judah, even unto this day, that is the three and twentieth year, the word of the LORD hath come unto me, and I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye have not hearkened.

3. A tertio decimo anno Josiae filii Ammon regis Jehudah ad hunc diem, hic tertius et vicesimus annus est, loquutus est Jehova ad me, et loquutus sum ad vos, surgens mane; et non audistis:

4. And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending them; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear.

4. Et misit Jehova ad vos omnes suos servos Prophetas, mane surgens et mittens; et non audistis et non inclinastis aurem vestram ad audiendum;

5. They said, Turn ye again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings, and dwell in the land that the LORD hath given unto you and to your fathers for ever and ever.

5. Dicendo, Revertimini agedum quisque a via sua mala eta malitia operum vestrorum; et habitate super terram, quam dedit Jehova vobis et patribus vestris a seculo et usque in seculum (et quoe sequuntur.)

Jeremiah now expostulates with the Jews, because they had not only perfidiously departed from the true worship of God, and despised the whole teaching of his Law, but because they had shaken off the yoke, and designedly and even obstinately

rejected all warnings, being not moved by reproofs nor even by threatenings. He does not then simply charge them with impiety and ingratitude, but adds the sin of perverseness, that they were like untameable wild beasts, and could by no means be corrected.

He says, that from the thirteenth year of Josiah king of Judah, to that year, which was the twenty-third year, he had not ceased faithfully to perform the office committed to him, but had effected nothing. It hence appears how incorrigible was their wickedness. We have seen, at the beginning of the book, that he was called by God to be a Prophet in the thirteenth year of King Josiah; and he had now been engaged in his calling, as he declares, for twenty-three years.

He had spent his time in vain, he had consumed much labor without any fruit. It is then no wonder that he now accuses them of perverseness, and that in the name of God; for he pleads not his own cause, but shews what the Jews deserved, considering how much God had labored in reclaiming them, and that they had rejected all his warnings and refused all his remedies. Then from the thirteenth year of Josiah, he says, to this day; and afterwards in a parenthesis he adds, that he had already discharged his office for twenty-three years.

We learn that the Prophet spoke thus seventeen years before the destruction of the City and Temple; for he had accomplished forty years before the people were driven into exile, and before they who thought themselves safe, miserably perished. He continued to the death of Josiah; and afterwards about twenty-two transpired; for Jehoiakim reigned eleven years; and without reckoning the short time of Jeconiah, Mathaniah, called also Zedekiah, was in the eleventh year removed, and disgracefully and reproachfully put to death. Thus it appears that the Prophet constantly labored for forty years.

Hence, also, we learn how diabolical was the madness of that people in rejecting so many admonitions. And if we connect another thing, to which I lately referred, that they had been taught by many examples, it will appear still more evident that the disease of impiety as to that people was altogether incurable.

But this passage deserves special attention; for we here learn that we ought immediately to return to God when he invites us; for faith is known by its promptitude. As soon then as God speaks, it behoves us to be attentive, so that we may immediately follow him. But if God ceases not for a whole year to warn and exhort us, while at the same time his doctrine is despised, we become guilty of intolerable sin. Let us then remember that days are here in a manner mentioned as well as years, that the Jews might consider how many days are included in every year; and let us also know that years are mentioned by Jeremiah, that they might, understand that they had no excuse, inasmuch as God had for so long a time ceased not to promote their welfare, while in the meantime they persisted in their impiety, and continued obstinate to the last. This is the reason why the Prophet relates again when it was that he began to discharge his prophetic office, even from the thirteenth year of Josiah.

He then adds, that it was their own fault that they had not repented; spoken, he says, has Jehovah to me, and I to you. By saying that the word of God was deposited with him, he no doubt intended to assert his authority against the unbelievers, who

clamored that he presumptuously pretended God's name, and that he had not been sent by God. For we have elsewhere seen that the Church was then miserably torn, having intestine broils, and many were boasting that they were prophets; and we shall hereafter find the same thing in other places. Thus, then, Jeremiah was not received by the whole people, and his authority was disputed. Since then he had to contend with many ungodly men, he here testifies that he came not of himself, but that the prophetic office had been committed to him.

After having asserted the authority of his call, he adds, that he had faithfully promoted the welfare of the whole people; for he declares how faithful and diligent he had been when he says, that he had spoken and rose up early; for to rise up early means that he had been assiduous in his work. The Prophet then shews that he had not been tardy or idle, and that he had not spoken carelessly as many do, who seem to do what God commands, but display no fervid zeal and no sedulity. The Prophet then, after having declared that he had been sent from above, adds that he had exercised fidelity and diligence, that he had strenuously served God and his Church. I have spoken to you, he says, as the Lord had spoken to me, --- how? rising up early

He then adds, I have spoken, and ye heard not He complains here that his work had been useless, and at the same time shews that the whole fault was in the people. He confirms the same thing in other words, Jehovah has sent to you all his servants the prophets, rising. up early, etc He enhances their sin, --- that they had not only rejected one Prophet but even many; for God had not employed Jeremiah alone to teach them, but had joined others with him, so that they were less excusable. We hence see that their sin is in this verse exaggerated; for the Jews had not only despised God in the person of one man, but had also rejected all his servants. He might, indeed, have simply said, that God had sent his servants, but he adds the word prophets, in order that their ingratitude might appear more evident. It was, indeed, very wicked to neglect God's servants; but as prophecy was an invaluable treasure, and a singular pledge and symbol of God's favor, it was a double crime when they thus despised the prophets, whose very name ought to have been held sacred by them.

He afterwards applies to God what he had said of himself, rising up early It is certain that God does not rise up, as he sleeps not in the night; but the language is much more expressive and forcible, when God himself is said to rise up early. And it, was not without reason that the Prophet spoke so emphatically; for though the Jews were sufficiently convicted of ingratitude for having disregarded God's servants, it was yet a monstrous impiety to shew no regard for God. But when the unbelieving are proved guilty, they ever fix their eyes on men, ``He! it is with a mortal that I have to do; far be it from me ever to rise up against God; but why is this so much blamed, since I do not immediately perish? since I am not suddenly cast down at the nod of man? what! am I not free to inquire, and to discuss, and to examine every part of what is said? why do the prophets so imperiously treat us, that it is not lawful to doubt any of their words?'' Thus, then, did the ungodly speak. But God on the other hand answered them and said, that he was despised, as also Christ said,

``He who hears you hears me,

and he who despises you despises me.'' (Luke 10:16)

So also the Prophet sets forth God himself as rising up early, exhorting the people and manifesting every care for their wellbeing. This, then, is the design of the metaphor, when he says, that God had sent to them and rose up early; he rose up early while sending his servants.

Now as God fulminates against all despisers of his doctrine, so from these words we may gather no small consolation; for we certainly conclude that God watches over our safety whenever sound and faithful teachers go forth: it is the same as though he himself descended from heaven, rose up early, and was intent in securing our salvation. This we learn from the very words of the Prophet, when he says, that God rose up early. But as this testimony of God's favor and paternal care towards us is delightful, so to the same extent dreadful is the vengeance that awaits those who neglect this favor, who sleep when God is watching, who hear not when he is speaking, who continue in their sloth and torpor when God of his own accord meets them, and kindly and gently invites them to himself.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast been pleased to choose us from our infancy to be thy people, and that when we were wretched apostates, thou hast also been pleased to restore us to the right way, by stretching forth thine hand to lead us, --- O grant, that we may not be deaf nor idle; but may it please thee, by thy Spirit, especially to correct all obstinacy in our hearts, so that we may render ourselves obedient and submissive to thee: and as thou hast not ceased continually to call us, may we in our turn respond to thee, and not only by our tongues, but also by our works, pursue the course which thou hast appointed for us, until we shall reach the goal, and enjoy that blessed state of glory which thou hast prepared for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Ninety-Fourth

We began yesterday to explain God's complaint against the Jews, --- that he had found them wholly refractory and rebellious. He says, in one word, that they did not hear him; but he afterwards adds, that they did not incline their ear to hear him; by which mode of speaking, is set forth more fully their perverseness, as they closed their ears as it were designedly; for not to incline the ear is more than not to hear. Jeremiah then means, that they had so hardened themselves against all that was taught by the prophets, that they designedly rejected everything that was set before them by God's authority.

He afterwards explains what God required them to do, Turn ye, I pray, every one from his evil way and from the wickedness of your doings, and dwell in the land which Jehovah has given to you and your fathers from age even to age What God required was doubtless most just; for he demanded nothing from the Jews but to repent. There was also a promise added; God not only exhorted them to repent, but wished also to be reconciled to them, and having blotted out all memory of their sins, to shew them kindness: had they not been harder than stones, they must have been turned to his service by so kind a treatment. God might have indeed sharply reproved them, he might have threatened them, he might, in short, have cut off every hope of pardon;

but he only required them to repent, and at the same time added a promise of free forgiveness. As then they had despised so great a favor, it follows that they must have been men of reprobate minds and of irreclaimable habits.

When they were bidden to repent of their evil way and of the wickedness of their doings, it was done for sake of amplifying; for the Prophet wished to take away from them every pretense for evasion, lest they should ask what was the wickedness or what was the evil way. He then intimates that they were fully proved guilty; and for this purpose he made the repetition. By way is designated a continued course of life; but as they had fully shewed themselves perverse in many ways, he refers to their fruits, as though he had said, that they in vain contended with God, by inquiring what had been their evil way, for their whole life sufficiently testified that they were wholly given to wickedness.

Now there is a striking alliteration in the verbs {שבו} and {ושבו}: the verb {שבו}, shebu, means sometimes to rebel, it means to return to the right way, and it means to rest or dwell in. He uses the same verb, though the sense is different when he says, ``Return ye,'' and ``ye shall dwell.'' [128]

He also emphatically uses the word {איש}, aish ``every one:'' it means properly ``man;'' but it is taken in Hebrew for every one or each one, ``each one from his evil way.'' The Prophet exempted none, lest they thought that their fault was extenuated, had not the evil been universal. He hence says, that every one was given to wickedness; as though he had said, that impiety not only prevailed among the whole people, as the case commonly is, but that every one had become corrupt, so that there was not one sound or upright among the whole people.

And this is what ought to be observed; for we are wont, in a cold manner, to confess our sins, and to pray to God when we are proved guilty, except when each one is touched with the sense of his own guilt, and owns himself to be justly exposed to God's judgment; for while every one mingles with the multitude, it so happens that no one acknowledges the heinousness of his own sins. Therefore, for true and sincere repentance this peculiar examination is necessary, so that every one may repent and not regard his friends.

When he says, Dwell ye in the land, though it be the imperative mood, yet it is a promise, by which God declared that he was ready to receive the Jews into favor, provided they returned from the heart to him: he proposed to them, as a symbol of his paternal layout, the possession of the land; for that land was as it were the pledge of their adoption; and the Jews, while they dwelt there, might have felt assured that God was their Father. He adds, From age even to age; as though he had said, ``I am prepared to do you good not only for one day, or for a short time, but also to shew you kindness from age to age. It will then be your fault if ye be not happy, and if this happiness will not pass on from you to your children and grandchildren.'' But the more delightful the invitation was, the more detestable became the impiety of the people, as it will be stated hereafter. He now adds, ---

Jeremiah 25:6

[128] This is not quite correct: the verbs are not the same, though in some moods and tenses they are formed the same; the one is {שב and the other is {ישב} --- Ed

6. And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt.

6. Et ne ambuletis post deos alienos ad serviendum ipsis, et ad incurvandum coram ipsis (id est, ad eos adorandos,) et ne provocetis me in opere manuum vestrarum, et non malefaciam vobis.

The Prophet mentions here one kind of sin; for though the Jews in many, and even in numberless ways kindled God's wrath, yet they especially procured a heavy judgment for themselves by their superstitions. They indeed manifested their contempt of God by adultery, theft, and plunder, but in a way not so direct; for when they abandoned themselves to the superstitions of the Gentiles, they thus shook off the yoke of God, as though they openly testified that he was no longer their God. And we know that nothing is so much valued and approved by God as a sincere attention to real piety; hence the Church is taught in the first table of the Law how he is to be worshipped. This is the reason why the Prophet especially reminds the Jews here that they had, in this respect, been rebellious against God, because he could not bring them back from their corrupt superstitions. He does not at the same time absolve them of other sins; but he mentions this one kind, in order that they might understand, that they were not only in part, but altogether rebellious against God; for they wholly departed from him when they vitiated his worship with wicked superstitions. We must then bear in mind, that the Jews were not condemned for some small offenses, but accused of the most heinous of sins; for they had become covenant-breakers and apostates, and had forsaken God himself and his law.

He says, Walk ye not after foreign gods to serve them and to worship them He pointed out as by the finger, how gross had been their impiety; for they had given themselves up to idols, that they might basely serve them; they had wholly devoted themselves to them. It was not then an excusable error, but a manifest treachery. He adds, Provoke me not by the work of your hands No doubt the Prophet meant by these words to confirm what has been already stated, that idolatry is before God an intolerable wickedness: and at the same time he shews, that they had not sinned through ignorance, for they had in time been reminded of the atrocity of this sin. As then they had not ceased from their superstitions, they were thus proved guilty of a diabolical madness, for they feared not to provoke God against them. And he says, by the work of your hands; and thus he speaks contemptuously or rather reproachfully of idols. They called them gods, not that they were ignorant that they were statues curiously made of wood and stone, or of some other material; but still they thought that divinity was connected with them, for they believed that God was thus rightly worshipped. Now, then, the Prophet calls them the work of hands, as though he had said, ``If the Jews themselves are nothing, the idols are less than nothing; for they are only the work of hands.'' And this way of speaking often occurs in the Prophets, by which God intended to shake off the stupidity of men, who were become quite senseless in their own devices; as though he had said, ``Have you not a particle of a right understanding in you? do you not know, that this which ye worship is the work of your own hands? and what can your hands do? for what are ye yourselves?'' We now perceive what the Prophet had in view in using these words.

There is, again; a promise given, I will not do you evil God declares by these words that they would be exempt from all trouble and distress, if they continued to walk according to the rule of true religion; and thus he intimates that whatever evils they had already endured, and would have hereafter to endure, could not be imputed to anything but to their own perverseness, for God had of his own free-will promised to spare them, provided they departed from their wicked ways. And such a hope ought especially to encourage us to repent, for we see that God is ready to receive us and seeks reconciliation with us, and is always prepared to forgive all our sins, provided we from the heart return to him; and he seems as one unwilling to inflict punishment. Here again the impiety of the people is more fully proved, for they refused to receive from God this invaluable favor. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:7

7. Yet ye have not hearkened unto me, saith the LORD; that ye might provoke me to anger with the works of your hands to your hurt.

7. Et non audistis me, (non auscultastic mihi) dicit Jehova, ut provocaretis (hoc est, quia voluistis me irritare) in opere manuum vestrarum, in malum vobis.

He proves what he had said before, that the Jews had been wholly disobedient, though God had kindly offered and shewed that he would be reconciled to them, provided they turned from the heart to him. The fact that this message was not received by the Jews, was an evidence of extreme and irreclaimable obstinacy. And he enhances their guilt by saying, that ye might provoke me; for he intimates that they were led away to evil by a voluntary purpose, as though they wished to provoke God. The Prophet, then, by saying that ye might provoke me, accuses them of deliberate wickedness. It, indeed, often happens that men go astray through ignorance, and do not attend because no one warns them; but since God had so many times exhorted the Jews to repent, no other opinion could have been formed of them, but that they designedly wished, not only to despise God, but also to provoke him to the contest.

And this is what we ought carefully to notice, for whosoever has been taught the will of God, unless he obeys, he cannot escape the charge of a voluntary obstinacy, as he has resolved, as it were, to carry on war with God. Though the ungodly do not confess this, yet the fact is evident; and God, who is a righteous judge, has declared that they who despised the prophetic doctrine were so regarded.

And he says, for evil to you, in order that they might know that God did not plead his own cause because he stood in need of their service, but that he cared for their welfare. For there is to be understood here an implied contrast, as though the Prophet had said, ``What loss has God suffered by your perverseness? Ye have, indeed, tried to deprive him of his glory, for ye have adorned your idols by spoils taken from him; but it is not in men's power to subtract anything from the rights of God; he remains ever perfect: then it only turns out to your ruin when ye are rebellious. When, therefore, God now reproves you, he does not maintain his own right, as though he received any gain or loss from you; but it is an evidence of his mercy, because he would not have you to perish, though he sees that you are led into destruction by an insane impulse.'' It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:8-9

8. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, Because ye have not heard my words,

8. Propterea sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Eo quod non audistis ad sermones meos (hoc est, non attenti fuistis ad sermones meos:)

9. Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations.

9. Ecce ego mittam et accipiam (vel, assumam) omnes cognationes (vel, familias) Aquilonis, dicit Jehova, et Nebuchadnezer regem Babylonis servum meum, et inducam eos in terram hanc et in habitatores ejus, et in omnes gentes istas in circuitu, et perdam eas, et ponam eas in stuporem et sibilum, et in vastitares seculi (id est, perpetuas.)

Here follows a denunciation of punishment; the Prophet says that God would no longer deal in words, for their iniquity had ripened, according to what is in Genesis,

``My Spirit shall not contend (or strive) any more with man.'' (Genesis 6:3.)

When God prepares to execute vengeance on the wickedness of men, he says that there is no more time for contending. A sudden execution of judgment is then what is here intended; but he mentions at the same time the punishment. After having explained the cause of so much severity, even because they would not hear the words of God, he adds, Behold, I will send for and take all the families of the north, etc. I have no doubt but that the Prophet alludes to the edicts of kings, for when they wish to raise an army they publish their edicts, and order those everywhere to meet who have either given their names or been enlisted as soldiers. So God now by these words intimates that the Chaldeans were under his power, so that they were ready, as soon as he gave them a signal; according to other modes of speaking he uses in other places, but in the same sense, ``I will hiss,'' and also, ``I will send an alarm.'' The Scripture is full of expressions of this kind, which shew that all mortals are prepared to obey God whenever he intends to employ their services; not that it is their purpose to serve God, but that he by a secret influence so rules them and their tongues, their minds and hearts, their hands and their feet, that they are constrained, willing or unwilling, to do his will and pleasure. And in the same sense he calls Nebuchadnezzar his servant, for that cruel tyrant never meant to offer his service to God; but God employed him as his instrument, as though he had been hired by him. And we shall see also elsewhere that he is called God's servant.

And it ought to be noticed, for we hence learn the fact, that many are God's servants who are yet wholly unworthy of so honorable a title; but they are not so called with respect to themselves. Nebuchadnezzar thought that he was making war with the God of Israel when he invaded Judea; and only ambition, and avarice, and cruelty impelled him to undertake so many wars. When, therefore, we think of him, of his designs and his projects, we cannot say that he was God's servant; but this is to be referred to God only, who governs by his hidden and incomprehensible power both the devil and the ungodly, so that they execute, though unwittingly, whatever he determines. There is a great difference between these and God's servants, who,

when anything is commanded them, seek to render that obedience which they ought --- all such are faithful servants. They are, then, justly called God's servants, for there is a mutual concord between God and them: God commands, and they obey. But it is a mutilated and a half service when the ungodly are led beyond the purpose of their own minds, and God uses them as instruments when they think of and design another thing.

It must at the same time be noticed that this name of servant is given, though in an inferior sense, to Nebuchadnezzar for the sake of honor, in order that the Jews might be made ashamed; for it was a great reproach to them that a heathen had been chosen by God, and had obtained the title of a servant, when they themselves had become aliens. The Prophet then, no doubt, intended to cast reproach on them by raising to this dignity the king of Babylon. There was also another reason, even that the Jews might know that whatever they were to suffer would be inflicted by God's hand, and that they might not otherwise think of Nebuchadnezzar than as God's scourge, in order that they might thus be led to confess their sins and be really humbled. We now perceive the meaning of the words.

He says afterwards, I will bring them on this land and on all its inhabitants, etc By these words he confirms what I have just referred to, that God had his vengeance ready as soon as he purposed to treat the Jews as they deserved. As he had then said that Nebuchadnezzar and all the people of the north were prepared by him as hired soldiers, so he now adds that victory was in his power --- I will bring them, he says, over the land and over all the neighboring nations which are around [129] Why the Prophet denounces punishment here on other nations we shall see elsewhere. The Jews, in addition to other vain confidences, were wont to flatter themselves with this, that if Nebuchadnezzar should invade the territories of others, all would unite together against him, and that by such a confederacy they could easily overcome him. As, then, the Jews looked to all parts, and knew that the Egyptians were in alliance with them, and were also persuaded that the Moabites, the Tyrians, the Syrians, and all the rest would become confederates, they became confident, and indulged in that security by which they deceived themselves. This, therefore, is the reason why the Prophet expressly threatens the nations by which they were surrounded, not for the sake of these nations, but that the Jews might cease to entertain their vain confidence.

God says that he would make all nations, as well as the Jews, an astonishment, a hissing, and perpetual desolations He intimates that it would be a dreadful calamity, such as would astonish all that heard of it. As it is said elsewhere, ``The report alone will excite alarm;'' so in this place, I will make them for an astonishment When a moderate calamity is related to us, we are indeed moved to pity; but when the greatness of the evil exceeds belief, we then stand amazed, and all our senses are stunned. The Prophet then means that the calamity which God would bring on the Jews would be, as it were, monstrous, such as would stupify all that would hear of it. [130]

[129] "Over or on the land," etc., rather than "against;" for it is literally, "I will cause them to come over this land," etc. So is the Vulg. — Ed.

[130] The three words are by the Sept. and Arab. rendered "extinction — hissing — perpetual

At last he adds, that they would be for perpetual desolations He does afterwards, indeed, mitigate the severity of these words; for he confines God's vengeance to seventy years. But this mode of speaking is common in Scripture; for, {עולם}, oulam stands opposed to a short time. It is to be taken in different senses, according to the circumstances of the passage. It sometimes designates perpetuity, as when the Prophet says, from age to age, that is, through continued ages, or through a course of years, which shall last perpetually. But age, or {עולם}, oulam, is often to be taken for the time allotted to the people until the coming of Christ; and sometimes it means simply a long time, as here and in many other places. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:10

10. Moreover I will take from them the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the sound of the millstones, and the light of the candle.

10. Et transire faciam (hoc est, auferam) ab ipsis vocem gaudii, et vocem laetitiae, vocem sponsi et vocem sponsae, vocem molarum (id est, strepitum molarum) et lumen lucernae.

He confirms here what I have just said, --- that the Jews were not to be chastised in a common manner, but be exposed to extreme distress. For though all things may not be with us prosperous and according to our wishes, yet marriages may still be celebrated, and some hilarity may remain; we may yet eat and drink and enjoy the necessaries of life, though we may have no pleasures; but the Prophet shews here that such would be the devastation of the land, that there would be no thoughts about marriages, that all hilarity and joy would cease, that there would be no preparations of food, no grinding of corn, and that, in short, all feasts usually kept by the light of candles would be no more celebrated. Here, then, he describes to the life that devastation which had been before mentioned. [131]

The Prophet no doubt indirectly condemns that insensibility by which the devil had possessed the minds of the people; for though the prophets continually threatened them, yet there was no end to their exultations and no moderation in them, according to what is said by Isaiah, who complains of such wantonness, that they said, ``Let us feast, tomorrow we shall die;'' and who also says,

``I have called you to sackcloth and ashes, but ye went to the harp and to feastings.''

(Isaiah 22:12, 13)

When, therefore, the Prophet speaks here of the voice of joy and gladness, of the noise of millstones, and of lamps, he doubtless upbraids them with their stupid

reproach;" by the Vulg., "astonishment — hissing — perpetual solitudes;" by the Targ., "waste — astonishment — perpetual desolations;" and by the Syr., "astonishment — hissing — waste for ever." The first word, {,{שמה means first, waste or desolation, and then what waste occasions, wonder or astonishment. It evidently means the latter here, as desolation is expressed by the last word; it is so rendered by the Vulg. the Syr., and in our version and by Blayney and others. The two words are again found together in the eleventh verse. Here the order, as often is the case, is inverted; the effect is first mentioned, then the cause: the cause of astonishment and hissing would be the desolations. --- Ed

[131] As this verse is connected with the foregoing, the {ו would be better rendered for, --- 10. For I will make to cease from among them The voice of exultation and the voice of joy, The voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, The voice of the millstone, and the light of the lamp. The time for grinding was the morning; the earliest thing in the morning was this work, and was done every day. The time for the light of the lamp was the evening; when this disappears, it is an evidence that there are no inhabitants. --- Ed.

security; for they feared nothing, and thought themselves safe even when God was shewing himself, as with an outstretched hand, to be their avenging judge. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:11

11. And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years.

11. Et erit tota terra haec in vastitatem et in stuporem, et servient gentes hae regi Babylonis septuaginta annis.

Here the Prophet mentions the restriction of which I have spoken, and thus he mitigates the severity of their punishment. It is, then, a kind of correction; not that he changes anything, but only by this sort of correction he explains what he before meant by perpetual desolations.

He says, The whole land shall be a waste and an astonishment, or as some render it, ``a desolation.'' The word {שמם}, indeed, means to lay desolate, and also to astonish; but as he had lately used the word in the sense of astonishment, I see no reason for changing its meaning here, especially as it is connected with {חרבה}, charebe. But as to the drift of the passage, there is not much difference whether we say, the land shall be a desolation, or an astonishment; for it was to be a solitude --- reduced to a desolation or a wilderness. [132]

And serve shall these nations the king of Babylon seventy years, there the Prophet concludes his prophecy concerning the future calamity of the people, even that the land would be reduced to a solitude, so as to render every one passing through it astonished, or that it was to become a horrid spectacle on account of its desolation. And that a time of seventy years was fixed, it was a testimony of God's paternal kindness towards his people, not indiscriminately towards the whole multitude, but towards the remnant of whom he had spoken elsewhere. Then the Prophet means, that however grievously the Jews had sinned, yet God would execute only a temporary punishment; for after seventy years, as we shall see, he would restore them to their own country, and repair what they had lost, even the inhabitation of the promised land, the holy city, and the Temple. And this is more fully expressed in the next verse.

Jeremiah 25:12

12. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, that I will punish the king of Babylon, and that nation, saith the LORD, for their iniquity, and the land of the Chaldeans, and will make it perpetual desolations.

12. Et erit cum impleti fuerint septuaginta anni, visitabo super regem Babylonis et super populum ejus, dicit Jehova, iniquitatem ipsorum, et super terram Chaldaorum, et ponam eam in desolationes saeculi (id est, perpetuas.)

The Prophet now, as I have said, shews more clearly why the time of the captivity and exile had been defined, even that the faithful might know that God would not forget his covenant, though he deprived the people of the inheritance of the land.

[132] As the first word means waste or desolation, and means nothing else, and as the second word means astonishment as well as desolation, the rendering of our version, and of Calvin, must be right. As it is commonly the case, their order is here inverted, being different from the order in which they are found in verse ninth. — Ed.

These words were not addressed indiscriminately to the whole body of the people, as we have observed before in other places; but the Prophet intended to consult the benefit of God's elect, who always retained a concern for true religion; for they must have a hundred times despaired had not this promise been added. This, then, was a special doctrine intended as food for God's children; for he addressed, as it was apart, the elect and faithful only.

God says also, that at the end of seventy years he would visit the iniquity of the king of Babylon, and of his whole people. We hence learn that Nebuchadnezzar was not called God's servant because he deserved anything for his service, but because God led him while he was himself unconscious, or not thinking of any such thing, to do a service which neither he nor his subjects understood to be for God. Though, then, the Lord employs the ungodly in executing his judgments, yet their guilt is not on this account lessened; they are still exposed to God's judgment. And these two things well agree together, --- that the devil and all the ungodly serve God, though not of their own accord, but whenever he draws them by his hidden power, and that they are still justly punished, even when they have served God; for though they perform his work, yet not because they are commanded to do so. They are therefore justly liable to punishment, according to what the Prophet teaches us here.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we see everywhere evidences of thy wrath, and as our own conscience convinces every one of us, so that we are constrained to confess that we are all, from the highest to the lowest, guilty before thee, --- O grant that we may in due time return to the right way, and seek to be reconciled to thee, and never doubt but that thou wilt be merciful and gracious to us, whenever we solicit pardon in the name of thy only-begotten Son; and may we also be so reconciled to thee, that we may know that thou art indeed with us as our Father, by ruling us by thy Spirit, so that thy name may to the end be glorified, through our Lord Jesus Christ. --- Amen.

Lecture Ninety-Fifth

We explained in the last Lecture the verse in which God declared that he would punish the king of Babylon and his people for their cruelty towards the Israelites. We said that this was addressed peculiarly to the elect, for many of the people perished without the hope of salvation. But God intended in the meantime to shew his care for the remnant; and for this reason he defined the time of exile, and predicted that he would be an enemy to the Babylonians, for he would undertake the cause of his people.

One thing I did not explain, that is, what the Prophet says of eternal reproaches. Now, it seems that this was not fulfilled; for though after seventy years Babylon was taken and was reduced to a state of subjection, yet the city itself remained safe, and for many ages was celebrated for its great splendor. The Prophet, then, seems to have exceeded the limits of truth in speaking of these desolations; for such did not take place when the city was taken by the Medes and Persians. But, as we have said elsewhere, we ought not to restrict to one time what is said in many places by the prophets respecting the destruction of Babylon; for it pleased God, in

various ways and at different times, to execute his vengeance on that people; and it appears evident from history that it would have been better for the Babylonians to have perished at once than to have undergone so many calamities. For in a short time after the people revolted from the Persians, the city was recovered by the contrivance and craft of Zopyrus; the nobles were then reduced into slavery, so that no dignity remained. It was afterwards taken by Alexander; and after that Seleucus obtained possession of it. On its ruins were then built the city Ctesiphon, and at length it gradually decayed. But no change occurred without a great diminution of the city's opulence; and nothing more disgraceful could have happened to it than for those who were in authority to be taken and hung on gibbets, as Zenophon and other historians relate.

We now, then, see how this passage, and others like it, are to be understood; for God does not speak only of one time of vengeance, but he includes all those judgments by which he vindicated the wrongs done to his people. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:13

13. And I will bring upon that land all my words which I have pronounced against it, even all that is written in this book, which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations.

13. Et adducam super terram illam omnes sermones meos quod loquutus sum super eam, quicquid scriptum est in libro hoc, quod prophetavit Jeremias super omnes gentes (vel in quo prophetavit, si placeat referre ad librum.)

He confirms what he had said before when he says, that he would bring all his words on the Chaldeans; that is, that he would give effect to all the prophecies, so that it would be evident that Jeremiah had foretold nothing rashly, and that God had not in vain threatened them by the mouth of his servant. Such is the meaning, and hence we see what the Prophet intimates when he says, that God would bring all his words, for he had then spoken. But as the ungodly regard whatever is brought forward in God's name as a matter of sport and mockery, and boldly deride all threatenings, to bring words means the same thing with proving by events that God does not terrify men without accomplishing his words; in short, to bring words is to prove their authority. And, as I have said, the expression has a reference to the insensibility of men who give no credit to God's words until they are convinced by their accomplishment; for they think that the air only is beaten, and thus they are not touched by any fear. But God proves the power of his word when he executes what he has predicted.

We then see that the Prophet intends nothing else in this verse than to confirm what he had said before. And he speaks of Chaldea and says, upon that land

And we must at the same time notice another form of speaking; for God says, that he had pronounced these words; he afterwards says, that Jeremiah was his minister, and as it were his herald; and he calls him also a scribe or a writer. God then here declares that he was the author of all that Jeremiah had brought forward; and yet he leaves his own office to his minister, for it is necessary to secure authority to the prophets; otherwise, except God visibly descended from heaven, men would either indiscriminately admit what might be said, and without judgment receive falsehood

and truth, or they would become wholly hardened, so as to give no credit to prophetic instruction. He says, whatsoever is written in this book The Prophet no doubt wrote down a summary of what he had delivered; for as we have said elsewhere, it was usual with the prophets, after they had spoken at large to the people and preached diffusely, to affix a short summary to the doors of the Temple. This volume then is what Jeremiah calls the book, which was composed from his public addresses. It might in common language be called a summary. Then he adds, in what, or, ``what he prophesied,'' [133] in order to shew that he meant what he had before said; and so it might be rendered, that is, what he prophesied; but the other exposition is not unsuitable, in which Jeremiah hath prophesied against all the nations It follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:14

14. For many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of them also: and I will recompense them according to their deeds, and according to the works of their own hands.

14. Quia fecerunt in illis (vel, quia coegerunt eos) in servitutem etiam ipsi, gentes multae (vel, robustae, vel, validae) et reges magni; et rependam illis secundum actionem suam et seceundum opus manuum ipsorum.

The beginning of the verse is obscure. When the verb {עבד}, obed, is followed by {ב}, beth, they think that it is to be taken actively, and rendered, to force or drive to bondage. It means properly, to serve; but they think that found as here it is a transitive verb. Some render it, ``they employed them;'' but this is frigid and ambiguous; for friends may be said to employ one another, when the work is mutual; hence the meaning is not sufficiently expressed. But the meaning may be given by a paraphrase, that they ``forced them into bondage.'' Still the meaning of the Prophet is not yet sufficiently clear; for {עבדו}, obedu, may be taken either in the past or future tense. It is, indeed, in the past tense; but the past may be taken for the future: thus the meaning may be different. If it be taken in the past tense, then it cannot be applied except to the Babylonians; for they were those who had treated the Israelites as slaves, or had forced them into bondage; and {בם}, bem, ``them,'' might be understood of the Israelites; for we know that pronouns are often thus used, when the Church, or God's elect people, is the subject. Then the Prophet's words may be thus rendered, ``for they have tyrannically ruled over them,'' even the Israelites, ``and they themselves,'' that is, the Israelites, shall in their turn rule, the latter words being understood. But the meaning, as it seems to me, would be more simple, were we to read the whole together in this way, ``For they also themselves shall rule over them, even over strong and valiant nations and great kings, and I will recompense them,'' etc.

The reason which has constrained me to give this interpretation is this: It is said in the last verse that Jeremiah prophesied against all nations; then follows an explanation, and the Prophet briefly shews, or reminds us, what would be the issue of these prophecies, even that they also would themselves rule over these nations. Then {בם}, bem, as I think, refers to the Babylonians and other heathen nations; and

[133] Had the book been intended, the {,{אשר which, would have been followed by a pronoun after the verb with the preposition ,{ב} in, prefixed to it; for this is the idiom of the language. All the versions render the phrase, ``whatever Jeremiah prophesied,'' etc. --- Ed

it is a common thing with the prophets, when they speak of the restoration of the ancient Church, and of Christ's coming, to promise power to God's children to hold the whole world under their feet. The sentence also will flow better, when we give this version, ``They shall rule.'' There is, indeed, a change as to time, but this is a common thing in Hebrew. It is then; For they shall rule over them, that is, the nations. Jeremiah had spoken of all heathen nations; mention had been made of all that he had prophesied against all nations; and he says now what seemed incredible, and hence the particle {גם}, gam, is introduced, ``even these very Israelites,'' as though he had said, ``Though this shall happen beyond hope, so as to appear strange and fabulous, yet God by the issue will shew that he has not in vain communicated this to me; for they, even the Israelites, shall have their turn to exercise dominion; and they shall constrain all nations to obey them.'' And what follows confirms my view; for he adds, over strong nations, {רבים} {גוים}, guim rebim, (for the {ב}, beth, may be repeated here;) or we may render the words ``many nations;'' for the word {רבים}, rebim, means both; but as it follows ``and great kings,'' I am disposed to render the words, ``strong nations.'' Then he says, ``For they shall rule over strong nations and great kings.'' [134]

He then subjoins, I will recompense them, that is, both kings and nations, according to their doing, and according to the work of their hands, because they had exercised every kind of cruelty towards the miserable Israelites. Hence the Prophet pursues the same subject, --- that God would at length really shew, that though he had been angry with his Church, yet all hope of mercy was not lost, for he was mindful of his covenant. He thus mitigates the severity of what he had previously said; he promises them something far better than what the wretched Jews could have expected in their extreme calamities.

We may again learn from the words of the Prophet, that God so employed Nebuchadnezzar and others, that they performed no service deserving of praise; for had they been without fault, God must doubtless have unjustly punished them. This passage then teaches us, that though the devil and the reprobate execute God's judgments, they yet deserve no praise for their obedience, for they have no such purpose in view. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:15

15. For thus saith the LORD God of Israel unto me; Take the wine-cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send thee, to drink it.

15. Quia sic dixit Jehova Deus Israel ad me, Sume calicem vini furoris (vel, iracundiae) Sume calicem vini furoris (vel, iracundiae) hujus e manu mea, et propina illum cunctis gentibus, ad quas ego mittam to ad eas (sed hoc secundum redundat.)

[134] A reference to Jeremiah 27:7, will enable us to understand this passage. The words are alike. "Many nations and great kings" in that verse mean the conquerors of the king of Babylon; and so they mean the same here, no doubt. "All the nations" in the preceding verse were "all the families of the north," mentioned in Jeremiah 25:9, who were subject to the king of Babylon; and "them" at the beginning of this verse are these nations, which are here spoken of as being subjected to bondage or to servitude, while in Jeremiah 27:7, the king of Babylon himself is mentioned. The verb {עבר}, when followed by {ב}, means invariably to enslave, to reduce to bondage, to bring into subjection, or to subdue. Then the verse should be thus rendered, --- For make them, even these, to serve, Shall many nations and great kings; And I will render to them according to their work, According to the doing of their own hands. This is the meaning given by the Targ.; the Vulg. and the Syr. render the verb incorrectly, though in both the pronoun them is made to refer to the nations in the preceding verse. --- Ed.

Jeremiah now explains more at large what might on account of its brevity have appeared obscure. He had spoken of all nations, but his discourse was abrupt; for he had not yet openly told us that he had been sent by God as a herald to summon all kings and nations before his tribunal, and to declare what was to be. As, then, the Prophet had referred to nothing of this kind, his discourse was ambiguous. But he now declares that a cup from God's hand had been delivered to him, which he was to give to all nations to drink. We hence see that there is here nothing new, but that the Prophet is, as it were, the interpreter of his previous prophecy, which was briefly stated.

Moreover, that what he said might have more weight, he relates a vision, Thus said Jehovah the God of Israel unto me, Take the cup of the wine of this fury from my hand [135] We have said in other places that the fulfillment of prophetic truth was not without reason dwelt upon, and that the servants of God were so armed, as though the execution of all that they alleged was ready at hand. They were said to demolish cities and to overthrow kingdoms even for this reason, because such was the torpidity of men, that they gave no credit to God, except they were brought to see the event as it were before their eyes. But as this subject has been handled more fully elsewhere, I shall only touch upon it here. He then says, that a cup had been delivered to him by God's hand; by which words he intimates, that he did not come forth of his own will to terrify the Jews and other nations, but that he faithfully proclaimed what had been committed to him; and he also intimates, that God spoke nothing now but what he meant shortly to execute; and this is what is to be understood by the word cup.

He calls it the cup of the wine of fury, or of wrath. This metaphor often occurs in the prophets, but in a different sense. For God is said sometimes to inebriate men when he stupifies them, and drives them at one time to madness, and at another time deprives them of common sense and understanding, so that they become like beasts; but he is said also to inebriate them, when, by outward calamities, he fills them with astonishment. So now the Prophet calls calamity the cup of wrath, even that calamity, which like fire was to inflame the minds of all those who received no benefit from chastisements. Madness, indeed, means no other thing than the despair of those who perceive God's hand stretched out against them, and thus rage and clamor, and curse heaven and earth, themselves and God. This is what we are to understand by wrath He compares this wrath to wine, because they who are thus smitten by God's hand are carried away as it were beyond themselves, and repent not, nor think of their sins with calmness of mind, but abandon themselves to a furious rage. We now then understand why the Prophet says, that the cup of the wine of wrath had been given to him.

Then he adds, An, make all the nations to whom I send thee [136] to drink it Here,

[135] I conceive that the sentence may be thus rendered, — Take the cup of the wine of fury, even this, from my hand. So do Gataker and Venema render the sentence, referring "this" to the cup and not to "fury." The word for "fury" is heat; it means hot, boiling, or burning wrath, — rendered "fury" by the Vulg. and Syr., — "malediction" by the Targ., and "unmixed" (the cup of this unmixed wine) by the Sept. — Ed.

[136] Literally, "whom I send thee to them;" which the Sept. have rendered almost word for word, {πρὸς} {ἅ} ({ἔθνη})-{πρὸς} {αὐτούς}; but the first, {πρὸς} is not in the original. This was an attempt to transplant

again, he confirms what I lately referred to, that his office was farther extended than to teach in the middle of the Church, but that he had also been chosen to proclaim as a herald God's judgments on all nations. He was, indeed, sent to the Jews otherwise than to heathen nations, for he was set over them as a teacher, and that for their salvation, provided they were not irreclaimable; but he was sent to the heathens expressly to threaten them with what was nigh at hand. He was, however, sent both to the Jews and to all other nations, as he will hereafter more distinctly shew in due order.

We now see the design and object of what is here said; --- to add authority to his last prophecy, Jeremiah, in the first place, sets forth the vision which had been presented to him; and then he testifies that he brought nothing of his own, but only obeyed God and faithfully performed his commands; and thirdly, he intimates that he was not only appointed a teacher in the Church of God, but was also a witness of his vengeance on all nations. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:16

16. And they shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them.

16. Et bibant et moveantur et insaniant (ad verbum legendum esset, bibent et inebriabuntur; est enim ubique, {ו} conversivum; sed potius resolvi debet copula in particulum finalem, ut bibent et inebrientur et insaniant) a facie gladii, quem ego mitto in medio ipsorum (inter ipsos.)

Here the Prophet more fully shews what we have before stated, that they were not vain terrors when he denounced God's judgments on all nations, for we call those threatenings childish which are not accomplished. But the Prophet here declares that however obstinately the Jews and others might resist, they could not possibly escape God's vengeance, as he was the judge of all. Hence the Prophet is bidden to take a cup and to give it to others. But the Jews might have still objected and said, ``We may, indeed, take the cup from thine hand, but what if we refuse? what if we cast away from us what thou givest us to drink?'' Hence the Prophet says that, willing or unwilling, they were to take the cup, that they might drink and exhaust whatever was destined for them by God's judgment; he therefore says that they may drink

He then adds, that they may be incensed and become distracted [137] These two words refer, no doubt, to the grievousness of their punishment; for he intimates that they would become, as it were, destitute of mind and reason. When God kindly chastises us, and with paternal moderation, we are then able with resignation to submit to him and to flee to his mercy; but when we make a clamor and are driven almost to madness, we then shew that an extreme rigor is felt, and that there is no hope of pardon. The Prophet, then, intended to express, that so atrocious would be the calamities of the nations with whom God was angry, that they would become stupified and almost insane; and at the same time frantic, for despair would lay

the peculiarity of one language to another, which is often the ease with the Septuagint. The Welsh is literally the same with the Hebrew. --- Ed

[137] The Versions vary as to these two verbs: the best rendering is, — And they shall drink and reel; And they shall be distracted on account of the sword, Which I shall send among them. Blayney's version is nearly the same, "drink and stagger and be out of their wits;" but it is better to connect "the sword" with the latter verb only. — Ed.

hold on their minds and hearts, that they would not be able to entertain any hope of deliverance, or to submit to God, but that they would, as it is usual with the reprobate, rise up against God and vomit forth their blasphemies.

He says, because of the sword that I will send among them. It appears from the word {בינתם}, bintem, ``among them,'' that there would be mutual conflicts, that they would destroy one another. God, then, would send his sword; but he would extend it now to the Chaldeans, then to the Egyptians; now to the Assyrians, then to other nations, so that with the same sword they would contend one with another, until at last it would prove a ruin to them all. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:17

17. Then took I the cup at the LORD'S hand, and made all the nations to drink, unto whom the LORD had sent me:

17. Et sumpsi calicem e manu Jehovae, et propinavi cunctis gentibus ad quas misit me Jehova ad eas (sed iterum supervacuum est hoec repetitio:)

The Prophet now adds that he obeyed God's command; for he had before often testified that he was constrained to perform his office, which he would have willingly not have done, if he was at liberty. But as he was bound to obey the divine call, it was evident that it was not his fault, and that he was unjustly charged by the people as the author of the evils denounced. We indeed know that the prophets incurred much ill-will and reproach from the refractory and the despisers of God, as though all their calamities were to be imputed to them. Jeremiah then says, that he took the cup and gave it to drink to all the nations: he intimates that he had no desire to do this, but that necessity was laid on him to perform his office. He then shews who these nations were, ---

Jeremiah 25:18

18. To wit, Jerusalem, and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an astonishment, an hissing, and a curse; as it is this day;

18. Jerosolymae et urbibus Jehudah, et regibus ejus, et principibus ejus, ad ponendum eos in vastitatem (vel, solitudinem,) in stuporem, in sibulum, et maledictionem, sicut dies haec;

He begins with Jerusalem, as it is said elsewhere that judgment would begin at God's house. (1 Peter 4:17.) And there is nothing opposed to this in the context of the passage; for though he had promised to the children of God a happy end to the evils which they were shortly to endure, he nevertheless enumerates here all the nations on whom God had bidden him to denounce judgments. In this catalogue the Church obtains the first place; for though God be the judge of the whole world, he yet justly begins with his own Church, and that especially for two reasons --- for as the father of a family watches over his children and servants, and if there be anything wrong, his solicitude is particularly manifested; so God, as he dwells in his Church, cannot do otherwise than chastise it for its faults; --- and then, we know that they are less excusable, who, having been taught the will of God, do yet go on indulging their own lusts, (Luke 12:47;) for they cannot plead ignorance. Hence is fulfilled what Christ declares, that those servants shall be more grievously beaten, who, knowing

their masters will, yet obstinately disregard it. There is, then, a twofold fault in the members of the Church; and no comparison can be made between them and the unbelieving who are in thick darkness. Since God shines in his Church and shews the way, as Moses says,

``Behold I set before you the way of life and of death; I therefore call heaven and earth to witness that there is no excuse for you. (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19.)

This, then, is the second reason why God first visits the sins of the faithful, or of those who are counted faithful.

There is also what appertains to an example: God chastises his own children lest he should seem by his indulgence to favor or countenance what is wicked and sinful. But this third reason is in a manner accidental; and therefore I wished to state it apart from the two other reasons. When, therefore, God so severely treats his own Church, the unbelieving ought to draw this conclusion, that if this be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry? (Luke 23:31.)

But the two things which I have before mentioned ought to be deemed by us as sufficient reasons why God, while suspending his vengeance as to the reprobate, punishes the elect as well as all those who profess themselves to be members of his Church. We now understand why Jeremiah mentions first the holy city, and then all the cities of Judah, the kings also and the princes; for God had with open bosom invited them to himself, but they had, as it were, from determined wickedness, provoked his wrath by despising both his Law and his Prophets.

He afterwards adds, to make them a waste, or a solitude. This was a grievous denunciation, no doubt, and we shall hereafter see that most became enraged against the holy man, and in their fury endeavored to destroy him; yet he with all intrepid mind fully declared what God had commanded him. He adds, an astonishment, and in the third place, an hissing, even that they would become detestable to all; for hissing intimates contempt, reproach, and detestation. In the fourth place he mentions a curse. We have already said what the Prophet meant by this word, even that the Jews would become in this respect a proverb, so that when one cursed another, he would use this form, ``May God destroy thee as he destroyed the Jews.''

It is then added, as at this day The Prophet refers, no doubt, to the time of the city's destruction. God had indeed even then begun to consume the people; but we shall hereafter see that the minds of the greater part were still very haughty: so that they often raised their crests and looked for a new state of things, and depended on aid from the Egyptians. But the Prophet here mentions what was not yet completed, and as it were by the finger, points out the day as having already come in which the city was to be destroyed and the temple burnt up. This, then, refers to the certainty of what he predicted. Some think that it was written after Jeremiah had been led into exile; but this conjecture has nothing to support it. [138] It seems to me enough to

[138] Blayney assents to this conjecture, and not without some reason: he considers that God's words are broken off at the end of Jeremiah 25:16, and are not resumed till the latter part of Jeremiah 25:26, where God again continues his words thus, "and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them." All the intermediate verses he includes in a parenthesis, and regards them as written either by Baruch or by the Prophet himself after the destruction of Jerusalem, when his prophecies were compiled: and this accounts for the words, "as at this day." But Gateker rejects this view, and considers this prophecy to have been announced after the Chaldean irruption in

suppose that his object was to rouse the Jews from their security, and to shew that in a short time all that he predicted would be accomplished, and that they were no more to doubt of this than if the calamity was now before their eyes. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:19

19. Pharaoh king of Egypt, and his servants, and his princes, and all his people;

19. Pharaoni (pendit enim a superiori versu quod propinaverit calicem Pharaoni,) regi Egyptio, servis ejus et principibus ejus et toti ejus populo;

It may here be asked, why he connects Pharaoh with the Jews, and assigns the second place to the Egyptians rather than to other nations? The reason is evident, --- because the Jews expected deliverance from them; and the cause of their irreclaimable obstinacy was, that they could not be removed from that false confidence by which the devil had once fascinated them. They departed from God by making the Egyptians their friends; and when they found themselves unequal to the Assyrians, they turned their hopes to the Egyptians rather than to God; the prophets remonstrated with them, but with no success.

As, then, the occasion of ruin to the chosen people was Egypt, and as Pharaoh was, as it were, the fountain and cause of destruction to Jerusalem, as well as to the whole people, rightly does the Prophet, after having spoken of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, immediately mention Pharaoh in the second place; for he was a friend to the Jews, and they were so connected together that they were necessarily drawn together into destruction; for they had corrupted one another, and encouraged one another in impiety, and with united minds and confederate hearts kindled God's wrath against themselves. [139] The Prophet, then, could not have spoken of the Jews by themselves, but was under the necessity of connecting the Egyptians with them, for the state of both people was the same.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we cease not to abuse thy paternal kindness, that when thou sparest us for a time, it is made by us the occasion of more audacity and liberty in sin, --- O grant that we may be so subdued by thy scourges as to return without delay to thee, and to seek reconciliation with thee through the blood of thine only-begotten Son, and also to be so displeased with our vices, that we may from the heart submit to thee, so as to be governed by thy Holy Spirit, until, having been cleansed from all our filth, we shall come to that blessed glory which thou hast prepared for us in heaven, and which has been obtained for us by the blood of the same, thy Son Jesus Christ. --- Amen.

Lecture Ninety-Sixth

Jeremiah 25:20

20. And all the mingled people, and all the kings of the land of Uz, and all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and Ashkelon, and Azzah, and Ekron, and the remnant of Ashdod,

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the third or fourth year of Jehoiakim, referred to in Daniel 1:1. The devastation then produced was great, and finally completed in the reign of Zedekiah. — Ed.

[139] Gataker observes that servants, princes, and people are mentioned together with the king, in order to preclude every hope of escape; for the king might have been removed, and the country left without being much disturbed. — Ed.

20. Et promiscuae multitudini, et cunctis regibus terrae Uz, et cunctis regibus terrae Philistim et Ascalon et Gazae et Echron, et reliquiis Azoth,

Jeremiah, after having spoken of his own nation and of the Egyptians, now mentions other nations who were probably known by report to the Jews; for we see in the catalogue some who were afar off. He then does not only speak of neighboring nations, but also of others. His object, in short, was to shew that God's vengeance was near, which would extend here and there, so as to include the whole world known to the Jews.

We stated yesterday the reason why he connected the Egyptians with the Jews; but now nothing certain can be assigned as a reason with regard to each of these nations; only it may be said in general, that the Jews were thus reminded, not only to acknowledge God's judgment towards them as an evidence of his wrath, but also to extend their thoughts farther and to consider all the calamities, which would happen to nations far as well as nigh, in the same light, so that they might know that human events revolve, not by chance, but that God is a righteous judge, and that he sits in heaven to chastise men for their sins.

It is a common proverb, that it is a solace to the miserable to see many like them; but the Prophet had something very different in view; for it was not his object to alleviate the grief of his people by shewing that no nations would be free from calamities; but his intention was to shew them in due time that whatever happened would proceed from God; for if it had not been predicted that the Chaldeans would have the whole of the east under their dominion, it would have been commonly said, that the world was under the rule of blind fortune, and thus men would have become more and more hardened in their impiety; for it becomes the cause of obstinacy, when men imagine that all things happen by chance. And for this reason God severely reproves those who acknowledge not that he sends wars, famine, and pestilence, and that nothing adverse takes place except through his judgment. Hence the Jews were to learn before the time, that when God afflicted them and other nations, they might know that it had been predicted, and that therefore God was the author of these calamities, and that they might also examine themselves so as to acknowledge their sins; for they who dream that the world as to its evils is governed at random by fortune, do not perceive that God is displeased with them; and so they regard not what they suffer as a just punishment.

Many indeed confess God as the inflicter of punishment, and yet they complain against him. But these two things ought to be remembered, --- that no adversity happens fortuitously, but that God is the author of all those things which men regard as evils, --- and that he is so, because he is a righteous judge; which is the second thing. God then in claiming for himself the disposal of all events, and in declaring that the world is governed at his will, not only declares that the chief power and the supreme government is in his hand, but goes farther and shews, that things happening prosperously are evidences of his goodness and justice, and that calamities prove that he cannot endure the sins of men, but must punish them. To set forth this was the Prophet's design.

He says that God threatened all the promiscuous multitude [140] The word {ערב}, means a swarm of bees; and it means also any sort of mixture; and hence, when Moses said that many went up with the people, he used. this word. (Exodus 12:38.) Nehemiah also says that he separated such mixtures from the people of God, lest they who had become degenerated, should corrupt true religion. (Nehemiah 13:3.) That the Church, then, might remain true and faithful, he says that he took away {ערב}, oreb, or this mixture. Now as to this passage, I have no doubt but that the Prophet speaks thus generally of the common people; and I extend this name to all the kingdoms, of which he will hereafter speak. He then adds, And all the kings of the land of Uz. We know that this was an eastern land. I know not why Jerome rendered it ``Ausitis,'' and not as in the Book of Job, for the same word is found there, (Job 1:2) and we find that Job was born in the eastern part of the world, for he was plundered by his neighbors, who were men of the east. Some think that it was Armenia; but it could hardly be a country so far off, for Cilicia was, with regard to Judea, in the middle between them. I, then, rather think that Uz was directly east to Judea.

He adds, And all the kings of the land of the Philistines Whether Palestine had then many kings is uncertain; it seems indeed probable; but what seems doubtful to me, I leave as such. It is no objection that he mentions all the kings, since he afterwards speaks of all the kings of Tyre and Sidon, though neither Tyre nor Sidon had many kings; for they were only two cities. There is then no doubt, but that the Prophet in speaking of all the kings of the land, meant that though they succeeded one another, it was yet decreed in heaven, that all these nations should perish. He therefore intended to obviate every doubt; for the prophecy was not immediately fulfilled; but the nations, of whom he now speaks, retained for a time their state, so that the Prophet might have appeared false in his predictions. Hence he distinctly mentions all the kings, so that the faithful might suspend their judgment until the appointed time of God's vengeance came.

He afterwards mentions Ashkelon; which was not a maritime city, though not far from the sea. Then he adds {עזה}, oze, which we call Gaza, for the Greek translators have so rendered it. But what the Greek and Latin writers have thought, that it was called Gaza, because Cyrus deposited there his treasures while carrying on war here and there, is wholly absurd; and it was a frivolous conjecture which occurred to their minds, because Gaza means a treasure, and the Greek translators rendered Oze, Gaza; but it was entertained without much thought. The situation of the city is well known. He then mentions Ekron, a neighboring city, not far from Azotus, which is also named. The Prophet says Ashdod, which the Greeks have rendered Azotus, and the Latins have followed them. We hence see that the Prophet refers to that part of the country which was towards Syria.

But it may be asked, why he names the remnant of Ashdod? Some think that he refers to neighboring towns, not so much known, as Gath, which is elsewhere named, but less celebrated But this exposition seems to me forced and absurd. The

[140] Venema and Blayney connect these words with the former verse, and consider that the mixed people in Egypt are meant; and this is most probable. So the Sept. “and all that are mixed with them.” The Syr. is, “and all the borders of it,” that is Egypt. The Vulg. is a paraphrase, “and the whole generally.” — Ed.

probability is, that Ashdod had been conquered, but that owing to its advantageous locality it was not wholly forsaken. For {שארית}, sharit, means what is left or remains after a slaughter. What remained then in Ashdod, he delivered up to God's sword, that it might be destroyed. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:21

21. Edom, and Moab, and the children of Ammon,

21. Edom et Moab et filiis Ammon,

The same words are ever to be repeated, that Jeremiah made all these nations to drink the cup. He mentions the Idumeans, the posterity of Esau, and also the Moabites, the descendants of Lot, as also were the Ammonites There was a relationship between these three nations and the Israelites; hence the Prophet seems designedly to have connected these three nations together. He adds ---

Jeremiah 25:22

22. And all the kings of Tyrus, and all the kings of Zidon, and the kings of the isles which are beyond the sea,

22. Et omnibus regibus Tyri et omnibus regibus Sidonis, et omnibus regibus insulae, quae est (vel, qui sunt; nam verbum nullum ponitur; potest igitur hoc tam ad reges ipsos quam ad insulam referri; qui sunt ergo) ultra mare,

As to the word Island, the number is to be changed; for the Prophet means not one island, but the countries beyond the sea. Some restrict the reference to Cyprus, Crete, Mitylene, and other islands in the Mediterranean; but it is a common way of speaking in Hebrew, to call all countries beyond the sea islands.

``The kings of the islands shall come.'' (Psalm 72:10.)

The Prophet in that passage calls those the kings of the islands who would come in ships to Judea. So also in this place we may understand by the kings of the islands all those who were beyond the sea.

We now see that kings of one age only are not those summoned to God's tribunal; for why does the Prophet mention all the kings of Tyre and all the kings of Sidon? Was it possible for these two cities to have four or two kings at the same time? But we must bear in mind what I have already stated, --- that the children of God were warned, lest they should entertain a too fervid expectation as to the fulfillment of this prophecy. It is then the same as if he had said, ``Though God's vengeance may not come upon the present king of Tyre or of Sidon, it is yet suspended over all kings, and shall be manifested in its time.'' [141] Tyre and Sidon, we know, were cities of Phoenicia, and very celebrated; and Tyre had many colonies afar off, among which the principal was Carthage; and the Carthaginians offered honorable presents to it every year, in order to shew that they were its descendants. And Tyre itself was a colony of Sidon, according to historians; but it so prospered, that the daughter as it were swallowed up the mother. But it appears evident that there were kings there

[141] The kings of Judah and the kings of other countries are found also mentioned; and the reason seems to be, that the calamities threatened to them did not come at once on one generation, but gradually on successive generations. Such was the case with respect to Judah, and also with other kingdoms; successive attacks were made until they were at last wholly subjugated. As we find in Isaiah 23:2, the people of Tyre called “the inhabitants of the isle,” we may render the verse thus, — 22. And all the kings of Tyre, and all the kings of Sidon, even all the kings of the isle which is by the side of the sea. This repetition was made on account of the power and wealth of Tyre, a place thought impregnable. See Isaiah 23. — Ed.

in the time of Isaiah and Jeremiah, though in the time of Alexander both cities were republics; for many changes during that period had taken place in them. Now the Prophet says only, that Tyre and Sidon would be involved in the punishment which he denounced on both kings and people. It follows ---

Jeremiah 25:23

23. Dedan, and Tema, and Buz, and all that are in the utmost corners,

23. Et Dedan et Thema et Buz, et cunctis terminatis in angulo (alii vertunt, atonsos coma, sicut etiam 9, Cap; sed illic de hac voce dixi quantum ferebat locus,)

I shall now only touch briefly on the extreme ones in a corner, or those bounded by a corner, who were almost unknown to the Jews on account of their distance. [142] After having spoken of nations so very remote, that he might not by prolixity be tedious, he mentions all the extreme ones in a corner, that is, those who were bounded by the farthest limits. As to Dedan, Tema, and Buz, we know that these countries derived their names from their founders. Who Dedan was, we learn from Moses, and also who Tema and Buz were. (Genesis 25:3,15; 1 Chronicles 5:14.) Two of them were descendants of Abraham by Keturah. [143] There is no need of saying more of these countries, for they are not known by us at this day, and we cannot learn from geographers the extent of any of these countries; for there was hardly a place at the time when heathen writers began their records, which had not long before changed its name. We however conclude that these were eastern countries. It follows ---

Jeremiah 25:24

24. And all the kings of Arabia, and all the kings of the mingled people that dwell in the desert,

24. Et omnibus regibus Arabiae, et omnibus regibus (vertunt iterum) Arabiae (sed mihi non placet, neque unquam mihi persuadebunt interpretes, qui tamen in hoc consentiunt, repieti proprium Arabiae nomen; cunctos reges, potius vertam, promiscui vulgi, vel, gentium hinc inde collectarum) qui habitant in deserto,

The Prophet now mentions the kings of Arabia, who were neighbors on one side to the Jews. He has hitherto mentioned nations towards the sea; he has named many maritime towns, and also others which were at some distance from the sea, and yet were not remote; for they were towns and countries intermediate between Judea and Syria or Cilicia, or verging towards Cilicia. He now speaks of Arabia, which was between Egypt and Babylon. And though Arabia was divided into three parts; it was however sterile where it bordered on Judea; it might therefore be said to be a desert.

But the Prophet, in the first place, mentions the kings of Arabia, and then the miscellaneous kings, as we may call them, that is, those who ruled in desert regions and were hardly of any repute; we, indeed, know that they were petty robbers; and these Arabs were sometimes called Schenites, because they dwelt in tents. I therefore consider that these, by way of contempt, were called kings of the promiscuous

[142] See Note in vol. 1, p. 506.

[143] This is not quite correct. Dedan — there are two of this name mentioned, Genesis 10:7, and Genesis 25:3; the latter is probably meant here. Tema was one of Ishmael's race, Genesis 25:15. See also Job 6:19, and Isaiah 21:14. — Buz was one of Nachor's posterity, Genesis 22:21; and of this family was Elihu, the most remarkable of Job's friends; he was a Buzite. Job 32:1-6. — Ed.

multitude, who excelled not in dignity nor in wealth; and hence the Prophet adds, that they dwelt in the desert, being a wandering people. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:25

25. And all the kings of Zimri, and all the kings of Elam, and all the kings of the Medes,

25. Et omnibus regibus Zimri, et omnibus regibus Elam, et omnibus regibus Medorum,

He now mentions nations more remote, but whose fame was more known among the Jews. We, indeed, know that the Elamites, who dwelt between Media and Persia, had ever been people of great repute. As to Media, it was a very large kingdom and wealthy, abounding in all delicacies; and we also know how fond of display were the Medes. With regard to Zimri, [144] it was an obscure nation in comparison with the Elamites and the Medes. The Prophet, however, intimates that every part of the earth, even the smallest kingdom, known to the Jews, would be visited by God's judgment, so that the whole earth, in every direction, would become a witness that God sits in heaven as a judge. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:26

26. And all the kings of the north, far and near, one with another, and all the kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of the earth: and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them.

26. Et omnibus regibus Aquilonis tam iis ui propinqui sunt quam qui remoti, viro (hoc est, cuique) contra fratrem suum, et omnibus regnis terrae, quae sunt super faciem terrae (mutatur quidem nomen, ponit {הארץ}, ponit {האדמה}: et rex Sesach bibet post eos.

The Prophet speaks now of the kings of the north who bordered on the king of Babylon; for as to Judea, Babylon was northward. He calls all those who were towards Chaldea the kings of the north. He then says, Whether near or remote, every one shall be against his brother, and, in short, all the kingdoms of the earth on the face of the earth There is no doubt, as we shall see, but that the Prophet put in the last place the Chaldeans and their king. It is hence probable that what he here predicts was to be accomplished by the hand and power of the king of Babylon, who executed God's vengeance on all these nations. God, then, chose for himself the king of Chaldea as a scourge, and guided him by his hand in punishing all the lands mentioned here.

I have already reminded you that this was not predicted for the sake of the Jews, that they might derive any alleviation to their grief from the circumstance of having associates, because the condition of others was nothing better; but that God's design was another, that is, that in so great a confusion of all things, when heaven and earth, as they say, were blended together, they might know that nothing happens through the blind will of fortune. For God had already testified by the mouth of his servant what he would do, and from this prophecy it was easy to conclude that all these changes and violent commotions were the effects of God's judgment.

[144] Blayney considers Zimri to be the same with Zimran, one of Abraham's sons by Keturah, and he and his brethren were sent to "the east country." (Genesis 25:2, 6.) The Zameroeni, mentioned by Pliny as inhabiting some part of Arabia, were probably the descendants of Zimri. — Ed.

The Prophet, after having shewn that the most grievous calamities were nigh all the nations who were neighbors to the Jews, and whose fame had reached them, says, in the last place, that the king of Sheshach would drink after them Hitherto the Prophet seems to have exempted the king of Babylon from all trouble and danger; for he has mentioned all the nations, and has spoken not only of those who were nigh the Jews, but also of the Persians, the Medes, and others. What, then, could have been the design of all this, if the king of Babylon had been passed by? It might have been asked, how can it be right and consistent that this tyrant should escape punishment, though he was of all the most cruel and the most wicked? Hence the Prophet now says, that the king of Babylon, how much soever his violence prevailed among all nations, and raged unpunished, would yet in his time be brought to a reckoning. The meaning then is, that God would defer the punishment of the Chaldeans until he employed them in destroying all the nations of which Jeremiah has hitherto spoken.

Respecting the king of Babylon being called the king of Sheshach, a question has been raised, and some think that some unknown king is intended; for we know that the word is a proper name, as it appears from some passages of Scripture. (1 Kings 11:40; 2 Chronicles 12:2.) But this opinion is not well founded; for the Prophet no doubt speaks here of some remarkable king; and there is also no doubt but that he reminded them of some most important event, so that there was no reason why delay should depress the minds of the faithful, though they saw that this Sheshach was not immediately punished with the rest. Others conjecture that Sheshach was a renowned city in Chaldea. But there is no necessity for us to adopt such light and frivolous conjectures. I have no doubt but that the opinion which the Chaldee paraphraser has followed is the true one, that is, that Sheshach was Babylon. For the sort of alphabet which the Jews at this day call {אתבש}, atbash, is no new invention; it appears from Jerome it had been long known; he, indeed, derived from great antiquity the practice, so to speak, of counting the letters backwards. They put, the last letter, {ת}, in the place of {א}, the first, and then {ש} in the place of {ב}, and {כ} being in the middle of the letters was put for {ל}; and so they called Babel Sheshach. [145] And to designate Babylon by an obscure name was suitable to the design of the Prophet. But every doubt is removed by another passage in this Prophet,

``How is Sheshach demolished! how fallen is the glory (or praise) of the whole earth! how overthrown is Babylon!''
(Jeremiah 51:40.)

There, no doubt, the Prophet explains himself; there is therefore no need to seek any other interpretation. It is a common thing, as we know, with the prophets to

[145] Both Venema and Gataker regard this as one of the vagaries of the Rabbins, though countenanced by Jerome. Various have been the reasons assigned for calling Babylon Sheshach. Some derive the word from {,{שיש which means in Syriac, to dwell, to rest, and consider K a formative letter; and then they render it ``a great habitation.'' Others derive it from an Arabic root which means to be swift or to advance swiftly --- the character of the sun or fire, which was deified. The third party say, that it signifies a feast, like the Saturnalian, which the Chaldeans {σακέαν}; for it was during a feast that Babylon was taken, so that there was thus an intimation given of this by calling him the king of this feast. See Jeremiah 51:39 But the most probable account is that given by Gataker, that Babylon was thus called from an idol in great repute in the city, named Sheshach or Shach, and that it was on the festival of this idol that the city was taken. This accounts for this name being given to it, when its destruction is especially referred to. Mishael, which terminated with God's name, was changed into Meschach, or rather Mishach, which contained the name of the Babylonian idol. (Daniel 1:7.) --- Ed

repeat the same thing in other words; as he had mentioned Sheshach in the first clause, to prevent any doubt he afterwards mentioned Babylon.

But here a question arises; why did not the Prophet openly and plainly denounce ruin on the king as well as on the Chaldean nation? Many think that this was done prudently, that he might not create an ill-will towards his own people; and Jerome brings forward a passage from Paul, but absurdly, where he says,

``Until a defection shall come,'' (2 Thessalonians 2:3)

but he did not understand that passage, for he thought that Paul spoke of the Roman empire. One error brings another; he supposed that Paul was cautious that he might not excite the fury of the Roman Emperor against the Church; but it was no such thing. Now, they who reject the opinion, which is the most correct, that Sheshach was Babylon, make use of this argument, --- that the Prophet was not afraid to speak of Babylon, because he had declared openly of it what he had to say, as we have already seen in other places, and as it will appear more clearly hereafter. But I do not allow that the Prophet was afraid to speak of Babylon, for we find that he boldly obeyed God, so that he stood firm, as we may say, in the midst of many deaths; but I think that he concealed the name for another reason, even that the Jews might know that they had no cause to be in a hurry, though the punishment of Babylon had been predicted, for the prophecy was, as it were, buried, inasmuch as the Prophet withheld the very name of Babylon. It was not, then, his purpose to provide for the peace of the Church, nor was he afraid of the Chaldeans, lest he should kindle their fury against God's people; he had no such thing in view, but wished rather to restrain too much haste.

And this appears from the context; Drink, he says, shall the king of Sheshath after them; that is, all these nations must drink before God shall touch the king of Babylon. He will not, then, be an idle spectator of all these calamities, but his severity will proceed through all lands until it reaches its summit; and then, he says, this king shall drink after the rest. Now, it might have seemed a poor consolation that God would for so long a time spare the king of Babylon; but all God's children ought nevertheless to have acquiesced in the admonition given them, that though they were to bear in mind that each of these nations were to be punished by God's hand, they were yet to believe that the king of Babylon would have his turn, and that they therefore were to restrain themselves, and not to be carried away by too hasty a desire to look for his punishment, but patiently to bear the yoke of tyranny laid on them, until the seasonable time came of which they had been reminded. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:27

27. Therefore thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Drink ye, and be drunken, and spue, and fall, and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you.

27. Et dices ad eos, Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Bibite et inebriamini, vomite et cadite, et ne surgatis a facie gladii, quem ego mitto inter vos.

Here the Prophet returns to his former discourse. He had said that a cup was extended to him by God's hand, that he might give it to all nations to drink. He now

repeats and confirms the same thing, not indeed that he brought this message to all the nations; for we have said the benefit arising from these predictions belonged only to the Jews. Neither the Tyrians nor the Sidonians ever knew that they were punished by God's hand when they were plundered by their enemies; this never came to their minds, nor had this been ever taught them. The Prophet had not been appointed their teacher; but his duty was only to warn his own nation.

However, the Prophet, that his predictions might have greater authority, is here introduced as God's herald, denouncing ruin on all nations, Thou shalt therefore say to them, Thus saith Jehovah, etc. The true God was unknown to these heathens, except they had heard that God was worshipped in Judea; but at the same time they despised, yea, hated true religion. But, as I have already said, the Prophet addressed his own people, the Jews alone, though he spoke of aliens and distant nations. I cannot advance further now.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since there are before our eyes so many evidences of thy judgments and of thy goodness, we may advance in the fear of thy name, and not go on to kindle thy wrath more against us, but that, being touched with true repentance, we may seek to be reconciled to thee, and that, commiserating the many evils, by which the world is at this day afflicted, we may also strive to restore those to the right way who seem to give themselves up to their own ruin, so that by converting those to thee who are now far away and aliens, thy name may be more glorified and proclaimed by us with one consent, through Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Ninety-Seventh

We began yesterday to explain the verse in which Jeremiah bids all nations to drink of the cup until they were drunken. Of the metaphor of the cup an explanation has already been given: the reason is, because God in his infinite wisdom knew what every one deserved, or how just it was to chastise at one time in a lighter, and at another time in a heavier degree. As then the measure is not the same, the similitude of a cup is most suitable. Further, God sometimes gives a cup to drink, that he who cannot bear a heavier punishment may only taste it. For we know that God deals more severely with the strong and the obstinate: but when any one is weak, he is treated more gently, and is made only to sip or to taste of the cup.

But the Prophet says here that they were to drink until they became drunken, according to what is said in another place, when the heathens are spoken of, ``They shall even exhaust the yew dregs.'' And God makes men drunken, as I have said before, even when he blinds them and gives them the spirit of giddiness or stupor. (Obadiah 26 [sic].) But the word drunkenness refers to external chastisements. Drink ye, then, and be drunken; that is, ``think ye not that you have suffered all, when God begins to punish you and has given you one draught only; but the Lord will make you thoroughly drunken.'' And hence he adds, Vomit ye and fall; for they who indulge in excess and fill themselves, so that they almost burst, must necessarily disgorge themselves. And vomiting disorders the brain, so that the feet can no longer perform their office, and no part of the body retains its power. The meaning then is, that

as God had for a long time deferred his judgment, and all nations had hardened themselves when his long-suffering invited them to repentance, the most dreadful vengeance was now nigh them all, a vengeance which would compensate for the delay or the length of endurance.

Some interpreters hence conclude, that the punishment of all the nations of whom the Prophet now speaks, would be of no avail to them: but this seems not to me to be well founded. For he has spoken of the chosen people; and it is certain that some of them repented, however small the number was, and we shall also see that pardon and salvation are promised even to the heathens, after the execution of God's judgments. I therefore thus simply interpret these words, --- that they should not only taste of the cup, but also drink to excess, so as to become like drunken men, wholly stupified, because the heaviness of their punishment would deprive them of reason. In no way more solid is the reason given by Jerome, when he says that the Prophet's discourse refers to the reprobate, because he subjoins, And rise no more Jerome thought, that by this expression extreme despair is intimated. But the Prophet, in my judgment, meant nothing else than that God's vengeance on all the nations would be so great that vestiges of it would remain after a length of time; as the case is with a drunkard, who cannot get rid of the effects of his excess in a night or in a day, but he remains stupid for some time, or becomes frantic. This is what the Prophet means when he says, and they shall rise no more [146]

It now follows, On account of the sword which I send among you. He now expresses without a figure what he had said of drunkenness and vomiting, even that so great a horror would seize their minds, that they would lie down wholly stupified. But God declares that he would send a sword against them, that the Jews might understand, as it has been already stated, that when all things would be in a state of almost entire confusion, yet God's judgment would be within the limits of moderation. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 25:28

28. And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup at thine hand to drink, then shalt thou say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Ye shall certainly drink.

28. Et erit, si rennerint ad sumendum (hoc est, sumere) calicem e manu tua ad bibendum, tunc dices ad eos (copula enim debetg resolvi in adverbium temporis,) Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Bibendo bibetis.

In this verse the Prophet intimates, that however refractory the nations might be, yet they could effect no good by their obstinacy, for willing or unwilling they would be constrained to drink of the cup. But in order to render the matter more striking, he introduces them as refusing; If they refuse to take the cup, thou shalt say to them, says God, Drinking ye shall drink We have before said that the Prophet was not set a teacher over the heathens: hence what he declares here appertained not to aliens; but the whole benefit belonged to God's Church. Therefore what is said was spoken

[146] It is better, as in Jeremiah 25:16, to connect “the sword” with this last verb: the verse then would read thus, — 27. And say thou to them, thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Drink ye and be drunken, vomit also and fall; and ye shall not rise up before the sword which I shall send among you. The representation is, that they would be so drunken as not to keep on their legs, and that having fallen they would not be able to rise to make any resistance to the attack made upon them. — Ed

for God's people, even that they might know that as God had determined to punish the wickedness of men, none of all those threatened with judgment could possibly escape. Men indeed are often like unruly horses, who kick and are ferocious, and rage against their rider, and also bite; but the Prophet shews that God possesses a power sufficient to quell such obstinacy. He however reminds us how rebellious most would be, nay, almost all, when chastised by God's hand. It is indeed a rare instance when he who has sinned, willingly and calmly submits to God, and owns that he is justly punished: nay, they who confess that they have deserved some heavy punishment, do yet complain against God; for they dread his vengeance, and apprehend not his mercy, and promise not to themselves any pardon. There is then no wonder that the Prophet ascribes here to wicked men, both Jews and aliens, so hard and rebellious a spirit, that they would resist God, and try to extricate themselves from his hand, in short, that they would by all means attempt to escape his judgment.

This is the reason why he says, If they refuse to take the cup from thy hand We hence see that we are not to take the words in their literal sense: for the Prophet did not speak to aliens, but what he had in view was the event itself, or rather the disposition of the people. These nations had indeed some power, and doubtless they strenuously defended their own safety; and this was the act of refusing intended by the Prophet. For when the enemy attacked the Moabites, they did not immediately yield; and the same was the case with others. Tyre was almost unassailable, for it was situated in the sea; where it was easy to prevent the approach of enemies. As then they had resolutely opposed their enemies, they are said to have refused the cup from God's hand, for they thought that they could keep off the coming evil. But however inconquerable they thought themselves to be, and how much soever they trusted in their own power, yet God says, that their efforts would be in vain and useless: drinking, he says, ye shall drink [147] The reason follows ---

Jeremiah 25:29

29. For, lo, I begin to bring evil on the city which is called by my name, and should ye be utterly punished? Ye shall not be unpunished: for I will call for a sword upon all the inhabitants of the earth, saith the LORD of hosts.

29. Quia ecce in urbe in qua invocatum nomen meum super eam, ego incipio ad malefaciendum (ad malum inferendum,) et vos inoxii eritis? Non eritis innoxii; quia gladium ego advoco super incolas terrae, dicit Jehova exercituum.

A proof is added by comparing the less and the greater; for the Prophet reasons thus, --- ``If God spares not the city in which he has chosen a temple for himself, and designed his name to be invoked, how can he spare aliens to whom he has never made any promise, as he regarded them as strangers? If then the green tree is consumed, how can the dry remain safe?'' This is the import of the passage. The Apostle uses the same argument in other words; for after having said that judgment would begin at God's house, he immediately shews how dreadful that vengeance of God was to be which awaited his open enemies! (1 Peter 4:17.)

We may hence gather a useful doctrine. Since God not only declares that he will

[147] Or we may render the words literally as they are, — Drink ye, — ye shall drink. The first verb is an imperative, and the second is in the future tense, and may be rendered, “ye must drink,” for the future may thus be often rendered. — Ed.

be indiscriminately the avenger of wickedness, but also summons in the first place his Church which he has chosen before his tribunal, its condition may seem to be worse than that of alien nations. Hence the minds of the godly, when they view things in this light, might be much depressed. It seems a singular favor of God, that he unites us to himself; but yet this honor seems only to lead to punishment: for God connives at the wickedness of heathens, and seems to bury them in oblivion; but as soon as we fall into sin, we perceive signs of his wrath. It would then be better to be at a distance from him, and that he should not be so solicitous in his care for us. Thus the faithful view the unbelieving as in a better state than themselves. But this doctrine mitigates all the sharpness of that grief, which might otherwise occasion great bitterness. For when it is represented to us, that God begins at his Church, that he may more heavily punish the unbelieving after having long endured them, and that they may thus be far more grievously dealt with than the faithful, as the dry tree is much sooner consumed than the green, --- when therefore this is set before us, we have doubtless a ground for comfort, and that not small nor common.

We hence see why Jeremiah added this, --- that how much soever the nations would resist God, they would yet be constrained, willing or unwilling, to yield, as God was more powerful than they; and for this reason, that since God would not spare his chosen people, the heathens could by no means escape unpunished, and not find him to be the judge of the world. Let then this truth be remembered by us, whenever our flesh leads us to complain or to be impatient; for it is better for us that God should begin with us, as at length the wicked shall in their turn be destroyed, and that we should endure temporal evils, that God may at length raise us up to the enjoyment of his paternal favor. And for this reason Paul also says, that it is a demonstration of the just judgment of God when the faithful are exposed to many evils. (2 Thessalonians 1:4, 5.): For, when God chastises his own children, of whose obedience he yet approves, do we not see as in a glass what is yet concealed? even the dreadful punishment that awaits all the unbelieving. God, then, represents to us at this day the destruction of his enemies by the paternal chastisements with which he visits us; and they are a certain proof or a lively exhibition of that judgment which the unbelieving fear not, but thoughtlessly deride.

Now, he says, Behold I begin to bring evil, etc. The verb {הרע}, ero, means properly to do evil; and it would be a strange thing to say that God does evil, were it not that common usage explains the meaning. They who are in any measure acquainted with Scripture know that calamities are called evils, that is, according to the perceptions of men. The Lord then is said to bring evil on men, not because he injures them or deals unjustly and cruelly with them, but because what is adverse to men's minds is thought to be by them, and is called evil. Then he says, I begin to do evil in the city on which my name is called [148] God's name is called on a people, when he promises to be their guardian and defender, and his name is said to be called upon men, when they betake themselves to his guardianship and protection.

[148] The literal rendering is, "which is called my name on it:" and the Sept. tried to imitate the Hebrew idiom by retaining "on it," inconsistently with the Greek idiom; but the Vulg. retains the character of the Latin, and renders the phrase, "on which my name is called." The Welsh, according to its idiom, is literally the Hebrew. — Ed.

But we must notice the real meaning, --- that God's name is called on a people, when they are deemed to be under his guardianship and keeping; as God's name is called on the children of Abraham, because he had promised to be their God; and they boasted that they were his peculiar people, even on account of their adoption. So God's name was called on Jerusalem, because there was the Temple and the altar; and as God called it his rest or habitation, his name was there well known, according to what we say in French, Se reclamer, il se reclame d'un tel, that is, such an one claims this or that as his patron, so that he shelters himself under his protection. So also the Jews formerly called on God's name, when they said that they had been chosen to be his people: nay, this may also be applied to men; for the name of Jacob, Isaac, and Abraham was called on the twelve tribes, even for this reason, --- because they regarded, when seeking to rely on God's covenant, their own origin, for they had descended from the holy fathers, with whom God had made his covenant, and to whom he had promised that he would be ever their God. All the Israelites called on Abraham, not, that they offered him worship, but that, as they were his offspring, they might feel justly assured that the gratuitous covenant by which God had adopted them to himself, had been transmitted to them. But this calling may be also taken in another sense, even because they daily appeased God by sacrifices and prayers: when they committed their safety to God, there was a sacrifice always added, and reconciliation was also promised. Then to be called upon or invoked, {נקרא}, nukora, may be taken in this sense, even that they knew that God was reconciled to them, when they from the heart repented. Since then God's name was called upon in that city, how was it possible that the Gentiles should escape that judgment to which the holy city was of be exposed?

But the former view seems to me the best; and there is no doubt but that God speaks here to the free adoption by which he had chosen that people for himself: hence was the invocation or the glorying of which he now speaks.

But as it was difficult to make the Jews to believe what the Prophet had said, he dwells on the subject, and repeats what was before sufficiently clear. He not only says, Shall ye be treated as innocent? but he mentions the word twice, Shall ye by being treated as innocent be treated as innocent? [149] And thus he rebuked the perverse contumacy by which the heathens were filled, while looking on their wealth, their number, and other things, and at the same time disregarding all that the prophets proclaimed at Jerusalem, as though it was nothing to them. The question is in itself emphatical, ``Can ye by any means be treated as innocent?'' The verb {נקה}, nuke, means to be innocent, but it is applied to punishment; as the word {עון}, on, which means iniquity, is used to designate punishment. So he is said not to be innocent who cannot exempt himself from God's judgment, nor be free from it.

He confirms this sentence when he says, For a sword am I calling for on all the inhabitants of the earth, saith Jehovah of hosts This confirmation is by no means superfluous, for the insolence of the nations had increased through the forbearance of God, for they had for a long time, yea, for many ages, been in a quiet state,

[149] Literally it is, — "And ye — shall ye, being acquitted, be acquitted? ye shall not be acquitted." The reference is to a judicial process, which is distinctly mentioned in the 31st verse (Jeremiah 25:31). — Ed.

and had indulged themselves in their pleasures, and slept as it were in their own dregs, according to what is said elsewhere. The Prophet then says now, that God was calling for a sword on all the inhabitants of the earth. For he had often and in various ways chastised his own people, while the Gentiles were not in any danger and free from troubles. (Jeremiah 48:11.) But he says now that he was calling for a sword to destroy all those whom he seemed to have forgiven.

But God is said to have called for men as well as for a sword; for Nebuchadnezzar is said to have fought under the banner of God; he is said to have been like a hired soldier. But God now speaks of the sword, that we might know that it is in his power to excite and to quell wars whenever it pleases him, and that thus the sword, though wielded by the hand of man, is not yet called forth by the will of man, but by the hidden power of God. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:30

30. Therefore prophesy thou against them all these words, and say unto them, The LORD shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth.

30. Et tu prophetabis ad eos (vel, contra eos) omnia verba haec, et dices illis, Jehova ab excelso rugiet, et ex habitaculo sanctitatis suae edet vocem suam; rugiendo rugiet super habitaculum suum; celeusma (clamorem potius generaliter) quasi prementium torcular respondebit super cunctos incolas terrae.

The word {הידד}, eidad, is rendered celeusma, a shout; but some render it a mournful singing; and it often occurs when the vintage is spoken of. Celeusma, as it is well known, is the shout of sailors. Its etymology is indeed general in its meaning; for {κελεύειν} is to exhort, to encourage; and then the noun is exhortation. But as this word is only used as to sailors, I prefer to adopt the word sound, or a loud noise.

Then he says, Prophesy thou against them all these words, and say to them, etc. I have already reminded you that no command was given to the Prophet to go to the heathens and to address each nation among them, or, in other words, to perform among them his prophetic office. But though he did not move a foot from the city, yet the influence of his prophecy reached through every region of the earth. The preaching therefore of Jeremiah was not in vain, for the Jews understood by what happened, that there was in the language of the holy man the power of the Spirit for the salvation of all the godly, and for the destruction of all the unbelieving. It is, then, in this sense that God bids and commands him again to prophesy against all nations, and to speak to them, not that he actually addressed them; but when he taught the Jews, his doctrine had an influence on all nations.

And he says, Jehovah from on high shall roar, and from the habitation of his holiness shall send forth his voice The metaphor of roaring is sufficiently common. It seems indeed unsuitable to apply it to God; but we know how tardy men are, and how they indulge themselves in their own insensibility, even when God threatens them. Hence God, adopting a hyperbolical mode of speaking, reproves their stupidity, as he cannot move them except he exceeds the limits of moderation. This then is the reason why he compares himself to a lion, not that we are to imagine

that there is anything savage or cruel in him; but as I have said, men cannot be moved, except God puts on another character and comes forth as a lion, while yet he testifies not in vain elsewhere, that he is slow to wrath, inclined to mercy and long-suffering. (Psalm 86:5, 15.) Let us then know that the impious contempt, by which most men are fascinated, is thus condemned, when God does as it were in this manner transform himself, and is constrained to represent himself as a lion.

Roar, then, he says, shall Jehovah, from on high, and from the habitation of his holiness shall he send forth his voice When he speaks of on high, it is probable that heaven is meant; and the habitation of his holiness is often taken for the sanctuary or the Temple; but in other places, when the same words are repeated, heaven is also meant by the habitation of his holiness. There is yet nothing unsuitable, if we say that the Prophet here refers to the Temple, and that he thus refers to it, that he might raise upwards the minds of the Jews, who had their thoughts fixed on the visible Temple: nay, this seems to be required by the context. They indeed foolishly thought that God was bound to them, because it had been said,

``Here is my rest for ever; here will my name and power dwell.'' (Psalm 132:14)

They strangely thought that there was no God but he who was inclosed in that visible and external sanctuary. Hence was that pride which Isaiah reproves and severely condemns when he says,

``Where is the place for my rest? the heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what place then will you build for me?'' (Isaiah 66:1.)

The Prophet there does not merely speak, as many think, against superstition; but he rather beats down that foolish arrogance, because the people thought that God could never be separated from the material Temple. And yet it was not for nothing that the Temple had the name of being the royal throne of God, provided vices were removed. So now the Prophet, though he exalts God above the heavens, yet alludes to the visible sanctuary, when he says, ``Roar shall Jehovah from on high, and from the habitation of his holiness shall he send forth his voice;'' that is, though the Gentiles think that God sits and rests in a corner, yet his throne is in heaven: that he has chosen for himself a terrestrial habitation, is no reason why the government of the whole earth should not be in his hands; and therefore he manifests proofs of his vengeance towards all nations; but for the sake of his Church he will go forth as it were from his Temple: and he repeats again, Roaring he shall roar on his dwelling, or habitation. [150] Jerome usually renders the last word ornament, beauty; and yet this passage sufficiently proves that it cannot mean any other thing than habitation, as well as many other passages.

He afterwards proceeds to another comparison, He will respond a shout, as those who tread the wine-press against all the inhabitants of the earth This repetition and variety confirm what I have said, --- that God hyperbolically set forth the vehemence of his voice in order to fill with terror the secure and the torpid. And the Prophet seems here to intimate, that though there would be none to cheer, yet God's voice would be sufficiently powerful. For they who tread the wine-press mutually encour-

[150] Or “against his habitation,” or “resting-place,” as rendered by Blayney; “his place,” is the Sept.; and ““his habitation,” is the Syr. The Vulg. is Jerome’s version. — Ed.

age one another by shouting; one calls on another, and thus they rouse themselves to diligence. There is also a mutual concord among sailors, when they give their shouts, as well as among the workmen who tread the grapes in the wine-press. But though God would have no one to rouse him, yet he himself would be sufficient; he will respond a shout [151] The Prophet might have used another word; but he says, he will respond --- to whom? even to himself; that is, though all united to extinguish God's vengeance, yet he will come forth a conqueror, nor will he have any need of help. It then follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:31

31. A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the LORD hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword, saith the LORD.

31. Pervenit (hoc est, perveniet) sonitus (vel, impetus) ad extremitatem terrae; quia lis Jehovae cum gentibus, judicium (id est, contentio, vel, disceptatio) ei contra omnem carnem: impios dabit (tradet) ipsos ad gladium, dicit Jehova.

He pursues the same subject; he says that there would be a dreadful assault, and that it would extend to the extreme parts of the earth. The word {שאון}, shaun, means a noise or sound; but it is also taken for violence or assault; and either meaning would not be unsuitable here. The sound then, or assault, shall come to the extreme parts of the earth It then follows, that God had a strife with all nations; and here the Prophet seems to obviate a question that might have been raised, ``What does this mean? that God will suddenly raise a commotion, after having been quiet and still for so many ages, without giving any symptom of his vengeance?'' For we have said that the nations here mentioned had been long in a tranquil state. Hence the Prophet answers this unexpressed objection and says, that God had a contention with them.

The time of contending is not always: he who does not immediately bring his adversary before the judge, but deals kindly with him, and seeks to obtain amicably from him what is right, does not thereby forego what is justly due to him; but when he finds that the contumacy of his adversary is such that his kind dealing effects nothing, he may then litigate with him. The same thing is now expressed by the Prophet, even that God would now contend with the nations and dispute with all flesh God is indeed, properly speaking, the judge of the world; and there is no arbiter or a judge in heaven or on earth to be found before whom he can dispute; but yet this mode of speaking ought to be especially noticed; for God thus silences all those complaints which men are wont to make against him. Even they who are a hundred times proved guilty, yet complain against God when he severely punishes them, and they say that they are made to suffer more than they deserve. Hence God for this reason says, that when he punishes he does not exercise a tyrannical power, but that he does as it were dispute with sinners. At the same time he sets forth his

[151] This verse seems to refer only to the Jews, and the following to the nations, as to their doom. God is represented in the latter part of this verse as responding to the shout of all the nations against his own people, — Roaring he will roar against his own habitation; A shout like that of treaders of grapes Will he respond to all the inhabitants of the earth. This rendering prevents the necessity of giving an unusual meaning to {אל}, as it is commonly done. Coccius takes this view of the passage. --- Ed

own goodness by representing the end he has in view; for what he regards in rigidly punishing wickedness, is nothing else than to obtain his own rights; and as he cannot secure these by kind means, he extorts them as it were by the aid of laws. [152]

Let us then observe, that nothing is detracted from God's power and authority, when it is said, that he disputes or contends with men; but that in this way all those clamors are checked which the ungodly raise against him, as though he raged immoderately against them, and also that thus the end of all punishment is pointed out, even that God condescends to assume the character of an opponent, and proposes nothing else than to require what is reasonable and just, like him who having a cause to try before the judge, would willingly agree beforehand, if possible, with his adversary; but as he sees no hope, he has recourse to that remedy. So God contends with us; for except we were wholly irreclaimable, we might be restored to his favor; and reconciliation would be ready for us, were we only to allow him his rights.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou seekest continually in various ways to restore us to thyself, --- O grant, that we may not by our untameable perverseness resist thy holy and kind admonitions, nor continue torpid in our drowsiness, but anxiously flee to thee, and so humbly solicit pardon, that we may thus shew that we really and habitually repent, so that thy name may in every way be glorified, until we shall come into thy celestial glory, through Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Ninety-Eighth

Jeremiah 25:32

32. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, and a great whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.

32. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Ecce malum egredietur a gente in gentem, et tempestas magna excitabitur a lateribus terrae.

Jeremiah goes on with the subject which we began to explain in the last Lecture. He had before prophesied of God's judgments, which were nigh many nations, and which referred to almost all the countries near and known to the Jews, and to some that were afar off. The substance of what has been said is, --- that God, who had long spared the wickedness of men, would now become an avenger, so that it might openly appear, that though he had deferred punishment, he would not allow the ungodly to escape, for they would in proper time and season be called to give an account.

To the same purpose is what he adds here, go forth shall evil from nation to nation The explanation by some is, that one nation would make war on another, and that thus they would destroy themselves by mutual conflicts; and this meaning may be admitted. It seems, however, to me that the Prophet meant another thing, even that God's vengeance would advance like a contagion through all lands. And according to

[152] The terms are legal terms, — 31. Gone has the sound to the extremity of the earth; For a contention had Jehovah with the nations, Into judgment hath he entered with all flesh; The wicked — he gave them to the sword, saith Jehovah. The past is evidently used for the future. "The sound" then was to go forth, and for the reasons here assigned, — God would have a dispute with all, would try the matter as it were by a judicial process, and would give up the condemned, the wicked, to the sword. The object of this representation is very correctly stated by Calvin. — Ed.

this view he adds a metaphor, or the simile of a storm, or a tempest, or a whirlwind; for when a tempest arises, it confines not itself to one region, but spreads itself far and wide. So the Prophet now shews, that though God would not at one time punish all the nations, he would yet be eventually the judge of all, for he would pass far and wide like a storm. Thus, then, I interpret the passage, not that the nations would make war with one another, but that when God had executed his judgment on one nation, he would afterwards advance to another, so that he would make no end until he had completed what Jeremiah had foretold.

And this view appears still more evident from the second clause of the verse, for this cannot be explained of intestine wars, raised shall be a tempest from the sides of the earth We hence see that the meaning is, that God would not be wearied after having begun to summon men to judgment, but would include the most remote, who thought themselves beyond the reach of danger. As when a tempest rises, it seems only to threaten a small portion of the country, but it soon spreads itself and covers the whole heavens; so also God says, that his vengeance would come from the sides of the earth, that is, from the remotest places, so that no distance would prevent the completion of what he had foretold by his servant.

But this may also be accommodated to our case; for whenever we see that this or that nation is afflicted by any calamity, we ought to remember this truth, that God seasonably warns us, that we may not abuse his patience, but anticipate him before his scourge passes from some side of the earth to us. In short, as soon as God manifests any sign of his wrath, it ought instantly to occur to us, that it may spread in a moment through all the extremities of the earth, so that no corner would be exempted. For if he makes known his power in the whirlwind or the storm, how will it be, when he makes a fuller and a nearer manifestation of his judgment, by stretching forth his hand as it were in a visible manner? This, then, is the import of this verse. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:33

33. And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.

33. Et erunt interfecti Jehovae, in die illa ab extremitate terrae ad extremitatem terrae: non plangentur, et non colligentur, et non sepelientur; stercus in supereficie terrae erunt (id est, pro stercore.)

This verse explains what I have just said; and hence it also appears that the Prophet did not speak of mutual slaughters inflicted by one nation on another, but that he only declared that God's wrath would spread like a storm so as to extend to all nations and lands. The Prophet no doubt continues the same subject; and we see why he says here, And the slain, of Jehovah shall be in that day, etc.; he calls our attention to God alone; he will speak otherwise hereafter, he does not set here before us the ministers of God's vengeance, but God himself as acting by himself.

Hence he says, the slain of Jehovah; some read, ``the wounded;'' and {חלל}, chelal, means to wound and to kill; but ``the slain'' is more suitable here. The slain then of Jehovah shall be from one extremity of the earth to the other; as though he

had said, that God would not be satisfied with punishing three or four nations, but would shew himself the judge of all the countries of the earth.

Now this passage is worthy of special notice; for we often wonder why God connives at so many crimes committed by men, which none of us would tolerate. But if we consider how dreadful was the tempest of which the Prophet now speaks, we ought to know that God rests for a time, in order that the ungodly and the wicked might be the less excusable. It was at the same time doubtless a sad spectacle, when so many regions and provinces were unceasingly suffering various calamities, when one nation thought itself better off than its neighbors, but presently found itself more cruelly treated. And yet this was generally the case, for God's wrath extended to the extremities of the earth.

He amplifies the atrocity of the evil by mentioning three things, --- They shall not be lamented, nor gathered, nor buried; but they shall be as dung, and shall thus lie on the face of the earth We have said in other places that lamentation does no good to the dead; but as it is what humanity requires, the want of it is rightly deemed a temporal punishment. So when any one is deprived of burial, it is certainly nothing to the dead if his body is not laid in a grave; for we know that God's holy servants have often been either burnt or hung or exposed to wild beasts; and the whole Church complains that dead bodies were lying around Jerusalem and became food to the birds of heaven and to the beasts of the earth. But these things do not disprove the fact, that burial is an evidence of God's paternal kindness towards men. For why has he appointed that men should be buried rather than brute animals, except that he designed it to be an intimation of an immortal life? As, then, burial is a sign of God's favor, it is no wonder that he often declares to the reprobate that their dead bodies would be cast away, so as not to be honored, with a grave.

But we must remember this truth, --- that temporal punishments happen in common to God's children and to aliens; God extends without any difference temporal punishments to his own children and to the unbelieving, and that in order that it may be made evident that our hope ought not to be fixed on this world. But however this may be, it is yet true that when God punishes the unbelieving in this way, he adds at the same time some remark by which it may be understood, that it happens not in vain nor undesignedly, that those are deprived of burial, who deserve that God should exterminate them from the earth, and that their memory should be obliterated, so that they should not be connected among men. But we have said also in another place, that such expressions admit of another meaning, which yet is not at variance with the former, but connected with it, and that is, that so great would be the slaughter, that none would be left to shew this kindness to his friend or to his neighbor or to his brother. For when four or ten or a hundred die, they may be buried; but when God slays by the sword a great number in one day, none are found to take care of burying the dead, as few remain alive, and even they dread their enemies. When therefore the prophets say that those whom God slew would be without lamentation and burial, they intimate that so great would be the number, that all would lie on the ground; for no one would dare to perform this humane act towards the dead, and were all to do their utmost, they would not be able, as the

number would be so great.

Thus Jeremiah confirms what we have said, --- that God's vengeance would extend to all lands and all nations, so as to involve in ruin the nobles as well as the common people, and to leave remaining but a small number.

For the same purpose he adds what follows, that they would be as dung on the face of the earth This is added by way of contempt. It was then hardly credible, that so many illustrious, wealthy, and powerful nations could thus in so short a time be destroyed. But the Prophet, in order to shake off this false conceit, says that they would become like dung, that however great their dignity and power, their wealth and strength, might be, they could not yet escape the hand of God, for he would reduce to nothing the glory of the whole world. We now perceive the real meaning of the Prophet. It then follows ---

Jeremiah 25:34

34. Howl, ye shepherds, and cry; and wallow yourselves in the ashes, ye principal of the flock: for the days of your slaughter and of your dispersions are accomplished; and ye shall fall like a pleasant vessel.

34. Ulalate pastores, et clamate, et volutate vos eximii gregis; quia impleti sunt dies vestri ad mactandum, et dispersiones vestrae (vel, afflictiones, confractiones;) et cadetis tanquam vas desiderii (id est, pretiosum.)

I doubt not but that the Prophet now turns his discourse especially to his own nation, which interpreters have not observed, and hence have not understood the meaning of the Prophet. He prophesied of God's judgments, that the Jews might know that they in vain looked for impunity, as the Lord would not pardon the ignorant and destitute of all true knowledge, who might have pretended their ignorance as an excuse; and also that this comfort might support the minds of the godly, that the heathens, involved in the same guilt, would be subjected to the same judgment; and lastly, that knowing the difference between them and other nations, they might flee to God's mercy and be encouraged to repent by entertaining a hope of pardon. After having then treated this general subject, he now returns to the people over whom he was appointed a teacher. He might indeed have declared from an eminence what was to take place through the whole earth; for so extensive was the office of a herald which God had conferred on him. He might then by the virtue of his office have denounced ruin on all nations; but he ought not to neglect his special care for the chosen people. And so I explain this passage; for he now again directs his discourse to the Jews.

Hence he says, Howl, ye pastors, and cry, etc. By pastors he means the king and his counsellors, the priests and other rulers; and by the choice of the flock he seems to understand the rich, whose condition was better than that of the common people. Some in a more refined manner consider the choice of the flock to have been those void of knowledge, unlike the scribes and priests and the king's counsellors; but this view seems not to be well-founded. I therefore adopt what is more probable, --- that the choice of the flock were those who were rich and high in public esteem, and yet held no office of authority in the commonwealth or in the Church. However this may be, the Prophet shews, that as soon as God began to put forth his hand to punish the

Jews, there would be no ranks of men exempt from lamentation, for he would begin with the pastors and the choice of the flock.

He adds that their days were fulfilled Here he indirectly condemns that wicked security which had for a long time hardened them, so that they despised all threatenings; for God had now for many years called on them, and had sent his Prophets one after another; when they saw the execution of judgment suspended over them, they considered it only as a bugbear, ``Well, let the prophets continue to pronounce their terrors, if they will do so, but nothing will come of them.'' Thus the ungodly turned God's forbearance into an occasion for their obstinacy. As then this evil was common among the Jews, the Prophet now says, by way of anticipation, that their days were fulfilled For there is to be understood this contrast, that God had spared them, not that he had his eyes closed, or that he had not observed their wicked deeds, but that he wished to give them time to repent; but when he saw that their wickedness was unhealable, he now says that their days were completed. And he adds, to be killed or slain. I wonder that learned interpreters render this, ``that they may slay one another.'' There is no need of adding anything, for the Prophet meant to express no such sentiment, nor to restrict what he denounces here on the Jews, to intestine or domestic wars; on the contrary, we know that they were slain by aliens, even by the Chaldeans. This sense then is forced, and is also inconsistent with history. It is added, and your dispersions [153] also are fulfilled, or your breakings. The verb {פוץ}, puts, means to scatter or to dissipate, and also to afflict, to tear; and the sense of tearing or breaking is what I prefer here. And he adds, And ye shall fall as a precious vessel This simile appears not to be very appropriate, for why should he not rather compare them to an earthen vessel, which is of no value and easily broken? But his object was to point out the difference in their two conditions, that though God had honored them with singular privileges, yet all their excellency would not keep them safe; for it often happens that a vessel, however precious, is broken. And he speaks not of gold or silver vessels, but of fragile vessels, once in great esteem. That he might then more grievously wound them, he says that they had been hitherto precious vessels, or a precious vessel; for he speaks of them all in the singular number, and that they were to be broken; and thus he confirms what I said on the last verse, that hypocrites in vain trusted in their present fortune, or in the superior blessings of God, for he could turn to shame whatever glory he had conferred on them. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:35

35. And the shepherds shall have no way to flee, nor the principal of the flock to escape.

[153] This word is omitted by the Sept., and Calvin's rendering is that of the Vulg., and it is a verb like the former in the Syr. and the Targ. On the contrary, the two words are nouns, and ought to be so rendered, — 34. Howl, ye pastors, and cry, And roll yourselves in the dust, ye illustrious of the flock, Because fulfilled are your days For the slaughter and for your dispersions; And ye shall fall like a precious vessel. The word {,באפר ``in the dust,'' is connected with the verb here used in Jeremiah 6:26, and in Ezekiel 27:30, and it is supplied here by the Vulg. and the Targ. The line is rendered by the Sept., --- And mourn, ye rams of the flock. But the verb has no other sense but that of rolling, though the other word may be rendered ``rams,'' as it is in the masculine gender. Venema gives the following version, --- Howl, ye pastors, and cry aloud, And sprinkle yourselves with dust, ye illustrious of the flock; For fulfilled are your days to be sacrificed; And there shall be your breakings, And ye shall fall like a precious vessel. He considers the first and the fourth line as connected, and the second and the third; the pastors were to be broken, and the illustrious of the flock to be slain in sacrifice. There is certainly a congruity in the parts thus viewed. --- Ed.

35. Et peribit fuga a pastoribus, et evasio ab eximiis gregis.

He explains what we have now observed, for he had bidden the pastors to howl and the choice of the flock to roll or to prostrate themselves in the dust; he now gives the reason, even because they could not preserve their lives, no, not by an ignominious flight. It is indeed very miserable, when any one cannot otherwise secure his life than by seeking exile, where he must be poor, and needy, and despised; but even this is denied by the Prophet to the king and his counsellors, as well as to the rich through the whole city and the whole land: Perish, he says, shall flight from them. This mode of speaking is common in Hebrew:

``Flight,'' says David, ``has perished from me,'' *
*(Psalm 142:5;)

that is, I find no way of escape. So here, Perish shall flight; that is, while looking here and there in order to escape from danger, they shall be so shut up on every side, that they shall necessarily fall a prey to their enemies. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:36

36. A voice of the cry of the shepherds, and an howling of the principal of the flock, shall be heard: for the LORD hath spoiled their pasture.

36. Vox clamoris pastorum et ululatus eximoirum gregis, quia perdidit jehova pascua eorum.

He not merely repeats the same thing in other words, but adds also something more grievous, that God would render desolate their pastures. He pursues the same metaphor; for as he used this comparison in speaking of the king's counsellors and the priests, so now he does the same; and what he means by pastures is the community, the people, in the city and in the country; [154] as though he had said, that they had hitherto ruled over that land which was rich and fertile, and in which they enjoyed power and dignity, but that now they would be deprived of all these benefits. He afterwards adds, ---

Jeremiah 25:37

37. And the peaceable habitations are cut down because of the fierce anger of the LORD.

37. Et peribunt (vel, succidentur, vertunt alii) pascua pacis (tuguria pacis, hos est, tranquilla) a facie excandescentiae (vel, furoris) irae Jehovae.

He goes on with the same subject, that the tents, previously tranquil, would perish or be destroyed. And he designedly calls their dwellings peaceable; for the Jews, having found that their enemies had not before disturbed them, still promised to themselves the same good fortune in future.

And the faithful indeed do act thus rightly, and justly conclude from God's previous benefits that he will be kind to them as he had ever been so; but hypocrites, though they repent not, yet absurdly think that God is bound to them; and though they daily provoke his wrath, they yet securely continue in their confidence of having peace. Since God then had until that time deferred the grievousness of his wrath, the Prophet says, that though their tents had been peaceable, [155] yet they could

[154] So the Targ. renders the sentence, "For the Lord hath destroyed their people." — Ed.

[155] The word rendered "tents" means sometimes dwellings, or habitations, and sometimes

not be exempted from destruction as soon as the indignation of God's wrath went forth. It might have been enough to make use of one of these words, either of {חרון}, cherun, or of {אף}, aph; but the Prophet used the two, indignation and wrath, [156] in order that he might fill the wicked with more terror; for as they were obstinate in their wickedness, so they were not moved except God doubled his strokes and set forth the extremity of his wrath. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 25:38

38. He hath forsaken his covert, as the lion: for their land is desolate because of the fierceness of the oppressor, and because of his fierce anger.

38. Dereliquit tanquam leo tabernaculum suum; quia redacta est terra eorum in vastitatem a facie irae oppressoris (aut, praedonis) et a facie excandescentiae irae ejus.

The Prophet in the last verse reminds us, that the Jews in vain trusted in God's protection, for he would forsake his own Temple as well as the city. It was as it were a common saying among them,

``He has said, This is my rest for ever.'' (Psalm 132:14.)

But hypocrites did not consider that he could still stand faithful to his promises, though he did not suffer them to go unpunished. They could not therefore connect these two things together, --- that God would be always mindful of his covenant, --- and that still he would be the judge of his Church.

This is the reason why the Prophet now says, that God would forsake as a lion his tabernacle Some give this explanation, that he would go forth for a short time, as hungry lions are wont to do; but this is too far-fetched. I therefore have no doubt that God sets forth his power under the character of a lion; for the Jews would have been feared by all their enemies, had not God changed as it were his station. But as they had expelled him by their vices, so that he had no more an habitation among them, hence it was that they became exposed to the plunder of all nations. The import of the passage then is, that as long as God dwelt in the Temple he was like a lion, so that by his roaring alone he kept at a distance all nations and defended the children of Abraham; but that now, though he had not changed his nature, nor was there anything taken away or diminished as to his power, yet the Jews would not be safe, for he would forsake them. [157]

And the reason is added, which clearly confirms what has been said, For their land (he refers to the Jews) shall be desolate But whence this desolation to Judea, except

pastures; and it is thus variously translated in our version, according to what the context requires. As “pastures” are mentioned in the previous verse, tents, or habitations, would be the best word here, and more suitable to the verb that is used, which means to reduce to silence, or to level, that is, with the ground, and hence to demolish. The rendering of the Vulg. is “fields — arva,” but of the Syr. and Targ. “habitations.” Venema and Blayney have “folds,” which are probably the habitations intended. — Ed.

[156] Literally it is, “through the burning of the wrath of Jehovah.” The word “fury,” by which it is often rendered, is by no means suitable. The Versions vary: “the wrath of indignation” is the Sept.; “the wrath of fury” the Vulg., “boiling wrath” the Sept.; and “the fury of wrath” the Targ. The same words occur at the end of the next verse. — Ed.

[157] Another view is taken by many, that God is compared to a lion forsaking his covert for the sake of prey; so Crotius, Gataker, Lowth, Henry, and Adam Clarke. Scott seems to agree with Calvin’s view; which seems to be favored by what follows, “for become has their land a waste,” etc.; though this may comport also with the other view, for this may have been stated as a proof that God had gone forth as a lion seeking his prey; that is, to destroy them. — Ed.

that it was deprived of God's protection? For had God defended it, he could have repelled all enemies by a nod only. But as he had departed, hence it was that they found an easy access, and that the land was thus reduced to a waste.

It is added, on account of the indignation of the oppressor. Some render the last word ``dove,'' but not correctly. They yet have devised a refined meaning, that God is called a dove because of his kindness and meekness, though his wrath is excited, for he is forced to put on the character of another through the perverseness of men, when he sees that he can do nothing by his benevolence towards them. But this is a far-fetched speculation. The verb {ינה}, inc, means to oppress, to take by force; and as it is most frequently taken in a bad sense, I prefer to apply it here to enemies rather than to God himself. There are many indeed who explain it of God, but I cannot embrace their view; for Jeremiah joins together two clauses, that God would forsake his Temple, as when a lion departs from his covert, and also that enemies would come and find the place naked and empty; in short, he intimates that they would be exposed to the will and plunder of their enemies, because they would be at that time destitute of God's aid. And as he had before spoken of the indignation of God's wrath, so now he ascribes the same to their enemies, and justly so, for they were to execute his judgments; what properly belongs to God is ascribed to them, because they were to be his ministers. [158]

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast been pleased to gather us, so that we may be under thy protection and care, and to offer thyself to be our Shepherd, and even to exhibit thyself as such through thine only-begotten Son, --- O grant, that we may willingly obey thee and hearken to the voice of that Shepherd whom thou hast set over us, so that we may be preserved to the end by thy goodness and power, and never wander from thee nor be carried away by our lusts, but so continue under the shadow of thy wings, that thou mayest be ever present with us and check our enemies, so that we may remain safe under thy protection throughout life, as well as in death, through the same Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

[158] There are several MSS. which have {,{חרב sword, for ,{חרון} burning or indignation, and so the Sept. and the Targ.; and ``the oppressing sword,'' {חרב} ,{היונה} is found in two other places in Jeremiah, 46:16, and Jeremiah 1:16. It is to be also observed, that {חרון} is very seldom used but in connection with ,{אף} and we have it again in the next clause. The true reading then most probably is .{חרב} The verse would then be as follows, --- 38. Left hath he like a lion his covert; For their land hath become a desolation Through the oppressing sword, And through the burning of his wrath. The {כי} might be rendered ``therefore,'' instead of ``for;'' and thus the meaning would be more evident. See Jeremiah 25:30-31, where ``the roaring'' as of a lion, and the ``sword,'' are both mentioned; and this confirms the view here given. In the two last lines, ``the oppressing'' or ``devastating sword'' is first referred to, --- the visible effect, and then ``the burning of his wrath'' --- the cause; an order often to be seen in the Prophets. --- Ed

Jeremiah 26

Lecture Ninety-Ninth

CHAPTER 26

Jeremiah 26:1-2

1. In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah came this word from the LORD, saying,

1. Principio regni Joakim filii Josiae, regis Jehudah, fuit sermo hic a Jehova, dicendo,

2. Thus saith the LORD; Stand in the court of the LORD'S house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD'S house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word:

2. Sic dicit Jehova, Sta in atrio templi Jehovae, et loquere ad omnes urbes Jehudah (id est, omnes cives urbium Jehudah) quae veniunt ad orandum in templum Jehovae hos omnes sermones quas mandavero tibi ad loquendum ad ipsos (hoc est, loquaris ipsis;) ne diminuas verbum.

This chapter contains a remarkable history, to which a very useful doctrine is annexed, for Jeremiah speaks of repentance, which forms one of the main points of true religion, and he shews at the same time that the people were rejected by God, because they perversely despised all warnings, and could by no means be brought to a right mind. We shall find these two things in this chapter.

He says that this word came to him at the beginning of the reign, of Jehoiakim, of which king we have spoken in other places, where Jeremiah related other discourses delivered in his reign. We hence conclude that this book was not put together in a regular order, but that the chapters were collected, and from them the volume was formed.

The time, however, is not here repeated in vain, for we know that the miserable derive some hope from new events. When men have been long afflicted and well-nigh have rotted in their evils, they yet think, when a change takes place, that they shall be happy, and they promise themselves vain hopes. Such was probably

the confidence of the people when Jehoiakim began to reign; for they might have thought that things would be restored by him to a better state. There is also another circumstance to be noticed; though their condition was nigh past hope, they yet hardened themselves against God, so that they obstinately resisted the prophets. It hence appears that the reprobate were become more and more exasperated by the scourges of God, and had never been truly and really humbled. This was the reason why Jeremiah, according to God's command, spoke so sharply.

I pass by other things and come to the words, that the word of Jehovah came to him. He thus arrogated nothing to himself; but he testifies how necessary it was, especially among a people so refractory, that he should bring nothing of his own, but announce a truth that came from heaven. A general subject might be here handled, which is, that God alone is to be heard in the Church, and also that no one ought to assume to himself the name of a prophet or teacher, except he whom the Lord has formed and appointed, and to whom he has committed his message; but these things have been treated elsewhere and often and much at large; and I do not willingly dwell long on general subjects. It is then enough to bear in mind the purpose for which Jeremiah says that the word of Jehovah came to him, even that he might secure authority to himself; he does not boast of his own wisdom nor of anything human or earthly, but says only that he spoke what the Lord had commanded him.

He adds, Thus saith Jehovah, Stand in the court of the house (literally, but house means the Temple) of Jehovah It was not allowed the people to enter into the Temple; hence the Prophet was bidden to abide in the court where he might be heard by all. He was, as we have seen, of the priestly order; but it would have been but of little avail to address the Levites. [159] It was therefore necessary for him to go forth and to announce to the whole people the commands of God which are here recited; and he was to do this not only to the citizens of Jerusalem, but also to all the Jews; and this is expressly required, speak to all the cities of Judah; and then it is added, who come to worship in the Temple of Jehovah God seems to have designedly anticipated the presumption of those who thought that wrong was done to them, when they were so severely reproved; ``What! we have left our wives and children, and have come here to worship God; we have laid aside every attention to our private advantage, and have come here, though inconveniently; we might have lived quietly at home and enjoyed our blessings; we have incurred great expenses, undertaken a tedious journey, brought sacrifices, and denied ourselves as to our daily food, that God might be worshipped; and yet thou inveighest severely against us, and we hear nothing from thy mouth but terrors; is this right? Does God render such a reward to his servants?''

Thus then they might have contended with the Prophet; but he anticipates these objections, and allows what they might have pleaded, that they came to the Temple to offer sacrifices; but he intimates that another thing was required by God, and that

[159] Indeed his message does not seem to have been to the priests nor to the false prophets, but to the people who came to worship, as though it was useless to address them. There are none in so hopeless a state as unfaithful and corrupt priests and false prophets; the people led astray by them may be restored, but their own case is almost past hope. This appears to be intimated here; for they are passed by, while the people are addressed. — Ed.

they did not discharge their duties in coming to the Temple, except they faithfully obeyed God and his Law. We now see why the Prophet said, that he was sent to those who came up to Jerusalem to worship God. The deed itself could not indeed have been blamed; nay, it was highly worthy of praise, that they thus frequented the worship of God; but as the Jews regarded not the end for which God had commanded sacrifices to be offered to him, and also the end for which he had instituted all these external rites, it was necessary to remove this error in which they were involved.

Speak, he says, all the words which I have commanded thee to speak to them The Prophet again confirms, that he was not the author of what he taught, but only a minister, who faithfully announced what God had committed to him; and so the people could not have objected to him by saying, that he brought forward his own devices, for he repelled such a calumny. The false prophets might have also alleged similar things; but Jeremiah had certain evidences as to his calling, that the Jews, by rejecting him, condemned themselves, for their own consciences fully convicted them. But from this passage, and from many like passages, we may draw this conclusion, --- that no one, however he may excel in powers of mind, or knowledge, or wisdom, or station, ought to be attended to, except he proves that he is God's minister.

He afterwards adds, Thou shalt not diminish a word Some read, ``Thou shall not restrain,'' which is harsh. The verb, {גרע}, garo, properly means to be lessened and to be consumed. And Moses makes use of the same word in Deuteronomy 12:32, when he says,

``Thou shalt not add, nor diminish,''

in reference to the Law, in which the people were to acquiesce, without corrupting it with any human devices. To diminish then was to take away something from the word. [160] But we ought to consider the reason why this was said to Jeremiah; it never entered the mind of the holy man to adulterate God's word; but God here encourages him to confidence, so that he might boldly execute his commands. To diminish then something from the word, was to soften what appeared sharp, or to suppress what might have offended, or to express indirectly or coldly what could not produce effect without being forcibly expressed. There is then no doubt but that God anticipates here this evil, under which even faithful teachers in a great measure labor; for when they find the ears of men tender and delicate, they dare not vehemently to reprove, threaten, and condemn their vices. This is the reason why God added this, Diminish not a word; as though he had said, ``Declare thou with closed eyes and with boldness whatever thou hast heard from my mouth, and disregard whatever may tend to lessen thy courage.''

We may now easily learn the use of this doctrine; the Prophet was not sent to profane men, who openly avowed their impiety, or lived in gross sins; but he was sent to the very worshippers of God, who highly regarded his external worship, and for this reason had left wives and children, came to the Temple and spared neither labor nor expense. As, then, he was sent to them, we must beware, lest we sleep in

[160] As it stands opposed to add, to subtract or take away would be the most suitable term. Such is the word used by the Sept., the Vulg., and the Syr.; the Targ. is diminish, the word of our version. — Ed.

our vices and think that we have done our duty to God, when we have apparently given some evidences of piety; for except we really and sincerely obey God, all other things are esteemed of no value by him. It then follows ---

Jeremiah 26:3

3. If so be they will hearken, and turn every man from his evil way, that I may repent me of the evil, which I purpose to do unto them because of the evil of their doings.

3. Si forte audiant et convertantur quisque a via sua mala, et poeniteat me mali quod ego cogitans ad faciendum (id est, cogito facere) ipsis propter (a facie, ad verbum) malitiam actionurn ipsorum.

In this verse God briefly shows for what end he sent his Prophet. For it would not have been sufficient for him to announce what he taught, except it was known to have been the will of God. Here then God asserts that he would not be propitious to the people, except they complied with what he required, that is, to repent. Thus he testifies that what was taught would be useful to them, because it had reference to their safety; and a truth cannot be rendered more entitled to our love than when we know that it tends to promote our wellbeing. Therefore God, when he saw the people rushing headlong through blind despair into all kinds of impiety, designed to make the trial whether or not some of them were healable; as though he had said, ``What are ye doing, ye miserable beings? It is not yet wholly over with you; only obey me, and the remedy for all your evils is ready at hand.'' We now see what God's design was, even that he wished to give those Jews the hope of mercy who were altogether irreclaimable, so that they might not reject what he taught on hearing that it would be for their good.

But we may hence gather a general doctrine; that when God is especially displeased with us, it is yet an evidence of his paternal kindness when he favors us with the prophetic teaching, for that will not be without its fruit, except it be through our own fault. But at the same time we are rendered more and more inexcusable, if we reject that medicine which would certainly give us life. Let us then understand that the Prophet says here, that he was sent that he might try whether the Jews would repent; for God was ready to receive them into favor.

By saying {אולי}, auli, ``if peradventure,'' he made use of a common mode of speaking. God indeed has perfect knowledge of all events, nor had he any doubt respecting what would take place, when the prophets had discharged their duties; but what is pointed out here, and also condemned, is the obstinacy of the people; as though he had said, that it was indeed difficult to heal those who had grown putrid in their evils, yet he would try to do so. And thus God manifests his unspeakable goodness, that he does not wholly cast away men who are almost past remedy, and whose diseases seem to be unhealable. He also strengthens his Prophet; for he might from long experience have been led to think that all his labor would be in vain; therefore God adds this, that he might not cease to proceed in the course of his calling; for what seemed incredible might yet take place beyond his expectation. We now see why it was said, If so be that they will hear

It is then added, and turn, etc. From the context we learn, that repentance as

well as faith proceeds from the truth taught: for how is it that those alienated from God return, confess their sins, and change their character, minds, and purposes? It is the fruit of truth; not that truth in all cases is effectual, but he treats here of the elect: or were they all healable, yet God shews that the use and fruit of his truth is to turn men, as it is said also by the Prophet, (Malachi 4:6,) and repeated in the first chapter of Luke,

``He will turn many of the children of Israel.'' (Luke 1:6.)

What follows is not without its weight, every one from his evil way; for God intimates that it was not enough that the whole people should ostensibly confess their sins, but that every one was required to examine himself: for when we seek God in a troop, and one follows another, it is often done with no right feeling. Repentance therefore is only true and genuine, when every one comes to search his own case; for its interior and hidden seat is in the heart. This is the reason why he says, If a man, that is, if every one turns from his evil way

As to God's repentance, of which mention is made, there is no need of long explanation. No change belongs to God; but when God is said to turn away his wrath, it is to be understood in a sense suitable to the comprehension of men: in the same way also we are to understand the words, that he repents. (Psalm 85:5; 110:4.) It is at the same time sufficiently evident what God means here, even that he is reconcilable, as soon as men truly turn to him: and thus we see that men cannot be called to repent, until God's mercy is presented to them. Hence also it follows, that these two things, repentance and faith, are connected together, and that it is absurd and an impious sacrilege to separate them; for God cannot be feared except the sinner perceives that he will be propitious to him: for as long as we are apprehensive of God's wrath, we dread his judgment; and thus we storm against him, and must necessarily be driven headlong into the lowest abyss, hence under the Papacy they speak not only foolishly, but also coldly of repentance; for they leave souls doubtful and perplexed, nay, they take away every kind of certainty. Let us then understand the reason why the Holy Spirit teaches us, that repentance cannot be rightly and profitably taught, unless it be added, that God will be propitious to miserable men whenever they turn to him.

With regard to the word I think, I have already said, that God forms no contrary purposes; but this refers to those men who deserved his dreadful vengeance; it is the same as though he had said, --- ``Their iniquity has already ripened; I am therefore now ready to take vengeance on them: nevertheless let them return to me, and they shall find me to be a Father. There is, then, no reason for them to despair, though I have already manifested tokens of my vengeance.'' This is the meaning; but he repeats the reason of his wrath, On account of the wickedness of their doings; for we know that they were proud and obstinate; it was therefore necessary to close their mouths, otherwise they would have raised a clamor, and said, that God was unjustly angry, or that he exceeded all bounds. Whatever evils then were at hand, God briefly shews that they came from themselves, that the cause was their own

wickedness, [161] It follows, ---

Jeremiah 26:4-6

4. And thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the LORD; If ye will not hearken to me, to walk in my law, which I have set before you,

4. Dices ergo ad eos, Sic dicit Jehova, Si non audieritis me, ut ambuletis in lege mea, quam posui coram conspectu vestro,

5. To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I sent unto you, both rising up early, and sending them, but ye have not hearkened;

5. Ad audiendum sermonem (hoc est, ut audiatis sermones) servorum meorum prophetarum, quos ego mitto ad vos, et mane surgendo et mittendo, neque tamen audistis (hoc postremum lego parenthesin;)

6. Then will I make this house like Shiloh, and will make this city a curse to all the nations of the earth.

6. Et (id est, tunc) ponam domum hanc (id est, templum) sicuti Silo, et urbem hanc ponam maledictionem cunctis gentibus terrae.

The Prophet now briefly includes what he had been teaching, what he had been commanded to declare to the people. No doubt he spoke to them more at large; but he deemed it enough to shew in a few words what had been committed to him. And the sum of it was, that except the Jews so hearkend as to walk in God's Law, and were submissive to the prophets, final ruin was nigh the Temple and the city. This is the meaning: but it may be useful to consider every particular.

By these words, Except ye hearken to me, to walk in my law, God intimates, that he mainly requires obedience, and esteems nothing as much, according to what he says, that it is better than all sacrifices. (1 Samuel 15:22.) This subject was largely treated in the seventh chapter, where he said,

``Did I command your fathers when they came out of Egypt to offer sacrifices to me? this only I required, even to hear my voice.'' (Jeremiah 7:22, 23)

We hence see, that the only way of living piously, justly, holily, and uprightly, is to allow ourselves to be ruled by the Lord. This is one thing. Then what follows is worthy of being noticed, To walk in my law God here testifies that his will is not ambiguous or doubtful, for he has prescribed what is right in his law. Were God then to descend a hundred times from heaven, he would bring nothing but this message, that he has spoken what is necessary to be known, and that his Law is the most perfect wisdom. Had he said only, ``Hear me,'' men might have still evaded and avowed themselves ready to learn. God therefore does here silence hypocrites, and says that he required nothing else but to follow his Law. And for the same purpose he adds what follows, which I have set before you: for this kind of speaking intimates that the doctrine of the Law was by no means obscure or doubtful, as Moses said,

``I this day call heaven and earth to witness, that I have set life and death before

[161] I render the verse as follows, — 3. It may be they will hear and turn every one from his way that is evil; then I will repent as to the evil which I purpose to bring on them for the evil of their doings. Here is “evil for evil,” the evil of punishment for the evil of sin. The word is often used in these two senses. It is changed in the Sept., {κάκων} and {πονήρων}; and in the Vulg., ``malum`` and ``malitia.'' ``Thus evil,'' says Gataker, ``begetteth evil, a just retaliation of evil for evil. The evil of iniquity and the evil of penalty are as the needle and the thread; the one goeth before and maketh way for the other; and when one hath found a passage it draweth on the other.'' --- Ed

your eyes.'' (Deuteronomy 30:19)

And in another place he said,

``Say not, Who shall ascend above the clouds? or, Who shall descend into the abyss? or, Who shall pass beyond the sea? The word is in thy heart and in thy mouth,'' (Deuteronomy 30:12-14; Romans 10:6-8)

as though he had said, ``God has deprived you of every excuse, for there is no reason for doubting, since he has spoken so familiarly to you, and has explained everything necessary to be known.''

And hereby is confuted the impious blasphemy of the Papists, who impudently assert that not only the Law is obscure, but also the Gospel. And Paul also loudly declares, that the Gospel is not obscure except to those who perish, and who have a veil over their hearts, being visited with judicial blindness. But as to the Law, in which there is no such plainness as in the Gospel, we see what Jeremiah affirms here, that it was set before the eyes of all, that they might learn from it what pleased God, and what was just and right.

But what follows in the next verse ought to be especially observed; for these two things are necessarily connected, --- that God required nothing but obedience to his Law, --- and that his will was that his prophets should be heard, --- To hearken, he says, to the words of my servants, the prophets, whom I send to you, (it is in the second person.) Here there seems to be some inconsistency; for if God's Law was sufficient, why were the prophets to be heard? But these two things well agree together: the Law alone was to be attended to, and also the prophets, for they were its interpreters. For God sent not his prophets to correct the Law, to change anything in it, to add or to take away; as it was an unalterable decree, not to add to it nor to diminish from it. What then was the benefit of sending the prophets? even to make more manifest the Law, and to apply it to the circumstances of the people. As then the prophets devised no new doctrine, but were faithful interpreters of the Law, God joined, not without reason, these two things together, --- that his Law was to be heard and also his prophets; for the majesty of the Law derogated nothing from the authority of the prophets; and as the prophets confirmed the Law, it could not have been that they took away anything from the Law.

Nay, this passage teaches us, that all those who repudiate the daily duty of learning, are profane men, and extinguish as far as they can the grace of the Spirit; many such fanatics among the Anabaptists have been in our time, who despised learning of every kind. They boasted that the doctrine of the Law was the Alphabet; and they also indulged in this dream, that wrong is done to the Holy Spirit when men attend to learning. And some dare, in a grosser manner, to vomit forth their blasphemies; they say that Scripture is enough for us, yea, even these two things, ``Fear God and love thy neighbor.'' But as I have already said, we must consider how God has spoken by his Law; whether he has closed up the way, so as not to explain his will more clearly by the prophets, nor to apply to present use what would have otherwise been less effectual? or that he purposed to draw continually by various channels the doctrine which flows from that fountain? But now, since God had given his own Law, and had added to the Law his prophets, every one who rejected the prophets must

surely ascribe no authority to the Law. Even so now, they who think it not their duty at this day to seek knowledge in the school of Christ, and to avail themselves of the hearing of his word, no doubt despise God in their hearts, and set no value either on the Law, or on the prophets, or on the Gospel. Remarkable then is this passage; it shews that the Lord would have his Law to be our leader and teacher, and yet he adds his own prophets.

He says further, Whom I have sent to you, rising early and sending Here he upbraids the Jews with their slowness and insensibility; for he roused them early, and that not once but often, and yet he spent his labor in vain. Rising early, when applied to God, means that he called these men in due time, as though he had said, that it was not his fault that the Jews had departed from the right way of safety, for he had been sedulously careful of their well-being, and had in due time warned them. We hence see how the Prophet condemned their tardiness and indifference, and then their hardness, by saying, and sending; for this intimates a repetition or assiduity. He had said before, ``whom I sent to you, rising early;'' now, when he says and sending, he means that he had not sent one prophet, or many at one time, but one after another continually, and that yet it had been without any benefit. The end of the verse I read in a parenthesis, (but ye have not hearkened.) Indeed what follows stands connected with the previous verses. [162]

Then will I make, etc.: the copulative is to be rendered here as an adverb of time. What had been just said, ``but ye have not hearkened,'' was by way of anticipation; for the Jews, swelling with great arrogance, might have immediately said, ``Oh! what new thing dost thou bring? Except ye hearken to my voice, saith Jehovah, to walk in my Law, which I have set before you, as though all this were not well known even to children among us; and yet thou pretendest to be the herald of some extraordinary prophecy; certainly such boasting will be deemed puerile by all wise men.'' Thus then they might have spoken, but the Prophet here briefly checks the insolence of such a foolish censure, but ye have not hearkened; as though he had said, that he had not been sent in vain to speak of a thing as it were new and unusual, because the Jews had corrupted the whole Law, had become disobedient, unteachable, and unbelieving, and had despised both the Law of God and his Prophets.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast been pleased not only to make known thy will once by the Law, but also to add more light by thy holy prophets, and further to give us perfect light by thy Gospel, and as thou invitest us daily to learn by means of those whom thou hast sent, --- O grant, that we may not be deaf nor tardy to hear, but promptly submit ourselves to thee, and so suffer ourselves to be ruled by thy word, that through our whole life we may testify that thou art indeed our God, we being thy people, until we shall at length be gathered into that celestial kingdom, which thine only-begotten Son our Lord has purchased for us. --- Amen.

[162] It is better to commence the parenthesis after the word "prophets;" the three verses I render thus, — 4. And say to them, Thus saith Jehovah, If ye will not hear me, so as to 5. walk in my law, which I have set before you, by hearkening to the words of my servants the prophets, (whom I have been sending to you, even rising up early and sending; but ye did not hearken;) 6. then will I make this house like Shiloh, and this city will I make a urse to all the nations of the earth. The Vulg. and the Syr. are in effect the same as above. — Ed.

Lecture One Hundredth

We could not yesterday finish the words of the Prophet, as time did not allow us to do so. We said that the Prophet had denounced God's vengeance on the people in such a manner, that he softened that severity by some comfort, lest despair should have rendered more obstinate those whom he wished to turn into obedience; we said also, that the ministers of the word cannot otherwise speak rightly or profitably of repentance, except they connect with it the promise of God's mercy. But as the Prophet had to do with refractory men and despisers of God, it behoved him to declare what at length he subjoins, even that the destruction of the Temple and city was nigh at band, except they repented.

And he says that that house would become like Shiloh, in order that by this example he might touch their hearts; for the ark of God had been long at Shiloh, and that place might have been deemed venerable for being ancient. Jerusalem was indeed renowned, but Shiloh was in time before it. This place was now forsaken; nay, it presented a sad and a degraded spectacle. He thus set before their eyes an example of God's vengeance, such as awaited them. We have seen the same reference in Jeremiah 7:12, where the Prophet says,

``Go to Shiloh, where the ark of the covenant was,''

etc.; but he now speaks more briefly, for he no doubt repeated often the same things.

Then he adds, I will make this city a curse, or execration, to all the nations of the earth It was still more intolerable to the Jews to hear what Jeremiah says here, --- that so great a city, the sanctuary and the royal throne of God, would become a curse to heathen nations; and yet as God had commanded him to say this, he boldly performed his duty. Now follows the reward he met with, ---

Jeremiah 26:7-8

7. So the priests, and the prophets, and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of the LORD.

7. Et audierunt sacerdotes et prophetae et totus populus Jeremiam loquentem sermones hos in templo Jehovae.

8. Now it came to pass, when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the LORD had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests and the prophets and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die.

8. Et factum est, cum finesset Jeremias loqui quaecunque mandaverat Jehova, ut loqueretur toti populo, ut loqueretur toti populo, comprehenderunt ipsum sacerdotes et prophetae et totus populus, dicendo, Morte morieris.

Here the Prophet recites what happened to him, after he had declared God's message, and faithfully warned the people by adding threatenings, as God had commanded him. He says first that he was heard; which is not to be deemed as commendatory, as though the priests and prophets patiently heard what he taught; for there was no teachable spirit in them, nor did they come prepared to learn, but they had long indulged themselves in perverseness, so that Jeremiah was become to them an avowed enemy; and they also audaciously opposed all his threatenings. But though they were not ashamed to reject what the Prophet said, they yet observed

a certain form, as it is usual with hypocrites, for they are more exact than necessary, as they say, in what is formal, but what is really important they neglect. We may hence observe, that the priests and prophets deserved no praise, because they restrained themselves, as though they deferred their judgment until the cause was known, but as the whole people were present, they for a time shewed themselves moderate; it was yet a reigned moderation, for their hearts were full of impiety and contempt of God, as it became really manifest.

But it must be observed that he says that the priests and prophets hearkened As to the priests, it is no wonder that he calls them so, though they were in every way wicked, for it was an hereditary honor. But it is strange that he mentions the prophets. At the same time we must know, that Jeremiah thus calls those who boasted that they were sent from above. In the twenty-third chapter he at large reproves them; and in many other places he condemns their impudence in falsely assuming the authority of God. He then allowed them an honorable title, but esteemed it as nothing; as we may do at this day, who without harm may call by way of ridicule those prelates, bishops, or pastors, who under the Papacy seek to be deemed so, provided we at the same time strip them of their masks. But these lay hold on the title, and thus seek to suppress the truth of God, as though to be called a bishop were of more weight than if an angel was to come down from heaven. And yet were an angel to descend from heaven, he ought to be counted by us as a devil, if he brought forward such filthy and execrable blasphemies, as we see the world is at this day polluted with by these unprincipled men. This passage then, and the like, ought to be borne in mind, for they shew that titles are not sufficient, except those who bear them really shew that they are such as their calling imports. Thus, then, Jeremiah was called a Prophet, and also those impostors were called prophets whose only religion it was to corrupt and pervert the doctrine of the Law, but they were so called with regard to the people. It is in the meantime necessary, wisely to distinguish between prophets or teachers, as also the Apostle reminds us, we ought to inquire whether their spirit is from God or not. (1 John 4:1.)

He says at last, that he was condemned by the priests, and the prophets, and the whole people; he at the same time introduced these words, that he had spoken all that the Lord had commanded him. Thus he briefly exposed the injustice of those by whom he was condemned; for they had no regard to what was right, as we shall presently see. But as they had brought with them a preconceived hatred, so they vomited out what they could no longer contain. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 26:9

9. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the LORD, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the LORD.

9. Quare prophetasti in nomine Jehovae, dicendo, Tanquam Silo erit domus haec, et urbs haec perdetur, ut non sit habitator? (congregatus autem totus populus ad Jeremiam in templo Jehovae.) (Hoc per parethesin legendum est, et refertur ad sequentem contextum, ut suo loco dicemus.)

Here is added the cause of Jeremiah's condemnation, that he had dared to

threaten with so much severity the holy city and the Temple. They did not inquire whether God had commanded this to be done, whether he had any just cause for doing so; but they took this principle as granted, that wrong was done to God when anything was alleged against the dignity of the Temple, and also that the city was sacred, and therefore nothing could be said against it without derogating from many and peculiar promises of God, since he had testified that it would be ever safe, because he dwelt in the midst of it. We hence see by what right, and under what pretense the priests and the prophets condemned Jeremiah.

And by saying, in the name of Jehovah, they no doubt accused him as a cheat, or a false pretender, because he had said that this had been commanded by God, for they considered such a thing impossible and preposterous. God had promised that Jerusalem would be his perpetual habitation; the words of Jeremiah were, ``I will make this city like Shiloh.'' God seemed in appearance to be inconsistent with himself, ``This is my rest for ever,'' ``this shall be a desert.'' We hence see that the priests and the prophets were not without some specious pretext for condemning Jeremiah. There is therefore some weight in what they said, ``Dost thou not make God contrary to himself? for what thou denouncest in his name openly and directly conflicts with his promises; but God is ever consistent with himself; thou art therefore a cheat and a liar, and thus one of the false prophets, whom God suffers not in his Church.'' And yet what they boasted was wholly frivolous; for God had not promised that the Temple should be perpetual in order to give license to the people to indulge in all manner of wickedness. It was not then God's purpose to bind himself to ungodly men, that they might expose his name to open reproach. It is hence evident that the prophets and priests only dissembled, when they took as granted what ought to have been understood conditionally, that is, if they worshipped him in sincerity as he had commanded. For it was not right to separate two things which God had connected; he required piety and obedience from the people, and he also promised that he would be the guardian of the city, and that the Temple would be safe under his protection. But the Jews, having neither faith nor repentance, boasted of what had been said of the Temple, nay, they bragged, as we have seen elsewhere, and spoke false things; and hence the Prophet derided them by repeating three times,

``The Temple of Jehovah, the Temple of Jehovah, the Temple of Jehovah,'' (Jeremiah 7:4)

as though he had said, --- ``This is your silly talk, you ever cry boastingly, `The Temple of God;' but all this will avail you nothing.''

It then follows, that the people were assembled Here Jeremiah passes to another part of the narrative, for he reminded the princes and the king's councillors that they were not without reason roused to go up to the Temple. [163]

If the dispute had been between few, either Jeremiah would have been slain, or

[163] It appears better to connect this sentence with the following verse, in this manner, — 10. While the whole people were assembled against Jeremiah in the house of Jehovah, then the princes of Judah heard these things, and went up from the king's house into the house of Jehovah, etc. This seems to be the beginning of another section. The {{ı repeated ought often to be thus rendered, while or when, and then; and indeed in our language, then may be sometimes omitted. Were it here rendered and in both instances, the meaning would be the same, only the connection appears more evident when rendered as above; the report of the people congregated against Jeremiah reached the princes --- Ed

in some way intercepted, or it might have been that the princes would have circumvented the king and his councillors, and thus the holy man would have been privately crushed. But here he introduced these words, that the whole people were assembled against him. Hence it was that the report, reached the king's court; and so the princes and councillors were commanded to come. In short, Jeremiah shews the reason why the princes came unto the Temple; it was because the city was everywhere in a commotion, when the report spread that something new and intolerable had been announced. The king therefore could not neglect this commotion; for it is a dangerous thing to allow a popular tumult to prevail. And therefore Jeremiah thus adds, ---

Jeremiah 26:10

10. When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the LORD, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the LORD'S house.

10. Et audierunt principes Jehudah sermones hos, et ascenderunt e domo regis in domum Jehovae (hoc est, a palatio regis in Templum,) et sederunt in foribus portae Templi Jehovae novae.

We have said that the princes were roused by a popular clamor; nor is there a doubt but; that the king had sent them to quell the commotion. It must be especially noticed, that they were engaged in other matters, as it was seldom the case that courtiers spent their time in hearing the prophets. It is indeed true, that the occupations of those are sacred, who have the care of the commonwealth, who dispense justice, and who have to provide for the public safety; but it behoves them so to divide their time, that they may be able to consecrate some portion of it to God. But courtiers think themselves exempted by a sort of privilege, when yet the truth is more necessary for them than even for the common people; for not only the duty of the head of a family lies on each of them, but the Lord has also set them over a whole people. If, then, private men have need of being daily taught, that they may faithfully rule and guide themselves and their families, what ought to be done by those rulers who are as it were the fathers of the commonwealth? But as I have already said, such men usually exempt themselves from the yoke of the faithful.

Hence then it was, that none of the princes were present, when Jeremiah had been commanded to proclaim his message, not only on the day when few came to the Temple, but when they came from all the cities of Judah to sacrifice at Jerusalem. It was, indeed, a very shameful sign of gross contempt, that no one of the king's counsellors appeared in the Temple, when there were present, from remote places, those whom religion and the desire to sacrifice had brought there. But he says that they came to know the cause of the commotion; for it is said, that they sat at the new gate, which some say was eastward; and they conjecture that it was called new, because it had been renewed; the king's palace was also towards the east, and the eastern gate was his tribunal. I am disposed to embrace this opinion, that they sat

at the eastern gate. [164] It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 26:11

11. Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.

11. Et dixerunt sacerdotes et prophetae principibus et toti populo, dicendo, judicium mortis est viro huic, uia prophetavit contra urbem hanc quemadmodum audistis auribus vestris.

We hence conclude, that the people in assenting to the sentence of the priests and prophets, had done nothing according to their own judgment, but that all of every rank through a violent feeling condemned Jeremiah. And as the priests and prophets directed also their discourse to the people, it appears clear, that they were guided by them, so that they thoughtlessly and inconsiderately gave their consent; for it often happens in a mob that the people exclaim, ``Be it so, be it so; amen, amen.'' Jeremiah has indeed said, that he was condemned by the whole people; but it must be observed, that the people are like the sea, which of itself is calm and tranquil; but as soon as any wind arises, there is a great commotion, and waves dash one against another; so also it is with the people, who without being excited are quiet and peaceable; but a sedition is easily raised, when any one stirs up men who are thoughtless and changeable, and who, to retain the same simile, are fluid like water. This, then, is what Jeremiah now intimates.

But there is another thing to be noticed, --- that the common people suffer themselves to be drawn in all directions; but they may also be easily restored, as it has been said, to a right mind. ``When they see,'' says Virgil, ``a man remarkable for piety and good works, they become silent and attend with listening ears.'' He there describes (Aeneid, 1) a popular commotion, which he compares to a tempest; and he rightly speaks of a tempest; but he added this simile according to common usage. The same thing is now set before us by the Prophet; the priests and prophets, who thought that they alone could boast of their power and speak with authority, in a manner constrained the people apparently to consent. The king's counsellors being now present, the people became as it were mute; the priests perceived this, and we shall see by the issue that what the same poet mentions took place, ``By his words he rules their hearts and softens their breasts.'' For it became easy for the king's counsellors even by a word to calm this foolish violence of the people. We shall indeed soon see, that they unhesitantly said, ``There is no judgment of death against this man.'' It is hence evident how easily ignorant men may be made inconsistent with themselves; but this is to be ascribed to their inconstancy; and noticed also ought to be what I have said, that there was no real consent, because there was no judgment exercised. The authority of the priests overpowered them; and then they servilely confessed what they saw pleased their princes, like an ass, who nods with

[164] The present Hebrew text is, "the new gate of Jehovah." "House," before Jehovah, is found in many MSS., and is given by all the Versions, except the Sept., where Jehovah as well as house, is left out. The true reading no doubt is, "the house of Jehovah." It was called "the new gate," says Gataker, because it had been renewed by Jotham. See 2 Kings 15:35. It is rendered "the eastern gate" by the Targ. It was in the porch of this gate, according to some, that the great consistory sat. — Ed.

his ears.

Now, when the subject is duly considered, it appears, that the priests and the prophets alone spoke both to the princes and to the whole people, that Jeremiah was guilty of death, [165] because he had prophesied against the city. We have said that they relied on those promises, which they absurdly applied for the purpose of confirming their own impiety, even that God had chosen that city that he might be there worshipped. It was a false principle, and whence proceeded their error? not from mere ignorance, but rather from presumption, for hypocrites are never deceived, except when they determine not to obey God, and as far as they can to reject his judgments. When, therefore, they are carried away by a perverse and wicked impulse, they ever find out some plausible pretext; but it is nothing but a disguise, as we clearly see from this narrative. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 26:12

12. Then spake Jeremiah unto all the princes and to all the people, saying, The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and against this city all the words that ye have heard.

12. Et dixit Jeremias cunctis principibus et toti populo, dicendo, Jehova misit me ad prophetandum contra domum hanc et contra urbem hanc cunctos sermones quos audistis.

Jeremiah pleads only his own calling and the command of God; and thus he confutes the preposterous charge which they most impudently brought against him. There is no doubt but that he might have spoken at large, but he deemed it enough to include the substance of his defense. Had he made a long discourse, the main point might have been more obscure. He now clearly makes known the state of the question on both sides. The priests by their own authority condemned Jeremiah, because he reduced to nothing [as they thought] God's promises, for he had threatened destruction to the city and to the temple; but Jeremiah on the other side answers, that he had declared nothing but what God had enjoined. There was need of proof, when the priests held that God was inconsistent with himself in denouncing destruction on that city, which he had undertaken to defend and protect. But the confutation of this was ready at hand, --- that God had never bound himself to hypocrites and ungodly men; nay, the whole glory of the city and the majesty of the Temple were dependent on his worship; nor is there any doubt but that Jeremiah had alleged these things. But as it was the main thing, he was satisfied with stating that he had been sent by God.

Thus he indirectly condemned their vain boastings, --- that God was on their side; but he says, ``I come not except by God's command.'' Now, though he declares briefly and distinctly that he had been sent by God, he yet presents himself as ready to prove everything; and as I have already said, there is no doubt but that he answered and discussed that frivolous question on which the priests so much insisted.

[165] The words literally are, “The judgment (or sentence) of death is to this man,” or, belongs “to this man,” that is, is deserved by him. They were now, it seems, before the court of justice, the princes sat as magistrates or judges; and this was the accusation brought by the priests and prophets; they had no power themselves of passing the sentence, they only declared him as worthy of death. — Ed.

It is further worthy of being noticed, that he addressed both the princes and the people; and thus he intimated that the priests and the prophets were deaf, and not worthy of being spoken to; for it was their determination proudly to despise God, and to carry on war, as it were avowedly, with his servants; for he would have otherwise no doubt gladly endeavored to restore them to the way of safety. But as he saw that they had closed the door against themselves, he passed them by. This is the reason why he says, that he spoke to the princes and to the people, having passed by those, on whom he must have spent labor in vain. And surely when they said that he was worthy of death, they proved by such a presumption that they would not be taught by him; and also their cruelty prevented them from being teachable. But the Prophet had regard to the very source of evil, because their object was obstinately to resist God and all his prophets.

By saying, that he was sent to prophesy all that they had heard, he made them judges, though he did not address them together with the princes; for we have seen that the latter were in the king's palace, and had been sent for when there was a fear of some commotion. But there is no doubt but that the address was repeated again. Jeremiah then made them judges and arbitrators, when he said that he retracted nothing, but that what they had heard, he had faithfully declared according to the command of God. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 26:13

13. Therefore now amend your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of the LORD your God; and the LORD will repent him of the evil that he hath pronounced against you.

13. Et nunc bonificate (bonas facite) vias vestras et studia vestra, et obtemperate voci Jehovae Dei vestri, et poenitebit Jehovam omnis mali quod pronunciavit contra vos.

He not only confirms here what he had taught, but also reproves the hardness and obstinate wickedness of the priests and prophets; for though he addressed the princes and the people, he yet no doubt designed to touch more sharply those ungodly men who set themselves up against God; and at the same time his discourse referred to them all, when he said, ``How have I sinned? I have endeavored to promote your safety, must I therefore die?'' We hence see that the Prophet not only confirmed what he had said, but also accused his adversaries of ingratitude; for nothing could have been more kind, and ought to have been more acceptable, than to be called to repent, that they might receive mercy from God: ``What was the object of my doctrine? even that ye might repent; and what does repentance bring? even salvation; for God is ready to forgive you. Now ye cannot bear to hear, that God would be merciful to you. What madness is this?'' We now then see the design of the Prophet.

And this passage deserves to be noticed; for God will render to all the ungodly their own reward; not only because they harden themselves against every instruction, but also because they are manifest and, as it were, sworn enemies to their own salvation, inasmuch as they refuse the necessary remedy, and do not allow themselves to be restored to the right way, that they may be forgiven. Very weighty,

then, is what he now says, that no fault could be found in his doctrine, except that it proved galling to the wicked, but that they could yet obtain peace, provided they sought reconciliation with God. [166]

He adds, Hear ye the voice of Jehovah, in order to shew that he required nothing new from the people, that he imposed on them no hard yoke, but only called them to the duty of obeying the Law; and he adds to this, your God, in order to take away from them every excuse, lest they should object and say that what Jeremiah alleged was unknown to them. Here, then, he triumphantly declares that he had taught them nothing that was alien to the Law, and that the Jews were inexcusable who professed Jehovah to be their God, and yet hearkened not to his voice, which ought to have been familiar to them.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast not only called us once to the hope of an eternal inheritance, but invitest us continually to repentance, while we cease not by our continual sins to depart from thee, --- O grant that we may not with deaf ears reject thy voice, but be pliable and submissive to thee, and that we may also so accustom ourselves to bear the yoke, that we may prove, through our whole life, that we are of thy sheep, and that Christ, thine only-begotten Son, whom thou hast set over us, is indeed our Shepherd, until we shall be gathered unto that kingdom which he has obtained for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and First

Jeremiah 26:14-15

14. As for me, behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you.

14. Et ego, ecce ego in manu vestro, facite mihi sicuti bonum, vel sicuti rectum erit in oculis vestris.

15. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the LORD hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears.

15. Veruntamen sciendo seite, quod si vos occideritis me, sanguinem purum (vel, innoxium) vos ponetis super vos et super urbem hanc, et super habitatores ejus; quia in veritate misit me Jehova ad vos, ut loqueror in auribus vestris cunctos istos sermones.

Jeremiah, after having exhorted the princes, the priests, and the whole people to repent, and having shewn to them that there was a remedy for their evil, except by their obstinacy they provoked more and more the wrath of God, now speaks of himself, and warns them not to indulge their cruelty by following their determination to kill him; for they had brought in a sentence that he deserved to die. He then saw that their rage was so violent, that he almost despaired of his life; but he declares here that God would be an avenger if they unjustly vented their rage against him.

[166] The words are, — 13. And now make good your ways and your doings, etc.; or, But now, etc. It reads better than "therefore," as in our version, borrowed from the Vulg. The Sept. is "and," and the Targ. also. "Amend" of our version, is the Syr.; "make good" is the rendering of the other early versions. He mentions what is posterior first; to hear God's voice is in order previous to the making good our ways; but this is according to the practice often adopted by the prophets. — Ed.

He yet shews that he was not so solicitous about his life as to neglect his duty, for he surrendered himself to their will; ``Do what ye please,'' he says, ``with me; yet see what ye do; for the Lord will not suffer innocent blood to be shed with impunity.''

By saying that he was in their hand, he does not mean that he was not under the care of God. Christ also spoke thus when he exhorted his disciples not to fear those who could kill the body. (Matthew 10:28.) There is no doubt but that the hairs of our head are numbered before God; thus it cannot be that tyrants, however they may rage, can touch us, no, not with their little finger, except a permission be given them. It is, then, certain that our life can never be in the hand of men, for God is its faithful keeper; but Jeremiah said, after a human manner, that his life was in their hand; for God's providence is hidden from us, nor can we discover it but by the eyes of faith. When, therefore, enemies seem to rule so that there is no escape, the Scripture says, by way of concession, that we are in their hands, that is, as far as we perceive. We ought yet to understand that we are by no means so exposed to the will of the wicked that they can do what they please with us; for God restrains them by a hidden bridle, and rules their hands and their hearts. This truth ought ever to remain unalterable, that our life is under the custody and protection of God.

We now, then, see in what sense Jeremiah regarded his life as in the hand of his enemies, not that he thought himself cast away by God, but that he acknowledged that loosened reins were given to the wicked to rage against him. But we must at the same time bear in mind why he said this; after having conceded that his life was in their hand, he adds, yet knowing know ye, that if ye kill me, ye will bring innocent blood upon yourselves. [167] But he had said before that they might do what seemed them good and right [168] Good and right here is not to be taken for a judgment formed according to the rule of justice, but for a sentence formed iniquitously according to their own will. This is a common mode of speaking in Hebrew. Jeremiah then testifies that he was not solicitous about his life, for he was prepared to offer himself, as it were, as a sacrifice, if the rage of his enemies should go so far. But in warning them to beware of God's vengeance, his object was not his own safety, but it was to stimulate them to repentance. He then plainly says that he did not fear death, for the Lord would presently shew himself to be his avenger, and that his blood also would be so precious in the sight of God, that the whole city, together with the people, would be punished, were they to deal unjustly with him.

But let us attend to what follows, even that God had sent him. He now takes this principle as granted, that it could not be that God would forsake his servants, to whom he has promised aid when oppressed by the ungodly. God, indeed, ever exhorts his ministers to patience, and he would have them to be prepared for death whenever there is need; yet he promises to bring them help in distress. Jeremiah

[167] "And upon this city," etc., according to our version and all the early versions and that of Calvin; but the preposition is different, and might be rendered "against:" by killing him, they must have brought the guilt of innocent blood on themselves as perpetrators, and against the city and its inhabitants as having allowed and countenanced such a deed. — Ed

[168] "Meet," in our version, is not the correct word; the term signifies what is just and right. The Sept. renders the phrase very loosely, "as it is expedient and as it is best for you." The Vulg. is nearly the original, "what is good and right in your eyes;" literally it is, "as good and as right in your eyes." — Ed

then relied on this promise, and was thus persuaded that it could not be that God would forsake him; for he cannot disappoint his people, nor forfeit his faith pledged to them. As, then, he was fully persuaded of his own calling, and knew that God was the author of all his preaching, he boldly concluded that his blood could not be shed with impunity. All faithful teachers ought to encourage themselves, for the purpose of discharging strenuously the duties of their office, with this confidence, --- that God who has committed to them their office can never forsake them, but will ever bring them help as far as it may be necessary. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 26:16

16. Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets; This man is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the LORD our God.

16. Et dixerunt principes et universus populus sacerdotibus et prophetis, Non est viro huic judicium mortis; quia in nomine Jehovae Dei nostri loquutus est nobis.

Jeremiah shews here that the sentence pronounced on him by the priests and false prophets was soon changed. They had indeed heard him, and had given some appearance of docility, as it is the case with hypocrites who for a time attend; but they exasperated themselves against God, and as their minds were previously malignant, they were rendered much worse by hearing. So it happened to the priests and false prophets, and in their blind rage they doomed the holy Prophet to death. He now says that he was acquitted by the princes and the king's counsellors, and also by the votes of the people. The people had, indeed, lately condemned him, but they had been carried away by the vain pomp and splendor of the priests and prophets; when they saw these so incensed against Jeremiah, they could not bring themselves to inquire into the cause. Thus the common people are always blinded by prejudices, so that they will not examine the matter itself. So it was when Jeremiah was condemned. We have said that the people were of themselves quiet and peaceable; but the prophets and priests were the farmers, and hence it was that the people immediately gave their consent. But in the presence of the princes they went in a contrary direction.

This passage, in short, teaches us how mischievous are rulers when there is no regard had for equity or justice; and it also teaches us how desirable it is to have honest and temperate rulers, who defend what is good and just, and aid the miserable and the oppressed. But we see that there is nothing steady or fixed in the common people; for they are carried here and there like the wind, which blows now from this quarter and then from that.

But we must notice this clause, that Jeremiah was not worthy of death, [169] because he had spoken in the name of Jehovah They thus confessed, that whatever came from God ought to have been received, and that men were mad who opposed the servants of God, for they hurried themselves headlong into their own destruction.

We may hence deduce a useful truth, that whatever God has commanded ought, without exception, to be reverently received, and that his name is worthy of such a

[169] The phrase literally is, "Not to this man the judgment of death." So nearly is the Sept. and the Vulg., "There is not to this man the judgment of death." Our version is the Syr. — Ed

regard, that we ought to attempt nothing against his servants and prophets. Now, to speak in the name of Jehovah is no other thing than faithfully to declare what God has commanded. The false prophets, indeed, assumed the name of God, but they did so falsely; but the people acknowledge here that Jeremiah was a true prophet, who did not presumptuously thrust in himself, nor falsely pretended God's name, but who in sincerity performed the duties of his office. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 26:17-19

17. Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying,

17. Et surrexerunt viri ex senioribus terrae, (ex senibus terrae,) ac dixerunt ad totum coetum populi (vel, locuuti sunt dicendo; est quidem semper verbum, {אמר}, loquuti sunt erqo ad totum coetum) dicendo,

18. Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.

18. Micha Morasthites fuit prophetans diebus Ezechiae regis Jehudah, et dixit ad totum populum Jehudah, dicendo, Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Sion ager (sed subaudienda est particula similitudinis, Sion ut ager) arabitur, et Jerusalem solitudines (vel, acervi) erit (hoc est, erit in solitudines, vel, in acervos, vel, in ruinas,) et mons domus (id est templi) in excelsa sylvae.

19. Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls.

19. An occidendo occidit eum Ezechias rex Jehudah, et totus Jehudah? an non timuit Jehovam? et deprecatus est faciem Jehovae, et poenituit Jehovam mali, quod loquutus fuerat contra eos: et nos facimus malum grande adversus animas nostras.

It is uncertain whether what is here recited was spoken before the acquittal of Jeremiah or not; for the Scripture does not always exactly preserve order in narrating things. It is yet probable, that while they were still deliberating and the minds of the people were not sufficiently pacified, the elders interposed, in order to calm the multitude and to soften their irritated minds, and to reconcile those to Jeremiah who had previously become foolishly incensed against him; for no doubt the priests and the false prophets had endeavored by every artifice to irritate the silly people against the Prophet; and hence more than one kind of remedy was necessary. When therefore the elders saw that wrath was still burning in the people, and that their minds were not disposed to shew kindness, they made use of this discourse. They took their argument from example, --- that Jeremiah was not the first witness and herald of dreadful vengeance, for God had before that time, and in time past, been wont to speak by his other prophets against the city and the temple.

The priests and the prophets had indeed charged Jeremiah with novelty, and further pretended that they thus fiercely opposed him on the ground of common justice. Jeremiah had said, that God would spare neither the holy city nor the Temple. This

was intolerable, for it had been said of the Temple,

``This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell.''
(Psalm 132:14.)

We hence see that Jeremiah was overwhelmed as it were by this one expression, while the priests and the false prophets objected and said,

``Thou then makest void God's promises; thou regardest as nothing the sanctity of the Temple.''

And they further pretended that not one of the prophets had ever thus spoken. But what do the elders now answer? even that there had been other prophets who had denounced ruin on the city and the Temple, and that, was falsely charged with this disgrace, that he was the first to announce God's judgment. We now understand the state of the case: Jeremiah is defended, because he had not alone threatened the city and the first, but he had others as the originators, from whose mouths he had spoken, who were also the acknowledged servants of God, from whom credit could not be withholden, such as Micah.

Now, what is here related is found in Micah 3:12. The Prophet Micah had the same contest with the priests and prophets as Jeremiah had; for they said that it was impossible that God should pour his vengeance on the holy city and the Temple. They said,

``Is not Jehovah in the midst of us?''

and they said also, ``No evil shall come on us.'' They were inebriated with such a security, that they thought themselves beyond the reach of danger; and they disregarded all the threatenings of the prophets, because they imagined that God was bound to them. We indeed know that hypocrites ever relied on that promise, ``Here will I dwell;'' and they also took and borrowed words from God's mouth and perverted them like cheats: ``God resides in the midst of us; therefore nothing adverse can happen to us.'' But the Prophet said, (the same are the words which we have just repeated,)

``For you Sion shall be plowed as a field, [170] and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of this house as the heights of a forest.''

But let us now consider each clause. It is first said, that the elders from the people of the land rose up [171] It is probable that they were called elders, not as in other places on account of their office, but of their age. It is indeed certain that they were men of authority; but yet I doubt not but that they were far advanced in years, as they were able to relate to the people what had happened many years before. As it is added, that they spoke to the whole assembly of the people, we may hence deduce what I have already stated, --- that the people were so violent, that there was need of a calm discourse to mitigate their ardor; and certainly when once a commotion is raised and rages, it is not an easy matter immediately to allay it. When, therefore, the kind elders saw that the minds of the people were still exasperated,

[170] Some render the phrase thus, “Sion, being a field, shall be plowed;” having become a field, it would be plowed. There is in this case no need of {,{כ as, to be placed before ``field;'' nor is there a different reading either here or in Micah, though it is supplied in the early versions, except the Syr., which has, ``Sion shall be reduced to a field.'' --- Ed

[171] The words literally are, “Then rose up men from the elders of the land.” — Ed.

they employed a moderating language, and said, Micah [172] the Morasthite (they named his country) prophesied in the days of Hezekiah, king of Judah, etc

We ought to notice the time, for it might seem strange, that when that holy king was anxiously engaged in promoting the true worship of God, things were in so disordered a state as to call for so severe a denunciation. If there ever was a king really and seriously devoted to the cause of religion, doubtless he was the first and chief exemplar; he spared no labor, he never seemed to shun any danger or trouble, whenever religion required this; but we find that however strenuously he labored, he could not by his zeal and perseverance succeed in making the whole people to follow him as their leader. What then must happen, when those who ought to shew the right way to others are indifferent and slothful? In the meantime the good princes were confirmed by the example of Hezekiah, so that they did not faint or fail in their minds when they saw that success did not immediately follow his labors, nor any fruit. For it is a grievous trial, and what shakes even the most courageous, when they think that their efforts are vain, that their labors are useless, yea, that they spend their time to no purpose, and thus it happens that many retrograde. But this example of Hezekiah ought to be remembered by them, so that they may still go on, though no hope of a prosperous issue appears; for Hezekiah did not desist, though Satan in various ways put many hinderances in the way, and even apparently upset all his labors, so that they produced no fruit. So much as to the time that is mentioned.

The elders said, that Micah had spoken to the whole people, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, Sion, shall be plowed as a field, We have already seen on what occasion it was that Micah spoke with so much severity; it was when hypocrites set up their false confidence and falsely assumed the name of God, as though they held him bound to themselves. For you, he said, Sion shall be plowed as a field He began with the temple, and then he added, and Jerusalem shall be in heaps, or a solitude; and lastly, he said, and the mountain, of the house, that is, of the temple, etc. He repeated what he had just said, for what else was the mountain of the temple but Sion? But as this prediction could have hardly been believed by the Jews, the Prophet, for the sake of confirmation, said the same thing twice. We hence conclude that it was not a superfluous repetition, but that he might shake with terror the hypocrites, who had hardened themselves against God's threatenings, and thought themselves safe, though the whole world went to ruin.

Having now related what Micah had denounced, they added, Slaying, did Hezekiah the king of Judah and all Judah slay him? By the example of the pious King Hezekiah, they exhorted the people to shew kindness and docility, and shewed that it was an honor done both to God and to his prophets, not to be incensed against his reproofs and threatenings, however sharply they might have been goaded or however deeply they might have been wounded. But they further added, Did he not fear Jehovah? and supplicate the face of Jehovah? and did not Jehovah repent? They confirmed what Jeremiah had previously said, that there was no other remedy but to submit themselves calmly to prophetic instruction, and at the same time to

[172] The Keri reads {,מיכה and is countenanced by several MSS., and is no doubt the true reading, and not ,{מיכיה} as in the present received text. --- Ed

flee to the mercy of God; for by the fear of God here is meant true conversion; what else is God's fear than that reverence by which we shew that we are submissive to his will, because he is a Father and a Sovereign? Whosoever, then, owns God as a Father and a Sovereign, cannot do otherwise than to submit from the heart, to his good pleasure. Therefore the elders meant that Hezekiah and the whole people really turned to God. Now repentance, as it must be well known, contains two parts --- the sinner becomes displeased with himself on account of his vices --- and forsaking all the wicked lusts of the flesh, he desires to form his whole life and his actions according to the rule of God's righteousness.

But they added, that they supplicated, etc. Though Jeremiah uses the singular number, he yet includes both the people and the king; he seems however to have used the singular number designedly, in order to commend the king, whose piety was extraordinary and almost incomparable. There is no doubt but that he pointed out the right way to others, that they might repent, and also that he humbly deprecated that vengeance, which justly filled their minds with terror. He, indeed, ascribed this especially to the pious king; but the same concern is also to be extended to the chief men and the whole body of the people, as we shall presently see; did he not then supplicate the face of Jehovah?

This second clause deserves special notice; for a sinner will never return to God except he has the hope of pardon and salvation, as we shall ever dread the presence of God, except the hope of reconciliation be offered to us. Hence the Scripture, whenever it speaks of repentance, at the same time adds faith. They are indeed things wholly distinct, and yet not contrary, and ought never to be separated, as some inconsiderately do. For repentance is a change of the whole life, and as it were a renovation; and faith teaches the guilty to flee to the mercy of God. But still we must observe that there is a difference between repentance and faith; and yet they so unite together, that he who tears the one from the other, entirely loses both. This is the order which the Prophet now follows in saying that Hezekiah supplicated the face of Jehovah For whence is the desire to pray, except from faith? It is not then enough for one to feel hatred and displeasure as to his sins, and to desire to be conformed to God's will, except he thinks of reconciliation and pardon. The elders then pointed out the remedy, and shewed it as it were by the finger; for if the people after the example of Hezekiah and of others repented, then they were to flee to God's mercy, and to testify their faith by praying God to be propitious to them.

Hence it follows, that Jehovah repented of the evil which he had spoken against them The Prophet now makes use of the plural number; we hence conclude that under the name of King Hezekiah alone he before included the whole people. God then repented of the evil [173] As to this mode of speaking, I shall not now speak at large. We know that no change belongs to God; for whence comes repentance, except from this, --- that many things happen unexpectedly which compel us to change our purpose? one had intended something; but he thought that that would be which never came to pass; it is therefore necessary for him to revoke what he had deter-

[173] Both the Sept. and the Syr. and also the Targ. give the meaning, but not the proper word, "And the Lord abstained from the evils," etc. — Ed.

mined. Repentance then is the associate of ignorance. Now, as nothing is hid from God, so it can never be that he repents. How so? because he has never determined anything but according to his certain foreknowledge, for all things are before his eyes. But this kind of speaking, that God repents, that is, does not execute what he has announced, refers to what appears to men. It is no wonder that God thus condescendingly speaks to us; but, while this simplicity offends delicate and tender ears, we on the contrary wonder at God's indulgence in thus coming down to us, and speaking according to the comprehension of our weak capacities. We now perceive how God may be said to repent, even when he does not execute what he had denounced. His purpose in the meantime remains fixed, and as James says,

``There is in him no shadow of turning.'' (James 1:17.)

But a question may again be raised, How did God then repent of the evil which he had threatened both to the king and to the people? even because he deferred his vengeance; for God did not abrogate his decree or his proclamation, but spared Hezekiah and the people then living. Then the deferring of God's vengeance is called his repentance; for Hezekiah did not experience what he had feared, inasmuch as he saw not the ruin of the city nor the sad and dreadful event which Micah had predicted.

Now this also is to be noticed, --- that the pious king is here commended by the Holy Spirit, that he suffered himself to be severely reproved, though, as I have already said, he was not himself guilty. He had, indeed, a burning zeal, and was prepared to undergo any troubles in promoting the true worship of God; and yet he calmly and quietly bore with the Prophet, when he spoke of the destruction of the city and Temple, for he saw that he had need of such a helper. For however wisely may pious princes exert themselves in promoting the glory of God, yet Satan resists them. Hence they ever desire, as a matter of no small importance, to have true and faithful teachers to help, to assist and to strengthen them, and also to oppose their adversaries; for if teachers are silent or dissemble, a greater ill-will is entertained towards good princes and magistrates; for when with the drawn sword they defend the glory of God and his worship, while the teachers themselves are dumb dogs, all will cry out, ``Oh! what does this severity mean? Our teachers spare our ears, but these do not spare even our blood.'' It is, therefore, ever a desirable thing for good and pious kings to have bold and earnest teachers, who cry aloud and confirm the efforts of their princes. Such was the feeling of pious Hezekiah, as we may conclude from this passage. The rest I must defer.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast been pleased to gather us as a people to thyself, and to promise that we should be like a spiritual temple for thee to dwell in, --- O grant that we may consecrate among us a perpetual habitation for time, and so strive through the whole course of our life to devote ourselves to thee, that thy grace and blessing may never depart from us, but that we may experience more and more that those are never destitute of thy protection who truly and undissemblingly rely on thee, so that thy name may be more and more glorified in us through thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Second

We saw yesterday the example which the elders had alleged to deliver Jeremiah from death, --- that he was not the first who had threatened the city and the Temple with ruin, for Micah under the reign of Hezekiah had done the same and was not put to death. They hence concluded that it would be a heinous crime were they to slay Jeremiah, and that it would not remain unpunished. They then intimated that the people would commit a most grievous offense, if they killed Jeremiah; and they also added, that vengeance would follow, for the Lord would render them their due reward, if they thus cruelly treated the holy Prophet. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 26:20-23

20. And there was also a man that prophesied in the name of the LORD, Urijah the son of Shemaiah of Kirjathjearim, who prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah:

20. Atque etiam vir fuit prophetans in nomine Jehovae, Urias, filius Semeah ex Cariath-iarim, et prophetavit contra urbem hanc et contra terram hanc secundum sermones Jeremiae:

21. And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death: but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt;

21. Et audivit rex Joakim et omnes magnates ejus et Proceres sermones ejus, et quaesivit rex interficere ipsum, et audivit Urias et timuit, et fugit et transivit (vel, concessit) in Egyptum;

22. And Jehoiakim the king sent men into Egypt, namely, Elnathan the son of Achbor, and certain men with him into Egypt.

22. Et misit rex Joakim viros in Egyptum, Elnathan filium Achobor et viros cure eo in Egyptum:

23. And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king; who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people.

23. Et eduxerunt Uriam ex Egypto, et adduxerunt eum ad regem Joakim, qui percussit eum gladio, et projecit cadaver ejus in sepulchra populi (vel, plebis potius.)

Another example is brought forward, partly different, and partly alike, --- different as to the king, the like as to a Prophet. Uriah, mentioned here, faithfully discharged his office; but Jehoiakim could not bear his preaching, and therefore slew him. Some explain the whole in the same manner, as though the elders designed to shew that the wicked can gain nothing by resisting God's prophets, except that by contending they make themselves more and more guilty. But others think that this part was brought forward by the opposite party, and the words, ``And also,'' {וגם}, ugam, favor this opinion; for they may be taken adversatively, as though they said, ``But there was another Prophet, who did not speak of the ruin of the city and of the destruction of the Temple with impunity.'' And this opinion seems to be confirmed by what follows in the last verse of the chapter, Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam, etc.; the particle {אך}, ak, is properly nevertheless; but it means sometimes, at least, or only. But in this place, as I shall shew again presently, it retains, I think, its

proper meaning; for the Prophet declares, that though he was in great danger, yet Ahikam fought so bravely for him, that at length he gained his cause.

But as to the present passage, both expositions may be admitted; that is, either that the malignants adduced the death of Uriah in order to overwhelm Jeremiah, --- or that God's faithful followers intended to shew that there was no reason of acting in this manner, for the state of things had become worse, since King Jehoiakim had cruelly slain God's servant.

But the time ought especially to be noticed. We have seen that this prophecy was committed to Jeremiah, and also promulgated at the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign; but this beginning is not to be confined either to the first or second year; but as he became tributary to the king of Babylon, he afterwards endeavored to throw off the yoke and was at length disgracefully dethroned; hence the beginning of his reign must be during the time that his power was entire. While then Jehoiakim retained his dignity, Jeremiah was bidden to proclaim this message. However this may have been, the King Jehoiakim thus enjoyed a tranquil reign; he was at Jerusalem. It is not therefore said here, that Uriah had threatened the city in his days; but the history is given as of a present thing. One thing then is evident, that this discourse was delivered, when King Jehoiakim was not afar off. His palace was nigh the Temple; his counsellors were present who had come down, as we have seen, on account of the tumult. For the affair could not be hidden; since the priests and the false prophets everywhere inflamed the rage of the people. The king's counsellors therefore came to quell the disturbances. If this part of the address is to be ascribed to the defenders of Jeremiah, then they must have been endued with great courage and firmness, to allege against the king a nefarious murder, and also to condemn him for a sacrilege, for he had not only done an injury to a holy Prophet, but had directly opposed God himself. There are on both sides probable conjectures; for if we follow this opinion, that the servants of God, who favored Jeremiah and sought to deliver him from danger, spoke these words, it might be objected and said, that no such thing is expressed But the narrative goes on continuously, And there was also a man, etc. Now when different persons speak and oppose one another, it is usual to mark the change. It seems then that the whole is to be read connectedly, so that they who first adduced the example of Micah, then added on the other hand, that Uriah indeed suffered punishment, but that thus a crime was added to a crime, so that Jehoiakim gained nothing by furiously persecuting God's Prophet. And that they did not speak of the consequences, ought not to appear strange, for the condition of the city and of the people was known to all, and a more grievous danger was nigh at hand. Hence a simple narrative might well have been given by them; and as they did not dare to exasperate the mind of the king, it was the more necessary to leave that part untouched.

But if the other view be more approved, that the enemies of Jeremiah did here rise against him, and alleged the case of Uriah, there is also some appearance of reason in its favor; the king was living, his counsellors were present, as we have said. It might then be, that those who wished the death of Jeremiah, referred to this recent example in order to have him destroyed, --- ``Why should he escape, since

Uriah was lately put to death, for the cause is exactly the same? Uriah did not go any farther than Jeremiah; he seems indeed to have taken the words from his mouth. As, then, the king did slay him, why should Jeremiah be spared? Why should he escape the punishment the other underwent, when his crime is more grievous?'' It hence appears that this view can without absurdity be defended, that is, that the enemies of Jeremiah endeavored to aggravate his case by referring to the punishment the king inflicted on Uriah, whose case was not dissimilar; and I do not reject this view. If any approve of the other, that this part was spoken by the advocates of Jeremiah, I readily allow it; but I dare not yet reject wholly the idea, that Jeremiah was loaded with prejudice by having the case of Uriah brought forward, who was killed by the king for having prophesied against the city and the Temple. [174]

Let us now consider the words; There was also a man who prophesied in the name of Jehovah, etc. If we receive the opinion of those who think that Jeremiah's enemies speak here, then the name of Jehovah is to be taken for a false pretense, as though they had said, ``It is a very common thing to pretend the name of God; for every one who claims to himself the office of teaching, boasts that he is sent from above, and that what he speaks has been committed to him by God.'' Thus they indirectly condemned Jeremiah; for it was not enough for him to pretend God's name, as Uriah, of whom they spoke, had also professed most loudly that he was God's prophet, that he brought nothing as his own, and that he had a sure call. But if this part is to be ascribed to God's true worshippers, whose object it was to protect and defend Jeremiah, to speak in the name of Jehovah, as we said yesterday, was not only to glory on account of the prophetic office, but also to give evidence of faithfulness and of integrity, so as really and by the effect to prove that he was God's prophet, such as he wished to be thought.

They then added, he prophesied against this city and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah If the adversaries of Jeremiah were the speakers, we see that he was so overpowered, that it was afterwards superfluous to know anything

[174] There are two other views taken of this subject; some say that the second example, that of Uriah, was introduced by the writer of the narrative, whether Jeremiah himself or Baruch, and that this was mentioned to shew, that according to this precedent, Jeremiah would have been killed, had it not been for the interposition of Ahikam. This is the view taken by Gataker and Blayney. But what appears most consistent with the whole passage is the view given by Venema; he considers that the 17th verse (Jeremiah 26:17) has been removed from its place between the 19th and the 20th (Jeremiah 26:19-20), and that the "princes" mentioned the case of Micah in favor of Jeremiah, and that "the elders of the land" adduced the case of Uriah against him, and that notwithstanding this it is at last added, that Ahikam, one of the princes, succeeded in his deliverance. That chapters have been transposed in this book is indubitable; the same thing may also have happened as to verses. Then the passage would read thus, — 16. Then said the princes and all the people to the priests and to the prophets, "Against this man there is no judgment of death, for in 18. the name of Jehovah hath he spoken to (or against) us. Micah the Morasthite was a prophet in the days of Hezekiah, the king of Judah, and he spoke to all the people of Judah, saying, 'Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Sion, being a field, shall be plowed, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house like the heights of 19. a forest.' Slaying, did Hezekiah, the king of Judah, and all Judah, slay him? did he not fear Jehovah and intreat the favor of Jehovah? then Jehovah repented as to the evil which he had pronounced against them; but we are doing a great evil against our own souls." 17. Then rose up men from the elders of the land and spoke to the 20. whole assembly of the people, saying, "But there was also a man, who prophesied in the name of Jehovah, Uriah, the son of Shemaiah," etc. etc. This arrangement makes the whole narrative plain, regular, and consistent. The conclusion comes in naturally, that notwithstanding the adverse speech of the "elders" Jeremiah was saved by the influence of Ahikam, one of the princes. — Ed.

more of his cause; for another had already been condemned, whose case was in no way dissimilar or different; ``He spoke according to the words of Jeremiah, and he was condemned, why then should we now hesitate respecting Jeremiah?'' We see how malignantly they turned against Jeremiah this example, as though he was condemned beforehand in the person of another. But if these were the words of the godly, they are to be accounted for in another way; what is intimated is, that if Jeremiah was slain, God's vengeance would be provoked; for it was more than enough to shed the innocent blood of one Prophet.

It then follows, And when, Jehoiakim the king, and all his mighty men and the princes, heard his words, etc. This verse seems to favor the opinion of those who conclude that godly men were the speakers; for they spoke dishonorably of the king and his counsellors; the king heard and his mighty men, (powerful men, literally,) and also all the princes; and the king sought to slay him These words, however, may also be ascribed to the ungodly and the wicked, for they wished to terrify the common people by first mentioning the king and then the mighty men and the princes. And to seek to kill him, might also have been excused, even that the king could not bear such a reproach without revenging it; for he saw that the Prophet had taken such a liberty as not, to spare the holy city nor the Temple: The king then heard, and his mighty men and princes; and then, the king sought to slay him

But when Uriah heard it, he feared and fled This passage teaches us that even the faithful servants of God, who strive honestly to fulfill their office, are yet not always so courageous as boldly to despise all dangers; for it is said that the Prophet feared; but he was not on this account condemned. This fear was not indeed blameless; but his fear was such, that he yet continued in his vocation. He might indeed have pleased the king, but he dreaded such perfidy more than death. He, therefore, so feared, that he turned not aside from the right course, nor denied the truth., nor admitted anything unworthy of his dignity or of the character he sustained. His fear then, though wrong, did not yet so possess the Prophet, but that he was ever faithful to God in his vocation. It then follows, that he went into Egypt We hence conclude, that the king's wrath and cruelty were so great, that the holy man could not find a corner to hide himself in through the whole land of Judea, nor even in other regions around. He was therefore forced to seek a hiding place in Egypt.

It is afterwards added that the king sent men, even Elnathan, the chief of the legation, with others. [175] There is no doubt but that Jehoiakim sent to the king of Egypt and complained that a turbulent man had fled, and that he asked him to

[175] To avoid what may seem a tautology in this verse, Blayney renders the word for Egypt, adversaries, — "But Jehoiakim the king sent adversaries, Elnathan the son of Achbor, and certain men with him, into Egypt." Were the words rendered literally, the repetition would not appear different from many that we meet with; "Then sent the king Jehoiakim men into Egypt with Elnathan the son of Achbor, even men with him into Egypt." The repetition seems to have been intended to shew that there was a strong force, and not one man, sent to take the Prophet, and that this force was to go even as far as Egypt. The version of the Sept. is, "And the king sent men into Egypt;" the Vulg. and the Targ. are the same with our version; but the Syr. is, "And the king Jehoiakim sent a certain Egyptian, Elnathan the son of Achbor, and some with him, into Egypt." It is singular that in one MS. the word {,מרגלים searchers, spies, is found instead of ,{מצרים} rendered often Egypt, though it comes from a root which means to bind close, to environ, to beset; and so as a hyphil participle it would be besetters, or catchers --- in modern language, bumbailiffs, which is a corruption for bound bailiffs. This meaning would exactly suit the passage, ``Then the king Jehoiakim sent men, catchers, with Elnathan the son of Achbor, even these men with him into Egypt.'' --- Ed

deliver him up as a fugitive. So then he was brought back, not through power, but through a nefarious compact, for he was betrayed by the king of Egypt.

It is at length added, that they led up Uriah from Egypt, and brought him to King Jehoiakim, who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people, by way of dishonor; for Jeremiah here calls them the graves of the common people, as we in French call shambles des charniers. The rich are honorably and splendidly buried at this day, and every one has his own grave; but when there is a vast number, the bodies are thrown together, for it would be too expensive to dig a grave for each. It seems also that there was such a practice in Judea, and that God's Prophet was buried in this ignominious manner.

Thus they who spoke intimated that the king's wrath so burned, that he not only put him to death, but followed up his vengeance, so that a new disgrace awaited the Prophet, even when dead, for he was cast among the obscure and ignoble common people.

I have hitherto so explained this passage as to leave it doubtful whether the probability is that the speakers were Jeremiah's enemies or his advocates. And though, as I have declared twice or three times, I reject not the view which is different from that which I embrace, yet it seems most probable to me that the words were spoken by the godly men who defended the cause of Jeremiah. All the various reasons which lead me to this conclusion I will not here specify; for every one may himself see why I prefer this view. The common consent of almost all interpreters also influences me, from which I wish not to depart, except necessity compels me, or the thing itself makes it evident that they were mistaken. But we have seen from the beginning, that the two examples consecutively follow one another, and that nothing intervenes; it may hence be supposed, that the enemies of Jeremiah had previously performed their part. The words themselves then shew that those who commenced the discourse were those who carried it on. And that they did not mention the reason why they adduced this example is not to be wondered at; for the displeasure of the king was feared, and he had given no common proof, in his treatment of the holy Prophet, how impatiently he bore anything that trenched on his own dignity. They therefore cautiously related the matter, and left what they did not express to be collected by those who heard them. But it was easy from their words to know what they meant, --- that God's vengeance was to be dreaded; for one Prophet had been slain; what if there was to be no end to cruelty? would not God at length arise to execute judgment when his servants were so unworthily treated? As, then, the words are not completed, it seems probable to me that God's true servants spoke thus reservedly and cautiously, because they dared not to express their thoughts openly.

Further, these words, the king sought to slay him, and the king sent men, etc., are more suitable when considered as spoken by the defenders of Jeremiah than by the ungodly and the wicked; and they also named Elnathan, that they might hand down his name with infamy to future ages. And they lastly added that the Prophet was brought up from Egypt What was very shameful seems certainly to be set here before us, that he was forcibly brought back from that land to which he had fled for an asylum, and also that he was brought to the king, that he smote him with

the sword, that is, cruelly killed him; and further, that being not satisfied with this barbarous act, he caused him to be ignominiously buried. All these particulars, as I have said, seem to shew that these words may be more suitably applied to the holy men who defended the cause of Jeremiah than to his enemies. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 26:24

24. Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.

24. Veruntamen manus Achicam, filii Saphan, fuit cum Jeremia, ne traderetur ipse (vel, ne traderent ipsum) in manum populi ad interficiendum ipsum.

There is here an adversative particle, and not without reason; for the contention is pointed out which had so raged that it became difficult to extricate the holy Prophet from danger. We hence conclude that Jeremiah was in so much peril that it was with great and arduous effort that Ahikam saved him. There is a frequent mention of this man in sacred history, and his name will hereafter be found in several places, and he was left to govern the remnant of the people after the demolition of the city. (2 Kings 25:22; Jeremiah 39:14.) [176] And there is no doubt but that he made progress in religion and was an upright man, and that his virtues were so valued by Nebuchadnezzar that he bestowed on him such an honor. He was soon afterwards slain by the ungodly and the wicked; but there is nothing related of him but what is honorable to him. It was indeed an extraordinary act of courage that he dared to oppose the fury of the whole people, and to check the priests and the false prophets who had conspired to put the holy man to death.

This is the reason why it is in the last place added, that the hand of Ahikam was with Jeremiah; though the people were furious, and the priests would by no means be restrained from persecuting the holy man, yet Ahikam could not be turned from his holy purpose, but persevered to defend a good cause until Jeremiah escaped in safety. It is hence said, that his hand was with Jeremiah; for by hand in Scripture is meant effort, (conatus;) for where there is anything to be done, or any difficulty, the Scripture uses the word hand But as Ahikam exerted himself to the uttermost, not only in aiding the holy Prophet by his words, but also in repressing the fury of the people, and in boldly resisting the priests and the false prophets, the hand in this place means aid; his hand was with Jeremiah, that is, he aided or helped him, so that he was not delivered up into the hand of the people

It hence also appears, as we said yesterday, that the tumult of the people was not immediately allayed, for the false prophets and the priests had so roused their virulence that they became almost implacable. Here, then, is set before us an example of courage and perseverance; for it is not enough for us to defend a good cause when we may do so with safety, except we also disregard all ill-will and despise all dangers, and resist the fury of the wicked, and undergo contentions and dangers for God's servants whenever necessary. We are also taught at the same time how much weight belongs to the influence of one man when he boldly defends a good cause and yields not to the madness of the wicked, but risks extremities rather than betray the truth of God and his ministers. Now follows, ---

[176] This was his son Gedaliah, and not himself. — Ed

Jeremiah 27

CHAPTER 27

Jeremiah 27:1-5

1. In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, came this word unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

1. Principio regni Jehoiakim filii Josiae regis Jehudah fuit sermo hic ad jeremiam a Jehova, dicendo,

2. Thus saith the LORD to me; Make thee bonds and yokes, and put them upon thy neck,

2. Sic dicit jehova ad me (mihi,) fac tibi vincula et juga, et pone ea super collum tuum;

3. And send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the Ammonites, and to the king of Tyrus, and to the king of Zidon, by the hand of the messengers which come to Jerusalem unto Zedekiah king of Judah;

3. Et mitte ad regem Edom, et ad regem Moab, et ad regem filiorum Ammon, et ad regem Tyri, et ad regem Sidonis, per manum nuntiorum, qui venient Jerusalem ad Zedechiam regem Jehudah;

4. And command them to say unto their masters, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Thus shall ye say unto your masters;

4. Et mandata dabis illis ad dominos suos, dicendo, Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Sic dicetis ad dominos vestros,

5. I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by my great power and by my outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me.

5. Ego feci terram, hominem et jumentum quod super faciem terrae est, in virtute mea magna, et brachio meo extento; et dedi eam illi qui placeret in oculis meis.

Jeremiah prefaces this prediction by saying, that it was delivered to him at the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign. But this beginning, as we have said, extended to the

whole of his reign while it was prosperous and entire. While, then, Jehoiakim enjoyed a quiet possession of the kingdom, Jeremiah was bidden to make known what had been committed to him, not to Jehoiakim himself, but, as we learn from the third verse, to Zedekiah who had not immediately succeeded him, but became at last king after various changes. God, then, committed this prophecy to his servant, but did not design it to be immediately promulgated. If it be asked, why God designed what he purposed to be made known to be concealed for so long a time? the answer is this, --- that it was done for the sake of the Prophet himself, in order that he might with more alacrity perform his office, knowing of a certainty that no one thought that it could ever happen, and certainly the thing was incredible. [177]

God's design then was to communicate this to his Prophet himself, that he might see afar off what no one, as I have just said, had thought could ever come to pass. This is the reason, as I think, why this prophecy was not immediately published, but was like a treasure deposited in the Prophet's bosom, until the ripened time came. I shall defer till tomorrow the explanation of this prophecy.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that when at any time thou grievously threatenest us, we may not, on that account, become angry, but learn to acknowledge our sins, and truly to humble ourselves under thy mighty hand, and also to deprecate thy wrath, and to prove by true repentance, that we profit by thy word, and believe thy denunciations, so that we may become partakers of that mercy, through which thou promisest to be propitious to all who turn to thee: and may we thus advance more and more, and persevere in the right course of repentance, until having at length put off all the vices of the flesh, we shall attain to a perfection of righteousness and the fruition of that glory which has been laid up for us in heaven by Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture one Hundred and Third

We explained yesterday why this command was given to Jeremiah at the beginning of Jehoiakim's reign, which was not yet to be executed until the time of Zedekiah: it was God's design to strengthen him in the meantime, lest he should faint in his course. Let us now see what was the object of this prophecy and what is its meaning.

The Prophet seems to have addressed the ambassadors who were sent by neighboring kings to King Zedekiah; and he was bidden to command them to declare each to his master, that they were all to come under the yoke of the king of Babylon. There is, moreover, no doubt but that God designed especially and chiefly to give a lesson to Zedekiah and to the Jews; for these legations mentioned here might have so emboldened them as to despise all prophecies, and to think themselves beyond

[177] The manner in which Calvin accounts for this prophecy being so long kept hid is ingenious; but modern authors are not satisfied. Lightfoot says, that Jeremiah was ordered to make these yokes in Jehoiakim's time to signify the subjection of Judah to the king of Babylon, but that he was ordered to send them to foreign kings in the reign of Zedekiah. The first verse is omitted in the Sept.; the Greek version as given by Theodoret, has "Jehoiakim," and so the Vulg. and the Targ., but the Syr. and Arab. have "Zedekiah;" and there are three Hebrew MSS. in which the same is found. What seems most decisive is the beginning of the next chapter, where Hananiah comes forward in "the fourth year" of Zedekiah and breaks the yoke of Jeremiah. Gataker, Henry, Lowth, Scott, and Blayney, are all inclined to think that the mistake originally was that of the scribe. — Ed.

all danger. For the purpose for which these legations were sent by the king of Sidon, by the king of Tyrus, by the king of Moab and Ammon, ought to be particularly observed: when they saw that the king of Babylon would not spare them, they began to join their forces. Every one at first consulted his own advantage, and saw no need of mutual help; and so it was that the Chaldeans easily overcame them while they were disunited. Experience at length taught them, that neither the king of Judah nor ally of the neighboring kings could sustain the contest unless they formed a confederacy. Thus, then, it happened that the king of Tyrus, the king of Sidon, the king of Moab, and the king of Ammon, offered their forces and their money to the king of Judah, and that he also promised to help them in return, if the Chaldean attacked them. It was therefore a new occasion for confidence to the Jews, so that they gathered courage, and thus were emboldened to resist, relying on so many neighboring kings.

The Chaldeans had been hitherto successful, for they had assailed each by himself; but when all of them were ready by their united forces to oppose and restrain their attacks, it was hardly credible that they could be conquered. It was therefore God's purpose to remove this false confidence, and to warn Zedekiah and the whole people, lest they should be deceived by such allurements, but that they might know that they were patiently to endure the punishment inflicted on them by God. This therefore was the reason why the Prophet was sent to the ambassadors who had come to Jerusalem. He was not set a teacher over them; but this was done with reference to Zedekiah and the people. It is yet probable that these commands were set forth before the king, that the king might know that he had been wholly deceived, and that he still foolishly trusted to the subsidies which had been offered.

We may easily imagine how grievous it must have been to the king and to the people to hear this prophecy. The ambassadors were in a manner dishonored; the kings, by whom they had been sent, might have complained that they were treated with great indignity. Hence the king and the people must have been very incensed against Jeremiah. But the Prophet boldly performed what God commanded him, as it behoved him. And we shall hereafter see, that his words were addressed to King Zedekiah rather than to these heathens.

We now understand the reason why God would have his Prophet to give these commands to the ambassadors, who had been sent by heathen kings to King Zedekiah: it was that the king might know that it was wholly useless for these kings to promise their assistance; for he had to do, not with the Chaldean king, but rather with the judgment of God, which is irresistible, and which men in vain struggle with.

Though the Prophet was bidden to command the ambassadors to say to the kings by whom they had been sent, Thus saith Jehovah, of hosts, [178] they yet might have refused to do so, and that with indignation: ``What! Are we come here to be ambassadors to thee? and who indeed art thou who commandest us? besides, dost thou think that we are so mad as to threaten for thy sake, our kings and masters, and to declare to them what thou biddest, that they are shortly to become the ser-

[178] The fourth verse in our version is not correct, "And command them to say to their masters," it ought to be, "And command them as to their masters (or lords,) saying," — for the Hebrew will not admit of such a transposition. — Ed.

vants of the Chaldean king?'' The ambassadors then might have thus treated the holy Prophet with derision and laughter: but, as we have said, the whole was done for the sake of Zedekiah and the people, in order that the Prophet might dissipate that vain splendor and pomp, by which he saw that Zedekiah and all the Jews were deceived; for they thought that they had as it were high and large mountains to be set in opposition to the Chaldean king and his army: ``On what part can they assail us, since the king of Tyrus is on our side, and also the king of Sidon, the king of Moab, and the king of Ammon? these rule widely, and their cities are impregnable.'' Thus, then, the Jews were convinced that they would be exempt from every trouble and molestation; but in order that they might not deceive themselves with that vain display, Jeremiah said,

``Declare, ye ambassadors, to your masters what God has spoken, even that ye must submit to the yoke of the king of Babylon.''

And a visible symbol was added in order to confirm the prediction: the Prophet was bidden to put a yoke on his neck, or yokes, for he speaks in the plural number. {מוט} muth, means a pole, a yoke, a transverse piece of wood: and no doubt he applied some pieces of wood to his neck, like the yoke laid on oxen; and then he tied this yoke or crossbar; for {יסר}, isar, means to bind or tie, and so {מוסרות}, musarut, are bands; {מוסר}, musar, also means sometimes a girdle; but here it is to be taken for bands or ligaments. It was a sad spectacle to see on the neck of Jeremiah, when he went forth, the symbol of the bondage of all kings and nations: he was as it were in the place of all a captive before the time: but when God laid a yoke on the Jews and on all other nations, Jeremiah was then a free man; for though he bore this mark of bondage, he yet expected God's judgment with a resigned mind, while others disregarded it. But this confirmation rendered them more inexcusable, as the case is, when God, to strengthen faith, adds sacraments or other helps to his word, by which means he impresses us the more, for he thus teaches not only our ears, but also our eyes and all our senses: when God thus omits nothing that may tend to strengthen our faith in his word, a heavier condemnation awaits us, if such signs avail not.

We then perceive the reason why the Prophet applied to his neck the symbol of future bondage: were there any teachable among the people, to see such a sign with their eyes must have been useful to them. But as the greater part had hardened themselves in their obstinacy, what ought to have done them good, by humbling them in time before God, so as to anticipate his judgment, had no other effect but to render their punishment more grievous.

Then follow these words, I have made the earth, the man and the beast, which are on the face of the earth, by my great power, and by mine extended arm. [179]

[179] Whenever the pronouns are set down in Hebrew, they are emphatic: the beginning of this verse ought to be rendered, "I myself," or "made have I, even I, the earth, the man also and the beast that are on the face of the earth," (not as in our version, "upon the ground,") etc. The last clause, "and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto me," according to Calvin and our version, ought rather to be, "and I will give it to whom it shall seem right in my eyes." So Venema and Blayney; and it is according to the Sept., though the other versions are the same with our own. The verb indeed is in the past tense, but it is preceded by {ו conversive. Then follows the next verse, ``And now I --- given have I all these lands,'' etc. The fifth verse contains a general declaration of truth; God made the earth, and would give it to whom he pleased: the sixth includes his determination as to all these lands; he had given them to

The spectacle would have been unmeaning and to no purpose, had Jeremiah only put the yoke on his neck, and added no instruction; for we know that all signs are as it were dead, except life is given them by the word. As then an image avails not much, so whatever signs may be set before our eyes, they would be frivolous and without meaning, were no doctrine added as the life. And hence also is condemned the madness of the Papists, who amuse the minds of the people with many signs, while no doctrine is conveyed. It therefore follows that they are mere figments, and attended with no profit. God, then, has ever added to signs his doctrine, which may therefore be truly compared to the soul, which gives life to the body, that would otherwise be without motion or strength. On this account Jeremiah shews what the yoke meant. He also speaks of the power and sovereign authority of God; for kings, though they confess that God holds the government of the world, cannot yet entertain the idea that they can be in a moment overwhelmed and cast down from their dignity. For they seem to themselves to be fixed in their nests, and so they promise to themselves a permanent condition, and imagine that they are not subject to the common lot of mortals.

As, then, kings are so inflated with pride, the Lord used this preface, that he made the earth and all living beings. He speaks not of heaven, but mentions only that he made the earth, and man, and the animals which are on the face of the earth; and adds, by my great power and extended arm Why was this said, except that men might be awakened on hearing that the earth continues not as it is, but as it is sustained by God's power by which it was once created? The same power preserves men and animals; for nothing can remain safe except God exercises from heaven his hidden power. This, then, was the reason why these words were introduced. God set his own arm and power in opposition to the pride of those who thought that they stood by their own power, and did not acknowledge that they were dependent on the nod of God alone, who sustained them as long as he pleased, and then overthrew and reduced them to nothing when it seemed good to him.

This doctrine, then, ought to be applied to ourselves: for Jeremiah did not speak generally and indiscriminately of God's power, but accommodated to the subject in hand what he said of God's power, that men might, know that there is nothing fixed or permanent in this world, but that God preserves men and animals, and yet in such a way, that at any moment he can by a single breath reduce to nothing all those who exist and all that they have. It follows ---

Jeremiah 27:6-7

6. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him.

6. Et nunc ego dedi omnes terras istas in manum Nebuchadnezer regis abylonis servi mei, atque etiam bestiam agri (hoc est, bestias agrestes) dedi illi ad serviendum ei:

7. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come: and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves

Nebuchadnezzar. --- Ed

of him.

7. Et servient ei omnes gentes et filio ejus, et filio filii ejus usque dum venerit temput terrae ejus, atque etiam ipsius; et servient ei gentes multae (vel, magnae) et reges magni.

God, after having claimed to himself the government of the whole earth, and shewn that it is in his power to transfer kingdoms to whom he pleases, now declares his decree --- that he would subject to the king of Babylon all the neighboring lands, even Tyrus and Sidon, the country of Moab, the country of Ammon, the country of Edom, and even Judea itself. If Jeremiah had begun by saying, that God had given to King Nebuchadnezzar these lands, the prediction would not have been so easily received, for pride would have been as it were an obstacle to bolt up their minds and hearts. But the preface, as it has been stated, served to shew that they were not to think that they could stand against the will of God. After having then brought down the great height which seemed fixed in their hearts, he now declares that King Nebuchadnezzar would be the lord over Judah as well as over all the countries around, for God had set him over these lands.

He extends also this subjection, of which he speaks, over the very beasts, and not without reason; for he thus indirectly condemns the hardness of men, if they resisted, as though he had said, ``What will it avail you to attempt with refractory hearts to shake off the yoke? for the very beasts, tigers, wolves, lions, and every fierce and savage animal in the land, even all these beasts shall know that the King Nebuchadnezzar is their master, even by a hidden instinct. Since, then, these beasts shall obey King Nebuchadnezzar, because he has been raised by God to that dignity, how great must be the stupidity of men in not acknowledging what the very beasts understand?'' We hence see the design of mentioning the beasts; the Prophet upbraided men with their madness, if they ferociously resisted the King Nebuchadnezzar; for in that, case the beasts of the field were endued with more intelligence than they. For whence is it that beasts have fear, except that God has imprinted certain marks of dignity on kings, according to what is said by Daniel. (Daniel 2:38.) As, then, the majesty of God appears in kings, the very beasts, though void of reason and judgment, yet willingly obey through a hidden impulse of nature. Hence inexcusable is the pride of men, if at least they do not imitate the example of the very beasts. [180]

Nebuchadnezzar is afterwards called the servant of God, not that he was worthy of such an honor, as it had never been his purpose to labor for God; but he was called a servant, because God designed to employ him in his service, as those are called in the Psalm the sons of God, to whom the word of God was addressed, that is, to whom he gave authority to rule. (Psalm 82:6; John 10:35.) So also Nebuchadnezzar was God's servant, because he was divinely endued with sovereign power. This he did not know, nor was this said for his sake, nor was he honored with such a name, as though God regarded him as one of his own people; but this had a reference to the

[180] Some give this view as to the beasts of the field, that not only towns and cultivated lands would be given up to Nebuchadnezzar, but also hills and mountains, deserts and forests, which were inhabited by wild beasts, and that this was said in order to shew that a complete possession of their lands, and of all things within them, would be given to that king, not excepting the wild beasts. — Ed.

Jews and to all the other nations, in order that they might be fully persuaded that they were obeying God in humbling themselves and in undertaking the yoke of the king of Babylon, for this pleased God. There is no power, says Paul, but from God, (Romans 13:1,) and that sentence is derived from this principle, that all power is from God; for he gives the power to rule and to govern to whom he pleases. Whosoever, then, are endued with the power of the sword and public authority, are God's servants, though they exercise tyranny and be robbers. They are servants, not with respect to themselves, but because God would have them to be acknowledged as his ministers until their time shall come, according to what follows ---

Serve him shall all nations, and his son, and the son of his son The greater part think that Nebuchadnezzar had only two successors of his own posterity, Evil-merodach and Belshazar; others name five, and two of them between Evil-merodach and Belshazar. Those who think that there were no more than three, quote this testimony of the Prophet, for he names only the king's son and his grandson; but this would be no sufficient reason. I am, however, disposed to follow what has been more commonly received, that Belshazar, the last king of Babylon, who was slain by Cyrus, was the third from Nebuchadnezzar. [181]

But this is not the main thing; for the Prophet speaks of the time of the Chaldean monarchy as well as of the king, until the time of his land shall come. The time of the land was that determined by heaven; for as to every one of us there is a limit fixed beyond which no one can pass, so we ought to judge of kingdoms. As, then, the life of every individual has its fixed limits, so God has determined with regard to the empires of the whole earth; thus the life and death of every kingdom and nation are in the hand and at the will of God. For this reason it is now said, that the time of Chaldea would come, and then it is added, and of the king himself. [182] This ought not to be confined to Nebuchadnezzar himself; but as his grandson represented him, the time, though not strictly, may yet be aptly said to have been that, when God had put an end to him and to his power when Babylon was taken by the Medes and Persians. This was, however, at the same time for the comfort of the godly; for it was not God's design to leave the faithful without some alleviation in their trouble, lest grief should overpower them; when they found themselves oppressed by the Chaldeans, and in a manner overwhelmed, doubtless despair might have crept in, and hence murmurings and blasphemies might have followed. It was, therefore, God's purpose to mitigate in some measure their bitterness when he added, that the time of Nebuchadnezzar himself would come, that is, the time in which he was to perish. When, therefore, the faithful saw him taking possession of all lands, and dreaded by all nations, they were not to despond, but rather to extend their thoughts to that time of which Jeremiah had predicted, that they might receive some alleviation to their grief, and be enabled to bear with more resignation the cross laid on them. In this expression, then, is included a promise; for the hope of deliverance was set before them, when they understood that reverses would soon happen to King Nebuchadnezzar.

[181] It seems that there were two besides, who exercised for a time regal power, but they were not the descendants of Nebuchadnezzar. — Ed.

[182] This is rendered differently, "until the time of his land, even his, shall come." So the early versions, and so Venema and Blayney. — Ed.

He afterwards adds, serve him shall great, or many nations (for the word {רבים}, rebim, means both) and great kings [183] This was distinctly expressed, that no conspiracy might deceive the Jews and other nations; for they thought that when united together they could offer an effectual resistance: ``Accumulate your forces and your efforts,'' says God; ``yet all these shall be dissipated; for my decree is, that great kings and many nations shall serve the Chaldeans.'' It follows ---

Jeremiah 27:8

8. And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the LORD, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand.

8. Erit autem ut gens et regnum, quae non servierint ei, nempe Nebuchadnezer regi Babylonis, et qui non posuerit collum suum sub jugo regis Babylonis, gladio et fame et peste visitabo super gentem illam, dicit Jehova, donec interfecero ipsos in manu ejus.

After having promulgated his decree by the mouth of Jeremiah, God now adds a threatening, in order that the Jews as well as others might willingly, and with resigned and humble minds, undertake the yoke laid on them. The Prophet, indeed, as we have said, had the Jews more especially in view; but he extended, as it were by accident, his prediction to aliens. We hence see why this denunciation of punishment was added. It ought, indeed, to have been enough to say, that Nebuchadnezzar was God's servant to subdue Judea; but as it was a hard thing for the Jews to receive that enemy, nor could they be induced to submit to him, it became necessary to add this threatening, ``See what ye do, for ye cannot be stronger than God.'' This threatening is indeed included in the former verse; but we know how tardy men are to learn, especially when any false impression has preoccupied their minds. As, then, the Jews refused the authority of Nebuchadnezzar, though the Prophet had testified to them that he was God's servant, they would not have hesitated still to evade and to be refractory, had not their hardness and obduracy been broken by this commination.

And it shall be, that the nation and kingdom, which will not serve him, even Nebuchadnezzar, and not put their neck under his yoke, it shall be, that I shall visit that nation, etc. God speaks without distinction of all nations; but the Jews ought to have reasoned from the less to the greater; for if God would so severely punish the pride of the Gentiles, in case they withdrew themselves from under the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar, how much heavier and more dreadful vengeance ought the Jews to have dreaded, who had been warned by the Prophet, and who doubtless knew that this happened not to them by chance, but that it was God's righteous judgment, by which their sins were punished? Were they obstinately to attempt to shake off the

[183] Here Calvin has followed the Vulg.; but our version gives the true meaning. See note on Jeremiah 25:14. The two clauses may be thus translated, "Until the time of his land, even his, shall come; then reduce him (or it, that is, land) to subjection, shall many nations and mighty kings." Such substantially is the version of Venema and of Blayney, and also of Piscator and Junius. — Ed

yoke from their neck, would not this have been to fight against God? We now, then, perceive that the Prophet spoke thus indiscriminately of all nations, that he might sharply rebuke the Jews; and he showed that their ferocity would be inexcusable were they not willingly to humble themselves.

By mentioning twice, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, he seems to imply something important; for they might have objected and said, ``What have we to do with a king so distant? and by what right does he now invade our countries? why is he not content with his own burdens? why does he not abide in his own city and in his own land?'' And the name of Babylon was at the same time hateful, for they had carried on war with many nations, and reduced the Assyrians under their yoke, who were neighbors to the Jews, and the Assyrians were also in a manner connected with them; and their name was no doubt abhorred by the Jews, on account of the wars perpetually carried on by them. Hence God meets here these objections, and shows that however odious Babylon might be to the Jews, and that however remote Nebuchadnezzar might be from Judea, yet his yoke was to be borne, as it had been so appointed by God. This seems to me to be the reason why Jeremiah repeated the words, Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon

There is also a denunciation of punishment, that God would visit with pestilence, famine, and the sword We know that these words are commonly mentioned in Scripture, when it is God's purpose to set forth the signs of his wrath. He has indeed various and innumerable ways by which he chastises us; but these are his most remarkable and most known scourges, the pestilence, the sword, and the famine. He then says, that he would visit the nations who would not obey King Nebuchadnezzar with these three scourges; and at the same time he shews what the end would be, until I slay, or consume them by his hand He not only threatens them with pestilence, famine, and the sword, but he also shows that the end would be such, that the nations who might at first obstinately resist, would yet be constrained to undertake the yoke, and to acknowledge Nebuchadnezzar as their king and master. This is the reason why he says, by his hand

Death might have seemed lighter, if only they could have escaped the tyranny of Nebuchadnezzar; but since both would happen to them, even to be consumed by famine, the sword, and the pestilence, and yet not to be able to escape bondage, it was a miserable prospect indeed. We now then perceive why God speaks of the hand of the King Nebuchadnezzar; it was, that the Jews might know that they could effect nothing by seeking means to escape, for they would at length, willing or unwilling, be brought under the hand and under the yoke of this king.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we cease not in various ways to arm thine hand against us, we may, being at least touched by thy holy admonitions, humble ourselves under thy mighty hand, and thus anticipate thy judgment, so that thou mayest meet us as a merciful and gracious God, and not only remit to us the punishments which we have deserved, but also shew and perpetuate to us thy paternal favor, until, having been led by thine hand, we shall come unto that celestial kingdom which thou hast prepared for us, and which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine

only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fourth

Jeremiah 27:9

9. Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon:

9. Et vos ne audiatis prophetas vestros, et divinos vestros, et somniatores vestros, et augures vestros, et incantatores vestros, qui dicunt vobis (loquuntur vobiscum dicendo; est quidem idem verbum, sed repetitio esset nimis dura,) Non servietis (vel, ne serviatis) regi Babylonis (est verbum futuri temporis, sed quidam accipiunt in modo hortandi, ut satis tritum est in lingua Hebraica.)

As Jeremiah had declared to the king, as well as to the citizens, that they could not escape the punishment that was at hand, he now shakes off from them that vain confidence, which was as an obstacle in the way, so that they were not touched by threatenings, nor received wholesome warnings. For the false prophets deceived them by their flatteries, and promised that all things would happen prosperously to them. As then the Prophet saw that the ears both of the king and of the people were closed against him, so that he could do little or nothing by exhorting and threatening them, he added what he deemed necessary, even that all the things which the false prophets vainly said were altogether fallacious.

He therefore said, Hear ye not your prophets and your diviners; for {קסם}, kosam, is to divine; then he adds, your dreamers; in the fourth place, your augurs; in the fifth place, your sorcerers, or charmers. Some indeed regard {עננים}, onnim, as observers of time, for {עונה}, oune, is a stated time, hence they who imagine that a thing is to be done on this or that day, and promise a happy issue, were called, as they think, {עננים} onnim, because they superstitiously observed hours and periods of time. But as {ענן}, onen, means a cloud, they may also be called {ענגים}, onnim, who divined by the stars, and hence took counsel as to what was to be done. [184]

But let us now inquire, whether Jeremiah speaks of such dreamers, and others as were among the Jews, or whether he includes also such as were found among the neighboring nations. It seems probable to me, that what he says ought to be confined to the Jews; for I take the word ye, as emphatical, Hear ye not, etc. There follows afterwards an explanation, According to these words have I spoken to the king; and then he adds, that he spoke to the priests and to the people. Hence then we conclude, that the whole of this part was probably addressed to the Jews alone. Divinations,

auguries, and incantations, were indeed prohibited in the Law; but we well know

[184] The five names here mentioned are thus explained by Venema, — 1. Prophets — who claimed divine inspiration; 2. Diviners — who prognosticated by means of lots and arrows; 3. Dreamers — who pretended that they had divine dreams; 4. Astrologers — who foretold events by the clouds and stars: 5. Sorcerers — who pretended to have familiar converse with some spirit. Parkhurst considers the second, diviners, as a general term, meaning those who divined either by dreams or stars, or familiar spirits; and he renders the fourth word cloudmongers, though he considers that they prognosticated by the stars, as well as by meteors, thunder, lightning, and probably by the flight of birds; but he regards the last word as meaning those who pretended to discover hidden and future things by magical means. How completely heathenized were the Jews become! they believed all these Pagan delusions rather than the infallible oracles of God! and yet these were things expressly forbidden in their law. — Ed.

how often the Jews gave up themselves to these tricks of the devil, the Law of God being wholly despised by them. It is then no wonder if at this time there were among them magicians, as well as augurs and diviners, notwithstanding the manifest prohibition of the Law. We may, however, so understand these words, as that the Prophet compared these false prophets to diviners, as well as to augurs and sorcerers. He sets, in the first place, the prophets, but in mentioning them, he seems to mark them with disgrace, because they had departed from their own office, and had assumed another character, for they deceived the people, as augurs, diviners, and magicians were wont to deceive the nations.

It is indeed certain, as I have before reminded you, that the Prophet spoke, not for the sake of other nations, but that the Jews might be rendered inexcusable, or, if there was any hope of repentance, that they might be reminded not to proceed in their usual course. We hence see the meaning of the words, and at the same time perceive the design of the Prophet, or rather of the Holy Spirit, who spoke by his mouth.

I said at first that the Prophet met an objection, which might have lessened or taken away the authority of his doctrine; for it was not a small trial, that the prophets denied that any evil was at hand. For the prophetic name was ever held in great repute and respect among the Jews. But we see also at this day, and experience sufficiently teaches us, that men are more ready to receive error and vanity, than to receive the word of God; and so it was then, and the Jews imagined that they honored God, because they regarded his Prophets. But when any one faithfully performed the prophetic office, he was often despised. The Jews therefore were taken up only with a mere name, and thought that they did all that was required by saying that they attended to the prophets, while at the same time they boldly despised the true servants of God. It is so at this day; while the name of the Catholic Church is boasted of under the Papacy, it seems that a regard is had for God; but when the word of God is brought forward, when what has been spoken by apostles and prophets is adduced, it is regarded almost as nothing. We hence see that the Papists separate God as it were from himself, as the Jews formerly did.

And hence also we see how necessary it was for Jeremiah to remove such a stumblingblock; for the Jews might have pertinaciously insisted on this objection, --- ``Thou alone threatenest us with exile; but we have many who glory in being prophets, and who promise safety to us: wouldest thou have us to believe thee alone rather than these who are many?'' Thus the Prophet, being alone, had to contend with the false prophets, who were many. And we have now a similar contest with the Papists; for they boast, of their number; and then they object, that nothing would be certain, if it was allowed to every one to appeal to the word of God. They hence conclude that we ought simply to believe the Church, and to receive whatever is brought under the pretense of being Scripture. But Jeremiah had confidence in his own vocation, and had really proved his divine mission, and also that he proclaimed the messages which he had received from the mouth of God. As then he had given certain proofs of his vocation, he had a right to oppose all those false prophets, and not only to disregard their lies, but also in a manner to tread them under his feet, as

he seems to have done, Hear ye not, he says, your prophets

He concedes to them an honorable name, but improperly. It is therefore a catachristic way of speaking, when he names them prophets; but he leaves them their title, as it was not necessary to contend about words. Yet he shews at the same time that they were wholly unworthy of being heard. Hence no authority was left them, though a mere empty name was conceded to them. It is the same at this day, when we call those priests, bishops, and presbyters, who cover themselves with these masks, and yet shew that there is in them nothing episcopal, nothing ecclesiastical, and, in short, nothing that belongs to the doctrine of Christ, or to any lawful order.

He afterwards adds, Who say to yote, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon We have said that the last clause is rendered by some as an exhortation, Serve ye not the king of Babylon, as though the false prophets stimulated the Jews to shake off the yoke.: But the proper meaning of the verb may be still retained, Ye shall not serve; for we know that the false prophets, when they came forth, pretended to be God's ambassadors, sent to promise tranquillity, peace, and prosperity to the Jews. Thus they reigned to do, when yet God, as it has been stated, and as we shall again see presently, had testified that there was no other remedy for the people but by submitting to the king of Babylon. It follows ---

Jeremiah 27:10

10. For they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish.

10. Quia mendacium ipsi prophetant vobis, ut procul abducant vos e terra vestra, et ejiciam vos, et pereatis.

This verse also confirms what I have said, --- that this discourse was designed for the Jews, and that it was peculiarly for them; for what is said here could not be applied to heathen nations. What then had been lately said of augurs, magicians, and diviners, ought no doubt to be understood of those impostors who, under the name of prophets, deceived that miserable people.

He says that they prophesied falsehood Many, no doubt, adduced, for the purpose of opposing him, their own evasions: ``Art thou alone to be believed? dost thou alone tell the truth? how dost thou prove that what thou teachest is an oracle from heaven, and that these deceive us?'' For so do the ungodly usually clamor, as we see to be the case at this day with the Papists, who cover themselves with a pretense of this kind: for whatever abomination there may be, they cover it over by means of this sophistry alone --- that the Scripture is obscure, and that controversy is uncertain, and that therefore nothing is to be believed but what the Church has decreed: so with them the definition of men, as they say, is the only rule of faith; and hence, also, the whole authority of Scripture is by them trodden under foot, as though God had in vain spoken by his own prophets and apostles. There is no doubt but the doctrine of Jeremiah was opposed by such clamors: he however persevered in the course of his office, and boldly condemned the prophets, that they only deceived the Jews by their lies.

He adds, that they may remove you far from your land I have said that this cannot be applied to other nations: but God gave a hope of mercy to his people, provided

they willingly obeyed the king of Babylon. It was not indeed a full pardon; yet it was owing to his kindness that God did not treat the Jews with strict justice, but chastised them with gentleness and paternal moderation: for it was an endurable punishment, to remain in their own country and to pay tribute to the king of Babylon. God then would have mitigated the punishment of the people, if only they had willingly undertaken the yoke., This is what Jeremiah now says: ``The false prophets seek only this, to drive you far from your country; for they would have you to think that you shall be free from all punishment: but God is prepared to deal gently with you; though he will not wholly pass by your vices, yet your chastisement will be one easily borne, for ye shall remain in your own country. But if ye will believe these impostors, they will lead you away into distant exile; for God says, I will cast you away, and ye shall perish.'' [185]

If it be objected again that the Jews could not form a certain opinion, whether Jeremiah was to be believed rather than the others who were many, the answer is at hand: they were themselves conscious of being wicked, and there was no need of long debates to ascertain what was true; for every one found God's judgment to be against himself, as they had departed from the pure worship of God, and had polluted themselves with many ungodly superstitions, and a license in all kinds of sins had also prevailed among them: they had been warned, not once, nor for one day, but by many prophets, and also continually and for a long time. As then they had thus provoked God's vengeance by their obstinate wickedness, how could they be in doubt respecting Jeremiah, whether he had, as from the mouth of God, and as a celestial herald declared to them what they deserved? And surely whenever men pretend that they have fallen through error or ignorance, they can always be deprived of this evasion; for their own conscience convicts them, and is sufficient to condemn them.

God adds, that the Jews would perish, except they anticipated extreme judgment, that is, except they submitted to paternal chastisement. This passage deserves to be specially noticed, as we shall presently see again; for we are here taught that whenever God shews some signs of displeasure, there is nothing better for us than to prepare ourselves for patience; for we shall thus ever give place and a free passage to his mercy: but by pertinacity we gain nothing, and do nothing but kindle his wrath more and more. This then is what Jeremiah means when he declares, that they who submitted not to the king of Babylon would perish. It follows ---

Jeremiah 27:11

11. But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the LORD; and they shall till it, and dwell therein.

11. Gens autem quae adduxerit cervicem suam sub jugum regis Babyonis, et

[185] This is more suitable than our version: the verse may be rendered thus, — 10. For falsely do they prophesy to you, so as to remove you away far from your own land; for I will drive you away and ye shall perish, (that is, from the land.) The word {{שקר may often be rendered adverbially. That {ו} may sometimes be rendered for, is evident: he threatens expulsion and ruin in case they listened to false prophesying; then, in the next verse, he promises continuance in the land to the obedient, ``But the nation that brings its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serves him, I will make that to settle on its land, saith Jehovah, that it may cultivate it and abide in it.'' --- Ed

servierit ei, relinquam eam in terra sua, dicit Jehova, et colet eam et habitabit in ea.

He seems indeed to speak here indiscriminately of all nations; but the admonition belongs to the Jews alone, as we have said, and as it appears from the context. He seems however to mention the nations, that he might more sharply touch the Jews, as though he had said, ``Though God's promises are not to be extended to heathen nations, yet God will spare the Tyrians and the Moabites, if they submit quietly to the king of Babylon, and take upon them his yoke. If God will spare heathen nations, when yet he has promised them nothing, what may his chosen people expect? But if he will punish nations who err in darkness, what will become of a people who knowingly and wilfully resist God and his judgments?'' For obstinacy in the Jews was mad impiety, as though they avowedly designed to carry on war with God; for they knew that Nebuchadnezzar was the executioner of God's vengeance. When therefore they ferociously attempted to exempt themselves from his power, it was to fight with God, as though they would not submit to his scourges.

We now then perceive why Jeremiah spoke what we here read, not only of the Jews, but also generally of all nations, The nation that brings its neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serves him, I will leave it in its own land We must yet bear in mind what I have before said, that the Jews were the people especially regarded. If, then, they had given place to God's kindness, he would have graciously spared them, and they would have perpetually enjoyed their own inheritance; but it was their obstinacy that drove them far into exile. And hence he adds, I will leave it in its land; and it shall cultivate it and dwell in it

There is a striking allusion in the word {עבד}, obed, for it means to serve, and also to cultivate; but there is to be understood a contrast between cultivating the land and that subjection, to which he exhorted the Jews, as though he had said, --- ``Serve the king of Babylon, that the land may serve you; it will be the reward of your obedience, if you will submit yourselves to the power of the king of Babylon, that the land will submit, to you, and you will compel it to serve you, so that it will bring forth food for you.'' We hence see that God promised that the land would serve the people, if they refused not to serve the king of Babylon.

And hence also we may gather useful instruction, --- that all the elements would be serviceable to us, were we willingly to obey God, but that on the contrary, the heaven, and the earth, and all the elements will be opposed to us, if we pertinaciously resist God. But Jeremiah speaks here more expressly of the submission which men render to God, when they calmly receive his correction, and acknowledge, while he inflicts punishment, that they justly deserve it, and do not refuse to be chastised by his hand. When, therefore, men thus submit to God's judgment, they obtain his favor, so that the earth, and heaven, and all the elements will serve them. But the more perversely men exalt themselves and raise their horns against God, the more bondage shall they feel; for their own chains bind them stronger than anything else, when they thus struggle with God and do not humble themselves under his mighty hand. The same thing the Prophet still more clearly confirms when he says, ---

Jeremiah 27:12

12. I spake also to Zedekiah king of Judah according to all these words, saying,

Bring your necks under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him and his people, and live.

12. Ad Zedekiam ergo regem Jehudah loquutus sum secundum conctos sermones istos, dicendo, Adducite colla vestra ad jugum regis Babylonis et servite ei et populo ejus, et vivetis.

This verse proves with sufficient clearness that what we have hitherto explained was spoken especially to the chosen people; for Jeremiah tells us here, that he spoke to the King Zedekiah, and in the sixteenth verse he adds that he spoke to the priests and to the people. He was not then sent as a teacher to the Moabites, the Tyrians, and other foreign nations; but God had prescribed to him his limits, within which he was to keep. He therefore says, that he spoke to the king

We hence learn what he had before said, that he was set over kingdoms and nations; for the doctrine taught by the prophets is higher than all earthly elevations. Jeremiah was, indeed, one of the people, and did not exempt himself from the authority of the king, nor did he pretend that he was released from the laws, because he possessed that high dignity by which he was superior to kings, as the Papal clergy do, who vauntingly boast of their immunity, which is nothing else but a license to live in wickedness. The Prophet then kept himself in his own rank like others; and yet when he had to exercise his spiritual jurisdiction in God's name, he spared not the king nor his counsellors; for he knew that his doctrine was above all kings; the prophetic office, then, is eminent above all the elevations of kings.

And skilfully no less than wisely did the Prophet exercise his office by first assailing the king, as he had been sent to him. At the same time he addressed him in the plural number, Bring ye your neck, he says; and he did so, because the greater part of the people depended on the will of their king. Then he adds, Serve ye his people It was, indeed, a thing very unpleasant to be heard, when the Prophet commanded the Jews to submit, not only to the king of Babylon, but also to all his subjects; it was an indignity that must have greatly exasperated them. But he added this designedly, because he saw that he had to do with men refractory and untamable. As, then, they were not pliant, he dealt the more sharply with them, as though he wished to break down their foolish pride. It was not therefore a superfluous expression, when he bade the Jews to obey all the Chaldeans; for they had been so blinded by perverse haughtiness, that for a long time they had resisted God and his prophets, and continued untamable.

There is afterwards added a promise, and ye shall live, [186] which confirms the truth to which I have referred, --- that it is the best remedy for alleviating evils, to acknowledge that we are justly smitten, and to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God; for thus it happens, that evils are turned into medicines, and thus become salutary to us. Whatever punishment is inflicted on us for our sins, as it is a sign of God's wrath, so in a manner it places death before our eyes. Punishment, then, in itself can do nothing but fill us with dread, nay, overwhelm us with despair; and I speak of punishment even the slightest; for we suffer nothing which does not

[186] This is an imperative in Hebrew, and live, but in all the early versions it is in the future tense, as rendered here by Calvin. The meaning is the same. — Ed.

remind us of our sin and guilt, as though God summoned us to his tribunal. How dreadful surely it must be to sustain this, and to fall into the hands of the living God? Hence, when God touches us as it were with his little finger, we cannot but fall down through fear. But this comfort is given to us, that punishment, though in itself grievous and as it were fatal, becomes profitable to us, when we allow God to be our judge, and are prepared to endure whatever seems good to him.

This is what the Prophet means, when he promises that the Jews would live, if they submitted to the king of Babylon; not that they could merit life by their obedience; but the only way by which we can obtain God's favor and be reconciled to him, is willingly to condemn ourselves; for we anticipate extreme judgment, as Paul says, when we condemn ourselves; and then we shall not be condemned by God. (1 Corinthians 11:31.) For how is it, that God is so angry with the wicked, except that they wish to be forgiven while in their sins? But this is to pull him down from his throne, for he is not the judge of the world, if the ungodly escape unpunished and laugh at all his threatenings. So also on the other hand, when in true humility we suffer ourselves to be chastised by God, he becomes immediately reconciled to us. This, then, is the life mentioned here. [187] It follows, ---

Jeremiah 27:13

13. Why will ye die, thou and thy people, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, as the LORD hath spoken against the nation that will not serve the king of Babylon?

13. Quare peribitis tu et ppopulus tuus gladio, fame et peste, quemadmodum loquutus est Jehjova super gentem quae non servierit regi Babylonis?

Here is a threatening added; for all means were used not only to invite the Jews, but also to stimulate them to repent. The Prophet offered them pardon, if they quietly submitted to be chastised by God. It was to be their life, he said, when the Lord punished them according to his will. As they could not be sufficiently moved by this kindness, he now adds, ``See ye to it, for except ye receive the life offered to you, you must inevitably perish. Therefore thou, Zedekiah, wilt precipitate thyself with all thy people into eternal destruction, if ye continue to be perverse and obstinate against God.''

We hence see that nothing was left undone by the Prophet to bend the Jews to obedience and to lead them to repentance. By speaking of the sword, famine, and pestilence, he intimates that there would be no end, until they were consumed by God's vengeance, except they suffered themselves, as we have said, to be thus chastised by his paternal kindness, for this would be salutary to them.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we cease not often and continually to provoke thy wrath against us, we may of our own accord anticipate thy judgment, and not harden ourselves in our sins, having been especially warned by thy word, but in due time repent, and so submit ourselves to thee, that whatever thou mayest appoint for us, we may not doubt but thou wilt be propitious to us; and while fleeing to thy mercy,

[187] No doubt we may extend this promise to spiritual life, but here it means living in the land of Canaan, as opposed to the perdition or expatriation in Jeremiah 27:10. — Ed

may we not refuse the punishment thou deemest expedient to bring us to the right way, until having at length put off all our corruptions, we shall enjoy that eternal inheritance, which is laid up for us in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifth

We said yesterday, that as the Prophet saw that there was great insensibility in the Jews, so that they disregarded all God's promises, he added terror to the hope of mercy. Hence he said, ``Ye shall perish, thou and thy people.'' He was, no doubt, constrained by necessity to speak in this severe way; for the kind exhortation which he had used availed nothing; and yet God shewed at the same time by his threatening how much he loved the people; for he had a sympathy for them, and as it is said elsewhere, he willed not the death of the sinner, but sought to induce those who were not wholly irreclaimable to repent that they might live. The same thing we now from these words of the Prophet; for God assumes the character of a man ready to give help, and sympathizes with the miseries of a people whom he saw rushing headlong into destruction. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 27:14

14. Therefore hearken not unto the words of the prophets that speak unto you, saying, Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon: for they prophesy a lie unto you.

14. Et ne audiatis verba prophetarum, qui dicunt vobis (qui loquutur vobiscum, dicendo,) Non servietis regi Babylonis; quia mendacium ipsi prophetant vobis.

He repeats the same words which we have met with before; there is therefore no need of dwelling long on them here. Yet the repetition was not superfluous; for he had a hard contest with the false prophets, who had attained great authority. As Jeremiah alone made an onset on the whole multitude, the greater part of them might have objected and said, that in matters of such perplexity there was nothing certain or clear. As therefore it was not easy to convince the Jews who were disposed to believe the false prophets, it was necessary to say the same thing often, as we shall also see hereafter. He adds, ---

Jeremiah 27:15

15. For I have not sent them, saith the LORD, yet they prophesy a lie in my name; that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, ye, and the prophets that prophesy unto you.

15. Quia non misi eos, dicit Jehova, et ipsi prophetant in nomine meo ad mendacium (id est, fallacium) ut vos ejiciam, et pereatis vos et prophetae, qui prophetant vobis.

He confirms what he had said, that they had not been sent by God. The object is to shew the Jews, that they were not to receive thoughtlessly everything presented to them under God's name, but that they were to exercise discrimination and judgment. This is a passage worthy of special notice, for the devil has ever falsely assumed God's name; and for all the errors and delusions which have ever prevailed in the world, he has not obtained credit otherwise than by this false pretense. And at this day we see that many are wilfully blind, because they think they are excused before God if they can pretend ignorance, and they say that they are not wickedly credulous,

but they dare not make curious inquiries. As then there are many who wilfully put on nooses and also wish to be deceived, we ought to notice what the Prophet says here, that we ought to distinguish the true from false prophets; for what purpose? even that we may receive them only, and depend on their words who have been sent by the Lord.

It may be here asked, how comes this difference? It was formerly necessary for prophets to be raised in a special manner, for it was a special gift to predict future and hidden events, hence the prophetic was not an ordinary office like the sacerdotal. That promise indeed ever continued in force,

``A prophet will I raise to thee from the midst of thy brethren.'' (Deuteronomy 18:18.)

But though this was a perpetual favor conferred by God on the Israelites, yet the prophets were ever called in a special manner; no one was to take this office except endued with an extraordinary gift. Though Jeremiah was a priest, yet he was not on that account a prophet; but God, as we have seen, made him a prophet. But with regard to us, the matter is different, for God does not at this day predict hidden events; but he would have us to be satisfied with his Gospel, for in it is made known to us the perfection of wisdom. As then we live in ``the fullness of time,'' God does not reveal prophecies so as to point out this or that thing to us in particular. We may now obtain certainty as to the truth, if we form our judgment according to the Law, and the Prophets, and the Gospel. There is indeed need of the spirit of discernment; but we shall never go astray, if we depend on the mouth of God, and follow the example of the Bereans, of whom Luke speaks in the Acts, who says, that they carefully read the Scriptures, and searched whether things were as they were taught by Paul. (Acts 17:11.) No wrong was done to Paul, when the disciples, in order to confirm their faith, inquired whether his preaching was agreeable to the Law and to the Prophets. So also now, all doctrines ought to be examined by us; and if we follow this rule, we shall never go astray.

As to the ancient people, they could not, as it was said yesterday, be deceived, for the prophets were only interpreters of the Law. With regard to future things, this or that was never predicted by the prophets, unless connected with doctrine, which was as it were the seasoning, and gave a relish to the prophecies; for when they promised what was cheering, it was founded on the eternal covenant of God; and when they threatened the people, they pointed out their sins, so that it was necessary for God to execute his vengeance when their wickedness was incurable. Ever to be borne in mind then is that which is said in Deuteronomy, that God tried his people whenever he gave loose reins to false prophets, (Deuteronomy 13:3,) for every one who sincerely and undissemblingly loves him shall be guided by his Spirit. This then is the sure trial which God makes as to his faithful people, according to what Paul also says, who refers to this testimony of Moses, that heresies arise in order that they who are the faithful and sincere servants of God, might thereby shew what they really are, (1 Corinthians 11:19;) for they do not fluctuate at every wind of doctrine, but remain firm and constant in the pure obedience of faith. Rightly then does Jeremiah say, that they who gave hope of impunity to the people, had not been

sent by the Lord; for every one had his own conscience as his judge.

He adds, They prophesy falsely in my name We see how sedulously and prudently we ought to take heed lest the devil should fascinate us by his charms, especially when the name of God is pretended. It is then not enough for us to hear, ``Thus has God spoken,'' unless we are fully persuaded that those who use such a preface have been called by him, and that they also afford a sure evidence of their call, so that we may be certain that they are as it were the instruments of the Spirit. Ungodly men will find here an occasion for clamoring, because God does in a manner make a mock of the anxiety of men, for he might send angels from heaven, he might himself speak; but when he employs men, and permits false prophets to boast of this word and of that, while they wholly dissemble, he seems in this way as though he designedly bewildered miserable men. But there is nothing better for us than to acknowledge that our obedience is tried by God, when he addresses us by men; for we know that nothing is more contrary to faith than pride, as also humility is the true principle of faith and the real entrance into God's kingdom. This then is the reason why God makes use of men.

In the meantime, when impostors creep in and boast that they are true legitimate prophets, it is indeed a grievous trial, and much to be feared; yet. God, as I have said, will ever relieve us, provided we trust not to our own judgment, and assume not to ourselves more than what is just and right, but look to him as the judge, and submit ourselves to his word; and further, if we suffer ourselves to be ruled by his Spirit, he will ever give us wisdom, which will enable us to distinguish between true and false prophets. However this may be, we clearly see that it is no new thing for Satan's ministers to prophesy in God's name, that is, falsely to assume his name, when in reality and truth they are vain pretenders.

He afterwards adds, that I might drive you out, and that ye might perish, as well as they. Here Jeremiah reminded them, that the prophets who promised impunity could not at length escape, but that they would have to suffer punishment not only for their presumption, but also for those sins by which they, together with the whole people, had already provoked the wrath of God; for their crime was twofold: despising God, they had promised all liberty to indulge in sin; and they had also dared to come forth and to pretend God's name, though they had not been called, nor did they bring, as we have said, any message from God. But the Prophet again repeated, that such prophets were instigated by the devil's artifice, in order to aggravate God's judgment; for the people, inebriated with joy, added sins to sins, as security is wont to lead men to all kinds of wickedness. There is therefore nothing more ruinous than for false teachers to flatter sinners, and so to cajole and wheedle them as to make them to think that they have nothing to do with God; for the devil rules then indeed, when men's consciences are thus asleep in a deadly lethargy. He afterwards adds, ---

Jeremiah 27:16

16. Also I spake to the priests, and to all this people, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Hearken not to the words of your prophets that prophesy unto you, saying, Behold, the vessels of the LORD'S house shall now shortly be brought again from Babylon:

for they prophesy a lie unto you.

16. Et ad sacerdotes et ad populum hunc loquutus sum, dicendo, Sic dicit Jehova, Ne audiatis sermones prophetarum vestrorum, qui prophetant vobis, dicendo, Ecce vasa domus Jehovae reducentur e Babylone nunc cito; mendacium ipsi prophetant vobis.

Jeremiah, as we have seen, did not deal privately with the king alone, for he did not separate him from the people; but as he had directed his words chiefly to him, he therefore expresses now what might have seemed obscure, that though he had begun with the king, he yet included all the Jews. It was indeed necessary to begin with the king, for we know that earthly kings think much of their own dignity, and that the whole people are dependent on their will. Hence Hosea condemned them, because they rendered a too willing obedience to royal edicts, and worshipped God according to what it pleased the king and his counsellors to dictate. (Hosea 5:11: Micah 6:16.) As then the royal name served to dazzle the eyes of the simple, Jeremiah was bidden to address first the king himself; but he now shews that the priests and the people were included.

It was indeed like something monstrous, that the priests, whom God had designed to be the interpreters of his Law, should have become so stupid as thoughtlessly to receive, together with the common people, what they had heard from the false prophets. This surely was by no means compatible with that high encomium by which they are honored by Malachi, that the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and that from him the Law is to be sought, because he is the messenger of the God of hosts. (Malachi 2:7.) As then they were the guardians of the Law and of knowledge, as they were messengers from God himself to the people, how was it that their stupidity was so monstrous, that they did not distinguish between truth and falsehood, but were led astray, together with the most ignorant, by what the false prophets delivered!

This ought to be carefully noticed, that we may not at this day be too much disturbed, when we see the pastoral office assumed by ignorant asses, and that those who are called, and wish to be thought ministers, are so inexperienced in Scripture that they are deficient as to the first elements of religion. And we see the very thing happening at this day especially under the Papacy, as existed among the ancient people; for the Papal bishops are for the most part extremely stupid and presumptuous. There are to be found many husbandmen and artisans, who know nothing of learning, but have only heard what is obscure and indistinct, and yet they can speak better on the general principles of faith than these haughty prelates in all their splendor. How is this? even because the just reward for their sloth is rendered to them. They are verily ignorant of what should qualify them to be bishops, and yet they glory in the name! Yea, though they do not think that Episcopacy consists in anything but in revenues, and also in vain symbols, such as to be mitred, to wear an episcopal ring, and to exhibit other like trumperies, they yet suppose themselves to be a sort of half-gods. Hence it is, that God exposes them to the utmost reproach. The same was the case with the priests under the Law, as Jeremiah now shews; for they were not ashamed of their ignorance, but encouraged the people to believe the false prophets; so at this day do the bishops; they scud forth their monks and

such like brawlers, who run here and there to deceive the ignorant people, and they secure a hearing to them. And what is the burden of their message? to bid men to attend to the holy Catholic Church; and what is the Catholic Church? The Synod which the Pope assembles, where the mitred bishops sit; for what purpose? That they may know what pleases these brawlers, to whom is committed the office of disputing. We hence see that all things under the Papacy are at this day in great disorder; and yet this horrible disorder differs nothing from that of old. And it is, as I have said, what ought to be particularly noticed, that our faith may not fail, when we see all things in a confusion and hardly any order remaining.

Now also is added a clearer explanation, --- that the Jews were warned, lest they should receive the false prophecy respecting the restoration of the vessels of the Temple; for in order to render the people secure as to the future, the false prophets boasted in this manner, ``The splendor of the Temple shall shortly be restored; for the vessels, which Nebuchadnezzar has taken away, shall return together with the captives, and everything decayed shall be repaired.'' But Jeremiah said, that what they promised was false; ``Believe them not,'' he says, ``when they say to you, Behold, the vessels of Jehovah's house shall be brought back, (or restored, that is, shall return hither;) for the king of Babylon shall either be constrained to restore what he has taken away, or he will of his own accord restore it.'' And they also added, Now soon, in order that the shortness of time might be all additional chain to captivate the minds of the people; for had a long time been mentioned, the prophecy would have been less plausible and by no means acceptable to them; but they said, ``Almost within a day the vessels of the Temple shall be brought back here.'' And Jeremiah also, as we have already seen, and shall presently see again, did not deprive the people of every hope, but had assigned seventy years for their exile. Now these prophets, in order to dissipate this fear, said, --- ``Shortly shall the vessels be restored;'' but he declared that they prophesied falsely to them. It follows ---

Jeremiah 27:17

17. Hearken not unto them; serve the king of Babylon, and live: wherefore should this city be laid waste?

17. Ne audiatis ipsos, servite regi Babylonis, et vivetis: ut quid erit urbs haec desolatio (hoc est, in vastitatem?)

It is not to be wondered at that Jeremiah said the same things so often, for, as we have seen, he had to contend with false prophets. When any one speaks, and there be no dispute and no adversary opposing him, he may calmly deal with the teachable and confine himself to a few words; but when contention arises, and opponents appear, who may seek to subvert what we say, then we must exercise more care, for they who are thus driven different ways, will not be satisfied with a few words. As, then, Jeremiah saw that the people were fluctuating, he found it necessary, in order to confirm them, to use many words; not that prolixity is in itself sufficient to produce conviction; yet there is no doubt but that Jeremiah spoke efficiently so as to influence at least some portion of the people. Besides, it was necessary to dwell more expressly on a subject not very plausible; the false prophets were heard with favor, and the greater part greedily devoured what was set forth by them; for the

hope of impunity is always pleasing and sought after by the world.

But what did Jeremiah say? Serve ye the king of Babylon; that is, ``No better condition awaits you than to pay tribute to the king of Babylon; be subject to his authority, and patiently endure whatever he may prescribe to you.'' This was indeed a very hard speech; for subjection was not unaccompanied with reproach; besides, he bade them to surrender themselves to a most cruel enemy, as though they were to expose their life to him; and lastly, they were to risk the danger of being spoiled of all that they had. What Jeremiah taught then was very much disliked, as he thus exhorted the people to endure all things. This was, then, the reason why he had not declared in a few and plain words what God had committed to him; it was difficult to persuade the people to undergo the yoke of the king of Babylon, and to submit to his tyranny.

We hence see that there were two very just reasons why the Prophet insisted so much on this one subject, and confirmed what he might have briefly said without any prolixity; Hearken, ye to them, he says; serve ye the king of Babylon and ye shall live [188] We must again bear in mind what we said yesterday, that patiently to humble ourselves under God's mighty hand is the best remedy for mitigating punishment, and that in this way punishment is turned into medicine; so on the other hand, when we are like refractory and ferocious horses, whatever punishment God inflicts on us, is only a prelude to endless destruction. Let us then lay hold on this truth and constantly meditate on it, --- that our punishment becomes vivifying to us, when we acknowledge God to be a righteous judge and suffer ourselves to be corrected by him. But I refer only briefly to this subject now, for I spoke of it more at large yesterday.

He adds, Why should this city be a desolation? He set before them the city in which God's sanctuary was, and by the sight of it he tried to turn them to repentance; for it was extremely base to harden themselves against the warnings of the prophets, so as to cause the Temple of God to be demolished, and also the holy city to be reduced to a waste, in which God designed to have his dwelling, as he had said,

``This is my rest for ever.'' (Psalm 132:14)

In short, he declared to the Jews that a most awful condemnation awaited them, if they suffered the city to perish through their own fault, and that they would be the authors of their own ruin, if they undertook not the yoke of the king of Babylon. It follows ---

Jeremiah 27:18

18. But if they be prophets, and if the word of the LORD be with them, let them now make intercession to the LORD of hosts, that the vessels which are left in the house of the LORD, and in the house of the king of Judah, and at Jerusalem, go not to Babylon.

18. Qued si Prophetae sunt, et si est sermo Jehovae cum ipsis (id est, apud ipsos,) intercedant ipsi apud Jehovam exercituum, ne veniant vasa, quae supersunt in Temple Jehovae, et in dome regis Jehudah et Jerosolymae Babylonem.

[188] As in Jeremiah 27:12, so here the verb is in the imperative mood, but in all the early versions as rendered here. — Ed.

Here the Prophet laughs to scorn the foolish confidence with which the false prophets were swollen, when they promised all happiness in time to come. He hence says, that they were not to be believed as to the prosperity of which they prophesied, but that on the contrary they ought to have dreaded a most grievous punishment.

He then says, If they are prophets, let them intercede with Jehovah, that what still remains may not be taken away from Jerusalem. They promised the return of the vessels, which had been already carried away to Babylon; and yet what still remained in the Temple and in the palace of the king and in the whole city, was to be removed to Babylon. We now perceive the Prophet's design; he compares the future with the past, and shews that these impostors foolishly promised some better state of things, even when God's heavy judgment was impending over them; for the city and the Temple were doomed to entire ruin. The verb {פגע}, pego, means to meet, to go to meet, and is taken metaphorically in the sense of interceding; for he who meets one as an intercessor, in a manner restrains the opponent; and the Scripture uses this word, when it speaks of the saints as supplicating God; the proper word is interceding. [189]

From this passage we learn that these two things are united --- teaching and praying. Then God would have him whom he has set a teacher in his Church, to be assiduous in prayer. And so the Apostles said, when they spoke of appointing deacons, that they could not attend to tables; for they said that they were sufficiently engaged in teaching, and they mentioned also prayers. (Acts 6:2-4.) The same also we learn from this place, where Jeremiah ascribes the office of interceding to God's true and faithful servants who conscientiously discharged the office of teaching; If they be prophets, he says, let them intercede with Jehovah, that the remaining vessels be not taken away. Let us at the same time notice the definition he gives; for by this he also shews who are to be counted true prophets, even those who have the word of God, as we have found elsewhere,

``The Prophet who has a dream, and who has my true word, let him speak my word.'' (Jeremiah 23:28)

We said by these words of the Prophet it may be determined who they are who deserve to be called prophets, even those who have the word of God. Jeremiah confirms the same here when he says, If they are prophets, and if the word of Jehovah is with them These two clauses ought to be read together, for the latter is exegetic, or explanatory of the former. But I cannot now finish the whole, I must therefore defer the rest till to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we continually by our many vices draw on ourselves new punishment, we may strive to be reconciled to thee, and thus anticipate thy judgment, and so submit to thee in true humility, that we may not by struggling against thee be untamable, but confess our guilt, obtain thy favor, and find reconciliation with thee, until having at length put off all our vices, we shall come to that blessed rest, which thine only-begotten Son has procured for us by his own blood.

[189] Both the Sept. and Vulg. give the first meaning, to meet with, and not the second, to intercede with, and thus convey no sense whatever. The Syr. uses the word, pray, "let them pray the Lord," etc. See Genesis 23:8; Job 21:15. — Ed.

--- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Sixth

Jeremiah 27:19-22

19. For thus saith the LORD of hosts concerning the pillars, and concerning the sea, and concerning the bases, and concerning the residue of the vessels that remain in this city,

19. Quia sic dicit Jehova exercituum de columnis et de mari, et de basibus, et de residuo vasorum quae supersunt in urbe hac,

20. Which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took not, when he carried away captive Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem;

20. Quae non abstulit Nebuchadnezer rex Babylonia, cum adduxit captivum Jechaniam filium Jehoiakim regem Jehudah e Jerusalem, Babylonem, et omnes proceres Jehudah et Jerusalem;

21. Yea, thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning the vessels that remain in the house of the LORD, and in the house of the king of Judah and of Jerusalem;

21. Certe sic dicit Jehovah exercituum, Deus Israel, de vasis quae supersunt in domo Jehovae et in domo regis et in Jerusalem;

22. They shall be carried to Babylon, and there shall they be until the day that I visit them, saith the LORD; then will I bring them up, and restore them to this place.

22. Babylonem transferentur, et illic erunt usque ad diem quo visitabo ea (vel, cos, quod mihi magis placet,) dieit Jehova; et ascendere faciam eos et reducam cos ad locum hunc.

Jeremiah said, in the passage we considered yesterday, that it was more to be desired that God should keep what remained at Jerusalem, than that what had been taken away should be restored, for the time of punishment had not yet passed away; and thus he condemned the false teachers, because they had presumptuously and boldly promised a quick return as to the king as well as to those who had been led with him into exile, he now confirms the same thing, and says that what remained as yet at Jerusalem was already destined for their enemies the Babylonians, and would become their prey. Nebuchadnezzar had in part spared the Temple and the city; he had taken away chiefly the precious vessels, but had not entirely spoiled the Temple of its ornaments. As, then, some splendor was still to be seen there, the Jews ought to have learned that he had acted kindly towards them. He now says, that the Temple and the city would be destroyed; and this may be gathered from his words when he says, that there would be nothing remaining.

Thus saith Jehovah concerning the pillars, etc. There is no doubt but that Solomon spent much money on the pillars, as the Scripture commends the work. He adds, concerning the sea, which was a very large vessel, for from it the priests took water to wash themselves whenever they entered the Temple to perform their sacred duties. And though it was made of brass, it was yet of no small value on account of its largeness; and for this reason it was called sea. He mentions, in the third place, the

bases [190] Jerome reads, ``To the bases,'' for the preposition is {אל}, but it means often of, or concerning, as it is well known. He then declares what God had determined as to the pillars as well as the sea and the bases. There were, indeed, other vessels besides; but he specified these in order that the king, and also the people, might know that nothing would be left remaining in the Temple.

And he also adds, The residue of the vessels which remains, in this city By adding, which Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took not away, he indirectly condemned the Jews, because they did not acknowledge that the cruelty of their enemy had been moderated by divine power. For we know how cruel were Babylonians, and how insatiable was their avarice, and that nothing would have been left in the Temple had not their hands been in a manner restrained by the hidden power of God. The Jews ought to have duly considered this, and therefore the Prophet alludes to their ingratitude when he says, that Nebuchadnezzar had not taken away the vessels when yet he led captive the king and all the chief men, both of the city and the whole land. There is, indeed, to be understood here a comparison between the less and the greater, as though he had said, ``Nebuchadnezzar would not have been so gentle had not God moderated his spirit, for he spared not your king, he led into exile all your chief men; how, then, was it that he left anything to remain in your city, and that the pillars were not taken away? Did he despise them? They have been polished with exquisite skill, and the materials are very costly. Ye hence see that God gave you a proof of his mercy, for some things still remain safe in the city as well as in the Temple; yet ye disregard this so great a benefit bestowed on you by God; what, then, will at length happen to you?'' We now perceive the Prophet's design in these words when he says, that the vessels were not taken away, even when the king was taken captive, and when the chief men of the land were led into exile.

Useful instruction may also be hence gathered. Whenever God chastises us, let us ever consider that he does not proceed to extremities; for the cause of murmuring, and often of despair, is this, --- because we think that he deals with us with extreme rigor. But this happens through our sinful and perverted judgment; for God never afflicts us so severely but that some portion of kindness and of moderation ever appears; in a word, his judgments are always founded on his goodness. Were any one, therefore, rightly to call to mind how far he is from suffering extreme evils, it would conduce much to alleviate his sorrows. But when we reject every knowledge of God's goodness, and only consider his severity, we either murmur or in a manner become furious against him. But this passage teaches us, that when God leaves some residue to us, it is an evidence of his paternal favor, and that therefore something more may be hoped for, provided we from the heart repent.

The design, then, of the Prophet's warning was, that the Jews might receive this remaining favor of God, and not proceed in their obstinacy until God again stretched forth his hand to destroy them.

He repeats again the same words, Yea, thus saith Jehovah, etc.; for so ought the

[190] Or foundations, those on which the sea or pillars stood. See I Kings 7:27-37. — Ed.

particle {כי}, ki, to be rendered in this place. [191] And he emphatically expresses what was of itself sufficiently clear, that he might deeply imprint on their minds this declaration of God, and that thus some terror might penetrate into the hearts of those who were so obdurate that it was not easy to effect anything by a simple statement of the truth. Thus, then, saith Jehovah of the vessels which yet remain in the Temple of Jehovah and in, the palace of the king, They shall be carried to Babylon, and there they shall be, etc. Jeremiah intimates that the Jews had no hope, as they were perversely resisting God and refusing to be chastised by his hand. And he says, until the day in which I shall visit them, the vessels; for so the reference may suitably be made; but as it is often the case in Hebrew to put a pronoun when anything remarkable is spoken without any noun, or a subject, as they say, preceding it, I am inclined to refer it to the Jews themselves; for the restoration of the vessels depended on that of the people. He means, then, that the vessels would be held captive until God allowed a free return to the people, which happened through the edict of Cyrus, after he had obtained power in Chaldea and Assyria.

It was the same thing as though the Jews were reminded that the exile which had been predicted would be long, and that they foolishly hoped for what the false prophets had promised as to the vessels; for God had no greater care for the vessels than for his chosen people, as the vessels were acceptable to God for the people's sake. Here, then, Jeremiah confirms what he has said elsewhere, and that often, that the people would be captives until the day of visitation, that is, till the end of seventy years. When, therefore, says God, I shall visit the Jews themselves, I will then bring back also the vessels; and so it was permitted by the command of Cyrus. We now understand the simple meaning of the words. Another narrative follows, ---

[191] A clear instance of the affirmative sense of this particle, for the passage can admit of no other, though the versions, except the Syr., retain its causal sense. — Ed.

Jeremiah 28

CHAPTER 28

Jeremiah 28:1-2

1. And it came to pass the same year, in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the fourth year, and in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, which was of Gibeon, spake unto me in the house of the LORD, in the presence of the priests, and of all the people, saying,

1. Factum est anno illo, principio regni Zedechiae, regis Jehudah, anno quarto, mense quinto, loquutus ad me Chananiah, filius Assur, propheta qui erat e Guibeon (oriundus e Guibeon) in Templo Jehovae, coram oculis sacerdotum et totius populi, dicendo,

2. Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon.

2. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, confregi (aut contrivi) jugum regis Babylonis.

The Prophet relates here with what haughtiness, and even fury, the false prophet Hananiah came forward to deceive the people and to proclaim his trumperies, when yet he must have been conscious of his own wickedness. [192] It hence clearly appears how great must be the madness of those who, being blinded by God, are carried away by a satanic impulse. The circumstances of the case especially shew how great a contempt of God was manifested by this impostor; for he came into the Temple, the priests were present, the people were there, and there before his eyes he had the sanctuary and the ark of the covenant; and we know that the ark of the covenant is everywhere represented as having the presence of God; for God was by that symbol in a manner visible, when he made evident the presence of his power and favor in

[192] Was he thus conscious, or given up to believe a lie? Was he led by ambition to act a part, or a conscientious bigot under the delusive influence of the evil spirit? In either case he was the servant of Satan; and are there not many like him still in the world? — Ed

the Temple. As Hananiah then stood before God's eyes, how great must have been his stupidity to thrust himself forward and impudently to announce falsehood in the name of God himself! He had yet no doubt but that he falsely boasted that he was God's prophet.

And he used the same words as Jeremiah did, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel Surely these words ought to have been like a thunderbolt to him, laying prostrate his perverseness, even had he been harder than iron; for what does Jehovah of hosts mean? This name expresses not only the eternal existence of God, but also his power, which diffuses itself through heaven and earth. Ought not Hananiah then to have trembled when any other had alleged God's name? But now, though he derided and laughed to scorn the prophetic office as well as God's holy name, he yet hesitated not to boast that God was the author of this prophecy, which was yet nothing but an imposture. And he added, the God of Israel, so that he might be in nothing inferior to Jeremiah. This was a grievous trial, calculated not only to discourage the people, but also to break down the firmness of the holy Prophet. The people saw that God's name was become a subject of contest; there was a dreadful conflict, ``God has spoken to me;'' ``Nay, rather to me.'' Jeremiah and Hananiah were opposed, the one to the other; each of them claimed to be a Prophet. Such was the conflict; the name of God seemed to have been assumed at pleasure, and flung forth by the devil as in sport.

As to Jeremiah, his heart must have been grievously wounded, when he saw that unprincipled man boldly profaning God's name. But, as I have already said, God in the meantime supported the minds of the godly, so that they were not wholly cast down, though they must have been somewhat disturbed. For we know that God's children were not so destitute of feeling as not to be moved by such things; but yet God sustained all those who were endued with true religion. It was indeed easy for them to distinguish between Jeremiah and Hananiah; for they saw that the former announced the commands of God, while the latter sought nothing else but the favor and plaudits of men.

But with regard to Hananiah, he was to them an awful spectacle of blindness and of madness, for he dreaded not the sight of God himself, but entered the Temple and profaned it by his lies, and at the same time assumed in contempt the name of God, and boasted that he was a prophet, while he was nothing of the kind. Let us not then wonder if there be many mercenary brawlers at this day, who without shame and fear fiercely pretend God's name, and thus exult over us, as though God had given them all that they vainly prattle, while yet it may be fully proved that they proclaim nothing but falsehoods; for God has justly blinded them, as they thus profane his holy name. We shall now come to the words:

And it was in the same year, even in the fourth of Zedekiah's reign, etc. The fourth year seems to have been improperly called the beginning of his reign. We have said elsewhere, that it may have been that God had laid up this prophecy with Jeremiah, and did not design it to be immediately published. But there would be nothing strange in this, were the confirmation of his reign called its beginning. Zedekiah was made king by Nebuchadnezzar, because the people would not have

been willing to accept a foreigner. He might indeed have set one of his own governors over the whole country; and he might also have made a king of one of the chief men of the land, but he saw that anything of this kind would have been greatly disliked. He therefore deemed it enough to take away Jeconiah, and to put in his place one who had not much power nor much wealth, and who was to be his tributary, as the case was with Zedekiah. But in course of time Zedekiah increased in power, so that he was at peace in his own kingdom. We also know that he was set over neighboring countries, as Nebuchadnezzar thought it advantageous to bind him to himself by favors. This fourth year then might well be deemed the beginning of his reign, for during three years things were so disturbed, that he possessed no authority, and hardly dared to ascend the throne. This then is the most probable opinion. [193]

He says afterwards, that Hananiah spoke to him in the presence of the priests and of the whole people [194] Hananiah ought at least to have been touched and moved when he heard Jeremiah speaking, he himself had no proof of his own call; nay, he was an impostor, and he knew that he did nothing but deceive the people, and yet he audaciously persisted in his object, and, as it were, avowedly obtruded himself that he might contend with the Prophet, as though he carried on war with God. He said, Broken is the yoke of the king of Babylon, that is, the tyranny by which he has oppressed the people shall be shortly broken. But he alluded to the yoke which Jeremiah had put on, as we shall presently see. The commencement of his prophecy was, that there was no reason for the Jews to dread the present power of the king of Babylon, for God would soon overthrow him. They could not have entertained hope of restoration, or of a better condition, until that monarchy was trodden under foot; for as long as the king of Babylon bore rule, there was no hope that he would remit the tribute, and restore to the Jews the vessels of the Temple. Hananiah then began with this, that God would break the power of the king of Babylon, so that he would be constrained, willing or unwilling, to let the people free, or that the people would with impunity extricate themselves from the grasp of his power. He then adds, ---

Jeremiah 28:3

3. Within two full years will I bring again into this place the vessels of the LORD'S house, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon took away from this place, and carried

[193] Gataker mentions various attempted solutions of this difficulty, the one stated here; another, that eleven years, the extent of his reign, being divided into three parts, the three first and the beginning of the fourth might be deemed the beginning of his reign; and a third, which he prefers, that the fourth year refers not to Zedekiah, but to the Sabbatical year, it was the fourth in that cycle; and it appears that according to chronologers the destruction of Jerusalem happened on a Sabbatical year, the fourth in the eighteenth jubilee. In this case the first year of Zedekiah being the fourth after a Sabbath-year, his eleventh would correspond with the next period of their kind, allowance being made as to the commencement of the year in which he began to reign. Blayney adopts the second solution. Perhaps it would be best to take "beginning," as Scott does, as meaning the early or former part of his reign.

[194] Hananiah was, as some think, a priest, for Gibeon in the tribe of Benjamin was one of the cities allotted to the priests; he was, no doubt, by profession, a prophet, he is so called throughout by Jeremiah. There was among the Jews, from early times, an order of men called prophets; they were not all endued with the gift of prophecy, but were trained up in seminaries for the purpose, to be the interpreters of the law and teachers of the people. See 1 Samuel 19:20; 2 Kings 2:3; 6:1. Hananiah was probably a prophet of this kind, and was on this account called a prophet by Jeremiah; but he appears here in another character, as a prophet endued with the spirit of prophecy. The scribes in the New Testament seem to have been the teaching prophets of the Old.

them to Babylon:

3. Adhuc (in adhuc, ad verbum) anni duo dierum (hoc est, cum transierint anni dierum duo,) ego reducam ad locum hunc omnia vasa domus Jehovae (id est, Templi,) quae abstulit Nebuchadnezer, rex Babylonis, a loco hoc et transportavit Babylonem.

We now see that what Hananiah had in view was to promise impunity to the people, and not only this, but also to soothe them with vain confidence, as though the people would have their king soon restored, together with the spoils which the enemy had taken away. But he began by referring to the power of the king, lest that terrible sight should occupy the minds of the people so as to prevent them to receive this joyful prophecy. He then says, Further, when two years shall pass, [195] I will bring back to this place all the vessels which King Nebuchadnezzar has taken away Jeremiah had assigned to the people's exile seventy years, as it has been stated before, and as we shall hereafter often see; but here the false prophet says, that after two years the exile of the king and of the people would come to an end, and that the vessels which had been taken away would be restored; he speaks also of the king himself,

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Jeremiah 28:4

4. And I will bring again to this place Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim King of Judah, with all the captives of Judah, that went into Babylon, saith the Lord: for I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon.

4. Et Jechaniam, filium Jehoiakim, regem Jehudah, et totam captivatatem (hoc est, totam turbam captivam; est enim {גלות} nomen collectivum, ut alibi diximus, totam ergo turbam captivam) Jehudah, quae profecta est Babylonem (hoc est, qui abducti fuerunt, vel, qui profecti sunt; sed violonter tracti tamen) ego reducam ad hunt locum, dicit Jehova; quia contrivi jugurn regis Babylonis.

Hananiah promised as to the king himself, what he had just predicted respecting the vessels of the Temple and of the palace. But it may be asked, how did he dare to give hope as to the restoration of Jeconiah, since that could not have been acceptable to Zedekiah? for Jeconiah could not have again gained what he had lost without the abdication of Zechariah; but he would have never submitted willingly to lose his own dignity and to become a private man, and to allow him who had been deprived of this high honor to return again. But there is no doubt but that he relied on the favor of the people, and that he was fully persuaded that if Zedekiah could ill bear to be thus degraded, he would yet be constrained to shew a different feeling; for Zedekiah himself regarded his own reign as not honorable, as he sat not in David's throne by the right of succession. He had been set on the throne by a tyrant, and he dared not to make any other pretense to the people than that he wished Jeconiah to return and to possess the kingdom of which he had been deprived. As then this impostor knew that the king dared not to shew any displeasure, but that his prophecy would be gratifying and acceptable to the people, he boldly promised what we here read respecting the return of Jeconiah.

He hence says in God's name, Jeconiah, the son of Jehoiakim, the king of Judah,

[195] It is better rendered in our version, “Within two full years;” literally, “in during (that is, in the space of) two full years:” not at the end, but within two years. He took the range of two years, without specifying any particular time — Ed.

and all the captive people, who have been led away to Babylon, will I restore to this place. We see that he was ever inflated with the same arrogance, and that he wholly disregarded God, whose name he thus in sport profaned. But all this flowed from this fountain, even because he had been blinded by the righteous judgment of God.

he then confirms his own prophecy, repeating its beginning, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon [196] He had made open for himself an entrance, by saying that the destruction of the Babylonian monarchy was at hand; and now, after having given utterance to what seemed good to him on the whole affair, he refers again to that event. As then he promised that the monarchy would not stand longer than two years, the Jews might have supposed that they would become free, and might thus have hoped for a happy state of things; and this was the design of the impostor; but what was the answer of Jeremiah? His opposition to him was frank and firm; but as he saw that he had incurred the ill-will of the people, he was anxious to remove it; and before he repeated what he had said of their seventy years in exile, he shewed that he had not eagerly received his commission, as though he had been alienated from his people, or had disregarded their welfare, or had been carried away by some morbid feeling to bring a sad and mournful message. He therefore said, ---

Jeremiah 28:5-6

5. Then the prophet Jeremiah said unto the prophet Hananiah in the presence of the priests, and in the presence of all the people that stood in the house of the LORD,

5. Tunc dixit Jeremias propheta Chananiae prophetae coram oculis sacerdotum et coram oculis totius populi, qui stabant in domo Jehovae (hoc est, in Tempe,)

6. Even the prophet Jeremiah said, Amen: the LORD do so: the LORD perform thy words which thou hast prophesied, to bring again the vessels of the LORD'S house, and all that is carried away captive, from Babylon into this place.

6. Et dixit Jeremias propheta, Amen, sic faciat Jehova, stabiliet Jehova sermones tuos, quos prophetasti ad reducendum (hoc est, ut reducantur) vasa Templi et tota captivitas ex Babylone ad hunc locum.

I have shortly reminded you of the design of the Prophet; for it was to be feared that the people would not hear him, or at least that they would not well receive him, as he had threatened them and handled them roughly and severely. We know that men ever seek to be flattered; hence adulations are ever delightfully received. Such is the pride of men, that they cannot bear to be called to an account for what they have done; and they become also indignant, when they see their crimes and vices brought to light; besides, they are so delicate and tender, that they avoid as much as they can all adverse rumors; and if any fear assails them, they instantly resist.

Now Jeremiah had been furnished with a twofold message, to expose the vices of the people, to shew that the Jews were unworthy to inherit the land, as they were covenant-breakers and despisers of God and of his Law; and then, as they had been so often refractory and perverse, he had another message, that they would not be suffered to escape unpunished, as they had in so many ways, and for so long a time continued to provoke God's wrath; all this was very displeasing to the

[196] The tense here is not correctly given, the words are, “For I will break the yoke of the king of Babylon; and so are all the Versions. — Ed.

people. It was therefore Jeremiah's object to turn aside the false suspicion under which he labored, and he testified that he desired nothing more than the well-being of the people; ``Amen,'' he said, ``may it thus happen, I wish I were a false prophet; I would willingly retract, and that with shame, all that I have hitherto predicted, so great is my care and anxiety for the safety of the public; for I would prefer the welfare of the whole people to my own reputation.'' But he afterwards added, as we shall see, that the promise of Hananiah was wholly vain, and that nothing would save the people from the calamity that was very near at hand.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou continuest to invite us to thyself, and often to remind us of our sins, that we may embrace the hope of mercy that is offered to us, --- O grant, that we may not be ungrateful for this so great and invaluable a blessing, but come to thee in real humility and true repentance, and that trusting in thine infinite goodness, we may not doubt but that thou wilt be propitious to us, so that we may be kindled with the desire for true religion, and in all things obey thy word, that thy name may be glorified in us, until we shall at length come into that celestial glory, which thy Son hath obtained for us by his blood. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventh

We began in the last Lecture to explain the answer of Jeremiah, when he said to Hananiah, ``May God confirm thy words, and may the vessels of the Temple be restored to this place and return together with the captive people.'' We briefly stated what is now necessary again to repeat, that there were two feelings in the Prophets apparently contrary, and yet they were compatible with one another. Whatever God had commanded them they boldly declared, and thus they forgot their own nation when they announced anything of an adverse kind. Hence, when the Prophets threatened the people, and said that war or famine was near at hand, they doubtless were so endued with a heroic greatness of mind, that dismissing a regard for the people, they proceeded in the performance of their office; they thus strenuously executed whatever God had commanded them. But they did not wholly put off every humane feeling, but condoled with the miseries of the people; and though they denounced on them destruction, yet they could not but receive sorrow from their own prophecies. There was, therefore, no inconsistency in Jeremiah in wishing the restoration of the vessels of the Temple and the return of the exiles, while yet he ever continued in the same mind, as we shall hereafter see.

If any one objects and says that this could not have been the case, for then Jeremiah must have been a vain and false prophet; the answer to this is, that the prophets had no recourse to refined reasoning, when they were carried away by a vehement zeal; for we see that Moses wished to be blotted out of the book of life, and that Paul expressed a similar wish, even that he might be an anathema from Christ for his brethren. (Exodus 32:32; Romans 9:3.) Had any one distinctly asked Moses, Do you wish to perish and to be cut off from the hope of salvation? his answer, no doubt, would have been, that nothing was less in his mind than to cast away the immutable favor of God; but when his mind was wholly fixed on God's glory, which would have been exposed to all kinds of reproaches, had the people been destroyed

in the Desert, and when he felt another thing, a solicitude for the salvation of his own nation, he was at the time forgetful of himself, and being carried away as it were beyond himself, he said, ``Rather blot me out of the book of life,'' and the ease of Paul was similar. And the same view we ought to take of Jeremiah, when he, in effect, said, I would I were a false prophet, and that thou hast predicted to the people what by the event may be found to be true.'' But Jeremiah did not intend to take away even the least thing from God's word; he only expressed a wish, and surrendered to God the care for the other, the credit and the authority of his prophecy, he did not, then, engage for this, as though he ought to have made it good, if the event did not by chance correspond with his prophecy; but he left the care of this with God, and thus, without any difficulty, he prayed for the liberation and return of the people. But it now follows ---

Jeremiah 28:7-9

7. Nevertheless hear thou now this word that I speak in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people;

7. Verum audi nunc (vel, agedum, hortantis) sermonem hunc, quem ego pronuncio (pronuncians sum) in auribus tuis et in auribus totius populi, ---

8. The prophets that have been before me and before thee of old prophesied both against many countries, and against great kingdoms, of war, and of evil, and of pestilence.

8. Prophetae qui fuerunt ante me et ante to a seculo, et prophetarunt super terras multas (vel, magnas) et regna magna de praelio, de malo et de peste:

9. The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the LORD hath truly sent him.

9. Propheta qui prophetaverit de pace (hoc est, de rebus prosperis,) cum venerit sermo (id est, cum eventu comprobatus fuerit sermo prophetae,) cognoscetur propheta quod miserit eum Jellova in veritate.

Jeremiah, having testified that he did not wish for anything adverse to his own people, but had a good will towards them, now adds that what he had predicted was yet most true. Here is seen more fully what I have said of his twofold feeling; for though the Prophet wished to consult the welfare of the people, he did not yet cease to render full obedience to God, and to announce those messages which were at the same time very grievous: thus Jeremiah did not keep silence, but became an herald of God's vengeance against the people. On the one hand, then, he showed that he desired nothing more than the welfare and the safety of his people, and that yet it was not in his power nor in that of any mortal to change the celestial decree which he had pronounced. We hence see that God so influenced the minds and hearts of his servants, that they were not cruel or barbarous; and yet they were not made soft and pliable through the influence of humanity, but boldly declared what God had commanded them.

For this reason he said, Nevertheless, hear thou this word which I pronounce in thine ears, and in the ears of all the people By these words Jeremiah indirectly condemned the vanity of Hananiah, who sought to flatter the people, and by his adulations hunted for favor and applause, as it is usual with such impostors, he then

said that it availed him nothing to give the people the hope of a near deliverance, for God had not changed his purpose. And Jeremiah now boldly and openly opposed him, as he had sufficiently rebutted that ill-will with which he was unjustly loaded; for impostors ever find out calumnies by which they assail the faithful servants of God. He might at the beginning have objected to Jeremiah and said, ``Thou art alienated from thine own nation, thou art not touched by the many miseries by which we have been hitherto distressed, nor carest thou for what may happen to us in future.'' Thus he might have kindled hatred against Jeremiah, had he not cleared himself. But after he had testified that he felt kindly and was well affected towards his own nation, he assailed the impostor himself, and hesitated not to assert what seemed very grievous, that the people would become captives.

Yet Jeremiah seems here to have been smitten in some measure with fear; for he did not confirm his own prophecy, but left that as it were in suspense; and yet he doubtless exposed the false declaration of Hananiah. But we know that the whole of what the Prophet said is not recited; for he only in a brief way records the heads or the chief things; and further, as we shall presently see, Jeremiah could not act as he wished in the midst of such a tumult, for he would have spoken to the deaf; and as Hananiah had prejudiced the minds of almost all, the holy Prophet would not have been listened to while there was such a confusion. He was therefore satisfied with the brief assertion, that God would soon shew that Hananiah was a false witness in promising so quick a return to the captives and exiles.

But he makes here only a general statement, The Prophets who have been before, me and thee, and prophesied against many (or great) lands, and against great kingdoms, have prophesied of war, and of evil, and of pestilence The word {רעה}, roe, evil, is placed between two other kinds of evil; but it is to be taken here no doubt for famine, as it is evident from many other passages. [197] Then he adds, changing the number, ``When any prophet spoke of peace, the event proved whether or not he was a true prophet. [198] Now, experience itself will shortly prove thee to be false, for after two years the people who are now in Babylon will be still there under oppression, and the condition of the residue will be nothing better, for those who now remain in the city and throughout all Judea shall be driven into exile as well as their brethren.''

Jeremiah seems here to conclude that those alone are to be deemed true prophets

[197] More than twenty MSS. read {,{רעב ``famine,'' which may be considered as the true reading, though all the Versions favor the other. It is rather difficult to render this verse. Calvin here repeats the word ``prophesied,'' which perhaps would be the best construction. There is a {ו} before ``prophesied'' in the text, which connects it with ``have been.'' I would then render it as follows, --- 8. The prophets, who have been before me and before thee from the beginning, and have prophesied concerning many lands and against mighty kingdoms, have prophesied of war, and of famine, and of pestilence. There were prophets who did not prophesy ``concerning many lands,'' etc.; he refers not to these, but to those who had done this. --- Ed.

[198] It is not the past but the future tense is used here, “The prophet, who shall prophesy of peace,” etc.; so the versions, except the Vulg. In the former verse Jeremiah speaks of what all the previous prophets had predicted, that is, of war, famine, and pestilence, as to various kingdoms, and Judah no doubt as forming a part of them. Now, in this verse he seems to say, that if a prophet should be found speaking a different language, contrary to that of all former prophets, the event alone, the fulfillment of his prophecy alone could prove him a true prophet. He intimates that as Hananiah said things contrary to all former prophets, he was not to be believed until what he said came to pass. The verse may be thus rendered, — 9. The prophet who shall prophesy (or who prophesies) of peace, when the word of that prophet shall come, he will be known as the prophet whom Jehovah hath sent in truth. The first word, “the prophet,” is a nominative case absolute, many instances of which are found in Hebrew. — Ed.

who prove by the event that they have been sent from above; and it not only appears that this may be gathered from his words, but it may also be shewn to be the definition of a true prophet; for when the event corresponds with the prophecy, there is no doubt but that he who predicted what comes to pass must have been sent by God. But we must bear in mind what is said in Deuteronomy 13:1, 2, where God reminds the people that even when the event answers to the prophecy, the prophets are not to be thoughtlessly and indiscriminately believed, as though they predicted what was true;

``for God,'' he says, ``tries thee,'' that is, proves thy faith, whether thou wilt be easily carried away by every wind of doctrine.''

But there are two passages, spoken by Moses himself, which at the first sight seem to militate the one against the other. We have already quoted the first from Deuteronomy 13; we have the other in the Deuteronomy 18:18,

``The prophet who has predicted what is found to be true,
I have sent him.''

God seems there to acknowledge as his faithful servants those who foretell what is true. But Moses had before reminded the people that even impostors sometimes speak the truth, but that they ought not on this account to be believed. But we must remember what God often declares by Isaiah, when he claims to himself alone the foreknowledge of things,

``Go,'' he says, ``and inquire whether the gods of the Gentiles will answer as to future things.'' (Isaiah 44:7)

We see that God ascribes to himself alone this peculiarity, that he foreknows future events and testifies respecting them. And surely nothing can be more clear than that God alone can speak of hidden things: men, indeed, can conjecture this or that, but they are often mistaken.

With regard to the devil, I pass by those refined disquisitions with which Augustine especially wearied himself; for above all other things he toiled on this point, how the devils reveal future and hidden things? He speculated, as I have said, in too refined a manner. But the solution of the difficulty, as to the subject now in hand, may be easily given. We first conclude, that future events cannot be known but by God alone, and that, therefore, prescience is his exclusive property, so that nothing that is future or hidden can be predicted but by him alone. But, then, it does not follow that God does not permit liberty to the devil and his ministers to foretell something that is true. How? As the case was with Balaam, who was an impostor, ready to let on hire or to sell his prophecies, as it is well known, and yet he was a prophet. But it was a peculiar gift to foretell things: whence had he this? Not from the devil any farther than it pleased God; and yet the truth had no other fountain than God himself and his Spirit. When, therefore, the devil declares what is true, it is as it were extraneous and adventitious.

Now, as we have said, that God is the source of truth, it follows that the prophets sent by him cannot be mistaken; for they exceed not the limits of their call, and so they do not speak falsely of hidden things; but when they declare this or that, they have him as their teacher. But these terms, as they say, are not convertible

--- to foretell what is true and to be a true prophet: for some, as I have said, predict what is found afterwards by trial and experience to be true, and yet they are impostors; nor did God, in the eighteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, intend to give a certain definition by which his own prophets are to be distinguished; but as he saw that the Israelites would be too credulous, so as greedily to lay hold on anything that might have been said, he intended to restrain that excess, and to correct that immoderate ardor. Hence he commanded them to expect the event, as though he had said, ``If any arise among you who will promise this or that in my name, do not immediately receive what they may announce; but the event will shew whether I have sent them.'' So also, in this place, Jeremiah says, that the true prophets of God had spoken efficiently, as they had predicted nothing but what God had ratified and really proved to have come from him.

Thus, then, we ought to think of most, that is, that those who predict what is true are for the most part the prophets of God: this is to be taken as the general rule. But we cannot hence conclude, that all those who apparently predict this or that, are sent by God, so that the whole of what they teach is true: for one particular prophecy would not be sufficient to prove the truth of all that is taught and preached. It is enough that God condemns their vanity who speak from their own hearts or from their own brains, when the event does not correspond. At the same time he points out his own prophets by this evidence, --- that he really shews that he has sent them, when he fulfils what has been predicted by them. As to false prophets there is a special reason why God permits to them so much liberty, for the world is worthy of such reward, when it willingly offers itself to be deceived. Satan, the father of lies, lays everywhere his snares for men, and they who run into them, and wish to cast themselves on his tenterhooks, deserve to be given up to believe a lie, as they will not, as Paul says, believe the truth. (2 Thessalonians 2:10, 11.)

We now then see what was the object of Jeremiah: his design was not to prove that all were true prophets who predicted something that was true, for this was not, his subject; but he took up another point, --- that all who predicted this or that, which was afterwards found to be vain, were thus convicted of falsehood. If then any one predicted what was to be, and the thing itself came not to pass, it was a sufficient proof of his presumption: it hence appeared, that he was not sent of God as he boasted. This was the object of Jeremiah, nor did he go beyond it; for he did not discuss the point, whether all who predicted true things were sent from above, and whether all their doctrines were to be credited and they believed indiscriminately; this was not the subject handled by Jeremiah; but he shewed that Hananiah was a false prophet, for it would appear evident after two years that he had vainly spoken of what he had not received from God's Spirit. And the same thing Moses had in view, as I have already explained.

As to the prophets, who had been in all ages and prophesied respecting many lands and great kingdoms, they must be considered as exclusively the true prophets: for though there had been some prophets among heathen nations, yet Jeremiah would not have thought them worthy of so great an honor; and it would have been to blend together sacred and profane things, had he placed these vain foretellers

and the true prophets in the same rank. But we know that all God's servants had so directed their discourse to the elect people, as yet to speak of foreign kingdoms and of far countries; and this has not been without reason distinctly expressed; for when they spoke of any monarchy they could not of themselves conjecture what would be: it was therefore necessary for them thus to speak by the impulse of the Holy Spirit. Were I disposed to assume more than what is lawful, and to pretend that I possess some special gift of prophesying, I could more easily lie and deceive, were I to speak only of one city, and of the state of things open before my eyes, than if I extended my predictions to distant countries: when therefore Jeremiah says that the prophets had spoken of divers and large countries, and of most powerful kingdoms, he intimates that their predictions could not have been ascribed to human conjectures; for were any one possessed of the greatest acuteness, and were he to surpass angels in intelligence, he yet could not predict what is hereafter to take place in lands beyond the seas But whatever had been predicted by the prophets, God sanctioned it by the events of time. It then follows that their call was at the same time sanctioned; that is, when God as it were ratified from heaven what they had spoken on earth. Whether therefore the prophets spoke of peace, that is, of prosperity, or of war, famine, and pestilence, when experience proved that true which they had said, their own authority was at the same time confirmed, as though God had shewed that they had been sent by him.

We must also notice the word {באמת}, beamet, he says that God sent them in truth He condemns here the boldness which impostors ever assume; for they surpass God's faithful servants in boasting that they have been sent. As then they were thus insolent, and by a fallacious pretense of having been called to their office, deceived unwary men, the Prophet adds here this clause, intimating that they were not all sent in truth. He thus conceded some sort of a call to these unprincipled men, but yet shewed how much they differed from God's servants, whose call was sealed by God himself. It follows ---

Jeremiah 28:10-11

10. Then Hananiah the prophet took the yoke from off the prophet Jeremiah's neck, and brake it.

10. Et abstulit Chananias propheta ligamen illud (vinculum) e collo Jeremiae prophetae, et confregit illud.

11. And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Even so will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon from the neck of all nations within the space of two full years. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way.

11. Et dixit Chananias in oculis totius populi (hoc est, coram toto populo loquutus est,) dicendo, Sic dicit Jehova, In hunc modum confringam jugum Nebuchadnezer, regis Babylonii cum adhuc (id est simulae) fuerunt duo anni dierum e collo omnium gentium: et profectus est Jeremias propheta per viam suam.

It was not enough for the impostor to resist the holy servant of God to his face, without laying sacrilegious hands on that visible symbol, by which it had pleased God to testify that the Prophet's message was true. For such was the tardiness of

the people, nay, their insensibility, that they could not be much moved by words; therefore God added a symbol, for Jeremiah carried cords or bands around his neck: and it was a sign of reproach before men, yet, in order to touch the people, he refused not to undergo that reproach.

The band then on the neck of Jeremiah was like a sacrament; for it was a visible sign to establish the credit of his message. And what did Hananiah do? After having insolently inveighed against Jeremiah, and promised deliverance to the people after two years, he violently broke and took off the cord or the band which Jeremiah had around his neck.

We hence see how great and how impetuous is the fury of those whom the devil impels: for when once they arrive at that degree of temerity as to dare to resist the word of God, and, were it possible, to cast him from his own throne, they spare no symbols of his power and glory. We ought especially to notice this madness of Hananiah; for he not only resisted God's servant, and endeavored to subvert his prophecy, but also snatched away the bands, that he might set up the falsehood of the devil in opposition to the true sacrament. This sign, as we have said, availed to confirm the prophecy of which we have heard; but what was done by Hananiah? he not only took away that sign, but by breaking the bands he attracted the attention of men, and by such a representation made them to believe that there would be in two years a deliverance. Then Hananiah displayed his furious zeal in two ways; for he profaned that symbol which Jeremiah had adopted according to God's command, and he also took it away, as though he aimed to be above God, and to overthrow his truth, and would triumph over it.

The same thing we now see done under the Papacy: for we know that what Christ had commanded has been either corrupted, or obscured, or blotted out by them; and they have also devised fictitious sacraments and innumerable pompous rites, by which they fascinate foolish and credulous men. The same did Hananiah; and therefore his disciples and imitators are the Papists; who not only reject or extenuate the testimonies which have come from God, but plainly dishonor his sacraments by arrogantly bringing forward their own devices and inventions.

We must also notice how craftily this impostor insinuated himself; for he seemed to imitate the true prophets of God, for he set a sign before the people, and then added a doctrine. The Papists have their empty signs, but they only delight the eyes, while yet they have no care nor concern for the ears. But Hananiah came still nearer to God's servants, so that he might deceive even those who were not stupid. What, indeed, could we desire more in this man than that he should set forth a sign? He also added the name of God and declared what was his purpose, in this manner will I break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar: nor did he speak in his own name, but assumed the person of God, Thus saith Jehovah, I will break the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar.

But as we have elsewhere said, this preposterous imitation of the devil ought not to disturb pious minds; for God ever supplies his own people with the spirit of discernment, provided they humbly pray to him. And therefore whenever Jeremiah repeated the word prophet, which he conceded to Hananiah, as he assumed it himself, for whenever he spoke of Hananiah, he honored him with this name, even that

he was a prophet, --- the holy man was not ignorant what an occasion of offense it was, when a prophet, who is so acknowledged in the Church of God, is yet the minister of Satan, a liar and an impostor. But his object was to warn us in due time, lest novelty should frighten us when any boasts of the title of a prophet. So the Papists brag that they are prelates and bishops, and boast that they are the successors of the Apostles: but the devil is their chief, who calls himself the Vicar of Christ on the earth. Then Jeremiah designedly called Hananiah so many times a prophet, so that our faith, when any such thing happens to us, may not fail, as though some new thing had taken place. I cannot to-day finish the last part of the verse.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou wouldest so try the constancy of our faith as to permit the devil to blend his lies with thy holy truth, we may not yet be entangled in them, but be attentive to that light which thou settest before us, and by which thou guidest us into the way of salvation; and may we in the spirit of docility so offer ourselves to be ruled by thee, that thou mayest also become our faithful and infallible leader, until we shall at length attain that eternal life which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture one Hundred and Eighth

Hananiah, after having broken the bands of Jeremiah, predicted that God would liberate the Jews as well as other nations from under the yoke of King Nebuchadnezzar; and it is at length added, that Jeremiah went his way; by which words the Prophet intimates that he left the place, for he was unwilling contentiously to dispute with a violent man, or rather with a wild beast; for it is probable, nay, it may be concluded as certain, that Hananiah had great power in the Temple, for his prophecies were plausible. For as men always seek flatteries, when they heard promised to them what was especially desirable, even an end to all their evils and calamities after two years, all of them greedily received what the impostor had said. Besides, not only his tongue fought against Jeremiah, but also his hands, for he violently assailed the holy man when he broke his bands. Hence Jeremiah could not have acted otherwise than to turn aside as it were from the storm; nor did he do this through fear, but because he saw that his adversary would be his superior in wrangling, nor did he hope to be heard amidst noise and clamors; for he saw that a great tumult would immediately rise if he began to speak. He found it therefore necessary to withdraw from the people.

We are hereby reminded that we ought wisely to consider what occasions may require; for it is not right nor expedient to speak always and everywhere. When, therefore, the Lord opens our mouth, no difficulties ought to restrain us so as not to speak boldly; but when there is no hope of doing good, it is better sometimes to be silent than to excite a great multitude without any profit. True indeed is that saying of Paul, that we ought to be instant out of season, (2 Timothy 4:2;) but he means, that the ministers of Christ, though they may sometimes offend and exasperate the minds of many, ought not yet to desist but to persevere. But Jeremiah had no hearers, and the whole people were so incensed, that he could do nothing against that impostor even if he exposed himself to death. He therefore was silent, for he

had already discharged the duties of his office; he might have also withdrawn, that he might come furnished with new messages, and thus endued with new authority, as, indeed, it appears from what follows, ---

Jeremiah 28:12-13

12. Then the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah the prophet, after that Hananiah the prophet had broken the yoke from off the neck of the prophet Jeremiah, saying,

12. Et fuit sermo Jehovae ad Jeremiam, postquam confregit Chananiah propheta jugum (aut, vinculum) e collo Jeremiae prophetae, dicendo,

13. Go and tell Hananiah, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast broken the yokes of wood; but thou shalt make for them yokes of iron.

13. Vade et loquere cum Chanania, dicendo, (alloquere Chananiam, dicendo,) Sic dicit jehova, Vincula lignea fregisti; fac autem tibi loco illorum vincula ferrea.

It hence appears that Jeremiah had regard only to the common benefit of the people, and that he wisely kept silence for a time, that he might not throw pearls before swine, and thus expose in a manner the holy name of God to the insolence of the ungodly. He therefore waited until he might again go forth with new messages, and thus secure more credit to himself. For had he contended longer with Hananiah, contentions would have been kindled on every side, there would have been no hearing in a tumult, and the Jews would have wholly disregarded anything he might have then spoken. But as he had withdrawn from the crowd, and was afterwards sent by God, the Jews could not have so presumptuously despised him or his doctrine. This, then, was the reason why he was for a short time silent.

If he feared and trembled in the midst of these commotions, God in due time confirmed him by giving him new commands: The word of Jehovah, he says, came to Jeremiah, after Hananiah broke the band from his neck. By these words he intimates, that the ungodly, however insolently they may rise up against God, ever depart with shame and reproach. For Hananiah had not only opposed Jeremiah by his words and tongue, but had also broken the cords or bands from his neck. This, then, the Prophet now repeats, in order that he might shew, as it were by his finger, that Hananiah by his audacity gained nothing, except that he rendered his vanity more notorious.

Now it is an abrupt sentence when he says, Go and speak to Hananiah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, Thou hast broken the wooden bands; but make to thee iron bands; Jeremiah does not keep to the same point; for in the first clause he relates what he had been commanded to say to Hananiah; and in the second he relates what God had commanded him to do, even iron bands. But there is no obscurity as to the meaning; for doubtless the Prophet might have arranged his words thus, ``Thou hast broken the bands from my neck; but God has commanded me to make new ones from iron.'' [199] Though Jeremiah, then, only tells us here that God commanded him to make iron bands, it may yet be easily concluded that when he spoke of wooden bands he at the same time added what he relates of iron bands, but in a different

[199] It appears that the true reading has been retained here only by the Sept. when the verb "make" is given in the first person; the difference is only the addition of {;{ then the sentence would be, --- The yokes of wood thou hast broken, But I have made for them yokes of iron. Or if the vau be considered conversive, the line would be, --- But I will make for them yokes of iron. The exigency of a passage is one of our best guides. --- Ed.

connection., Now follows the explanation, ---

Jeremiah 28:14

14. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, I have put a yoke of iron upon the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and they shall serve him: and I have given him the beasts of the field also.

14. Quoniam sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, jugum ferreum imposui super collum omnium gentium istorum, ut serviant Nevuchadnezer, regi Babylonis, et servient ei, atque etiam bestiam agri dedi illi.

It would have been a vain spectacle, had Jeremiah brought only his iron band around his neck; but when he added an explanation of the symbol, he no doubt prevailed on many to believe his prophecy, and rendered those inexcusable who had hardened themselves in their wickedness. But it is worthy of being observed, that God replaced the wooden bands with iron bands; and he did this, because the whole people had through their foolish and wicked consent approved of the madness of that impostor, who had dared to profane that symbol, by which God had testified that he did not speak in vain, but seriously by the mouth of his servant.

A profitable doctrine may be hence elicited, --- that the ungodly by barking against God gain nothing, except that they kindle more and more his wrath, and thus render double their own evils, like a dog, who being ensnared obstinately strives to extricate himself from the snare and to shake it off, and thus strangles himself. In like manner the ungodly, the more they resist God, the heavier judgment they procure for themselves. And, therefore, whenever God declares to us that he is offended with our sins, we ought to take heed, lest while we seek to break the wooden bands, he be preparing and forming for us iron bands. Our condition will ever become worse, unless we humbly deprecate God's wrath as soon as it appears, and also patiently submit to his scourges when he chastises us for our offenses. We ought then to bear this in mind as to the wooden and iron bands.

He adds, Upon the neck of all these nations The Jews, as it has been stated, hoped that Nebuchadnezzar could be in a moment driven back beyond the Euphrates, and would be made to surrender other countries which he had occupied; and all the neighboring nations had conspired, and sent ambassadors here and there; and when the Amorites, the Moabites, and other nations gave encouragement to the Jews, they also in their turn animated others, so that they might all make an assault on the Babylonians. As, then, such a secret conspiracy gave courage to the Jews, this was the reason why the Prophet spoke of other nations. He says, And they shall serve him He had, indeed, already subdued all these countries; but the Prophet means, that the domination of the king of Babylon would continue, though Hananiah had said, that it would stand only for two years. Continuance, then, is set in opposition to a short time, as though the Prophet had said, ``Let, indeed, the nations chafe and fret, but they shall abide under the yoke of King Nebuchadnezzar, and in vain shall they attempt to extricate themselves, for God has delivered them up to bondage.''

This servitude may at the same time be explained in another way; the condition of these nations was bearable, as long as Nebuchadnezzar ordered tribute to be paid; and when he sent his prefects, the object was no other than to retain possession; but

when he found that they could not be otherwise subdued than by a harder servitude, he began to exercise great tyranny, though he had been before an endurable master. The same thing may be also said of the Jews; for we know that they had been tributaries to the king of Babylon; and as he had spared them, his humanity might have been deemed a sort of liberty; but when he found that a hard wood could not be split but by a hard wedge, he began more violently to oppress them. Then that servitude began which is now mentioned. The Jews, therefore, began then really to serve the king of Babylon, when he saw that they would not endure that bearable yoke which he had laid on them, but in their obstinacy and pride ever struggled against it.

The Prophet adds, The beast of the field have 1 also given him By these words he indirectly upbraids the Jews, as we have before reminded you, with their perverseness, because they perceived not that it was the righteous judgment of God, that Nebuchadnezzar imposed laws on them as a conqueror; for they would have been defended by a celestial aid, as it is said by Moses, had they not deprived themselves of it. (Deuteronomy 29:25.) As, then, they had long rejected the protection of God, hence it was that Nebuchadnezzar invaded their country and conquered them. As they now continued to bite and champ their bridle, the Prophet exposes their madness; for they did not humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, while wild beasts, void of reason and understanding, perceived that it happened through God's secret and wonderful providence, that Nebuchadnezzar took possession of these lands. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet expressly mentioned wild beasts, as though he said, that the Jews were so refractory, that there was in them less reason, humility, and solicitude than in lions, bears, and animals of the like kind; for through the secret impulse of God the wild beasts submitted to the authority of King Nebuchadnezzar, while the Jews became more and more insolent. It was the highest madness not to acknowledge God's judgment, while this was done by wild and savage animals. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 28:15

15. Then said the prophet Jeremiah unto Hananiah the prophet, Hear now, Hananiah; The LORD hath not sent thee; but thou makest this people to trust in a lie.

15. Et dixit jeremias propheta Chananiae prophetae, Audi agedum Chanania, non misit to Jehova, et tu confidere fecisti populum hunc super mendacio (vel, in mendacio.)

There would not have been weight enough in the plain teaching of Jeremiah had he not confronted his adversary, as the case is at this day with us; when insolent and unprincipled men rise up and dare to vomit forth their blasphemies, by which they darken and degrade the doctrines of true religion, we are under the necessity to contend with them, otherwise what we teach would be ineffectual; for the minds of many, I mean the simple, are in suspense and fluctuate when they see a great conflict between two contrary parties. It was therefore necessary for the holy man to expose the lies of Hananiah, for he ever vaunted himself and boasted of his own predictions.

But what did Jeremiah say? Jehovah hath not sent thee This refutation ought

to be noticed whenever we contend with Satan's ministers and false teachers; for whatever they may pretend, and with whatever masks they may cover their lies, this one thing ought to be more than sufficient to put an end to their boastings, --- that they have not been sent by the Lord. Jeremiah might have contended in a long speech with Hananiah, for he might have been made sufficiently eloquent through the Holy Spirit suggesting and dictating whatever was needful on the subject; but this concise brevity produced much greater effect than if he had made great display and used many words. Let this, then, be borne in mind, that wherever there is a controversy about religion, we ought ever to ask whether he who speaks has been sent by God; for whatever he may babble, though the most acute, and though he may talk things which may fill with wonder the minds of the simple, yet all this is nothing but smoke when his doctrine is not from God. So also we ought at this day to deal in a brief manner with those mercenary dogs of the Pope who bark against the pure truth of the Gospel; we ought to be satisfied with this compendious answer, --- that God is not their master and teacher. But as our state now is different from that of the ancient people, we must observe that sent by the Lord is he only whose doctrine is according to the rule of the Law, and of the Prophets, and of the Gospel. If, then, we desire to know whom the Lord has sent, and whom he approves as his servants, let us come to the Scripture, and let there be a thorough examination; he who speaks according to the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel, has a sure and an indubitable evidence of his divine call; but he who cannot prove that he draws what he advances from these fountains, whatever his pretences may be, ought to be repudiated as a false prophet. We hence see what an important instruction this passage contains.

He then adds, Thou hast made this people to rely on falsehood They pervert the meaning of the Prophet who thus render the words, ``Thou hast falsely rendered this people secure,'' at least they lessen by one half what the Prophet intended to express; for not only is Hananiah condemned because he vainly and falsely pretended God's name, but the word {שקר}, shicor, is introduced, the very thing employed; as though he had said, ``Thou feedest this people with a vain hope which thou hast formed in thine own brains; therefore thy fictions make this people to go astray.'' Hence Jeremiah not only accused this impostor that he by his fictions deceived the people, but also that he brought forward his prophecies in God's name; and these removed their fear and gave them some hope, so that the people became torpid in their security.

Let us learn from this passage that we ought especially to take heed when the ground of trust is the subject, lest we rely on any empty or perishable thing, like wretched hypocrites who devour shadows only, and afterwards find nothing solid in their own fictions. But when we refer to trust, let there be something solid on which we can safely rely; and we know that we cannot possibly be disappointed, if we look to God for all things, if we recumb on his mercy alone; for there is no rest nor peace for us anywhere else but in Christ. Let us then retain this object of trust, and let it be our only support. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 28:16

16. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the LORD.

16. Propterea sic dicit Jehova, Ecce ego emitto to (hoc est, projicio) e superficie terrae hujus (vel, terrae; potius indefinite accipitur hoc loco pro tota terra: {השנה} videtur quidem paulo post notare certum annum; sed in voce {האדמה} puto exprimi speciialiter Judaem, imo potius totum orbem, atque hoc facile colligitur, quia denunciat Jeremias sublatum iri Chananiam e medio, et non fore amplius superstitem mundo: morieris, ergo, hoc anno, quia defectionem loquutus es contra Jehovam.

Here is added the punishment which confirmed the prophecy of Jeremiah; for it was God's purpose to have regard to the ignorance of many who would have otherwise stumbled, or made their ignorance a pretext, for they could not determine which of the two had been sent by God, Hananiah or Jeremiah. It was then God's design, in his paternal indulgence, to stretch forth his hand to them, and also in an especial manner to render inexcusable the unbelieving who had already given themselves up, as it were, to the devil; for the greater part were not moved by an event, so memorable; [200] for it follows immediately, ---

Jeremiah 28:17

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

17. Et mortuus est Chananias propheta anno illo, mense septimo.

All those who had disregarded Jeremiah saw, in a manner, before their eyes the judgment of God. No surer confirmation could have been expected by the Jews, had they a particle of understanding, than to see the impostor slain by the word of Jeremiah alone; for he never touched him with a finger, nor caused him to be led to punishment, though he deserved this; but he drove him out of the world by the mere sound of his tongue. As, then, the word of the holy Prophet had a celestial and divine power, as though God himself had fulminated from heaven, or with an armed hand had slain that ungodly man, how great was their blindness not to be moved! However, they were not moved; hence some of the Rabbins, wishing to conceal, as their manner is, the reproach of their own nation, imagine that the disciples of Hananiah secretly took away his body, and that then the people knew nothing of his death. But what need is there of such an evasion as this? for Jeremiah says no such thing, but speaks of the event as well known; it was indeed a sure testimony of his own call. It hence follows that it was not unknown to the Jews; and yet the devil had so blinded the greatest part of them, that they paid no more attention to the holy man than before; on the contrary, they wholly disregarded those threatenings

[200] The last clause of this verse is not here explained. Calvin's version is, "revolt hast thou spoken against Jehovah;" the Vulg., "against the Lord hast thou spoken;" the Syr., "iniquity hast thou spoken before the Lord;" and the Targ., "perverseness hast thou spoken before Jehovah." Blayney's version is, "thou hast spoken prevarication concerning Jehovah." Gataker renders it the same with Calvin, and explains it thus, — "Because by thy lying tales thou hast heartened and encouraged men to stand out against God's word, and against his admonitions and menaces by his prophets." Henry gives the same view. Blayney says that, {{סרה properly signifies declining or turning aside from the straight path, the path of truth and right, and that here it means the presumption of uttering as a revelation from God what a man knew to be not so. The same phrase occurs in two other places, Deuteronomy 13:5; Jeremiah 29:32. The {אל} here before Jehovah is {על} in several MSS.; but the prepositions are sometimes the same. The rendering that would suit the three places would be the following: --- ``For of turning aside hast thou spoken contrary to Jehovah,'' that is, to his expressed will or command. The meaning might be thus conveyed, --- ``for thou hast encouraged disobedience contrary to the express command of God.'' --- Ed

of which he had been the witness and herald.

But how does this appear? the greatest part of the people often rose up against him as though he was the most wicked of men; he was accused as the betrayer of his country, and hardly escaped, through the clemency of. a cruel king, when he was cast into a dungeon as one half-dead. Since, then, the Jews thus pertinaciously raged, we hence understand what the Prophet so often threatened them with, even with the spirit of giddiness, and of fury, and of madness, and of stupor, and of drunkenness. Moreover, it was needful for that small portion which was not wholly irreclaimable to be restored to the right way; and this was done by this manifest proof of Jeremiah's call. It was also necessary on the other hand that the unbelieving should be more restrained, so that they might be condemned by their own conscience, as Paul calls heretics self-condemned who were become fixed in their own perverseness, and had willingly and designedly sold themselves as slaves to the devil.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou dost kindly and graciously invite us to repentance, we may be so touched by the sense of thy wrath, that we may not by our perverseness increase more and more the heinousness of thy vengeance against us, but lay hold on the mercy that is offered to us, so that we may experience the efficacy and fruit of thy truth for our salvation, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Jeremiah 29

Lecture One Hundred and Ninth

CHAPTER 29

Jeremiah 29:1

1. Now these are the words of the letter that Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem unto the residue of the elders which were carried away captives, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to all the people whom Nebuchadnezzar had carried away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon;

1. Hi sunt sermones libri (vel, epistolae) quem misit Jeremias propheta Jerusalem ad reliquias seniorum captivitatis, et ad sacerdotes et ad prophetas, et ad universum populum, quem captivum abduxerat Nebuchadnezer e Jerusalem in Babylonem;

Here the Prophet begins a new discourse, even that he not only cried out constantly at Jerusalem, that the Jews who still remained there should repent, but that he also mitigated the grief of the exiles, and exhorted them to entertain the hope of returning, provided they patiently endured the chastisement allotted to them. The design of the Prophet was at the same time twofold; for he not only intended to mitigate by comfort the sorrow of the exiles, but designed also to break down the obstinacy of his own nation, so that they who still remained at Jerusalem and in Judea might know that nothing would be better for them than to join themselves to their other brethren. The Jews, as it has already appeared, and as we shall hereafter in many places see, had set their minds on an unreasonable deliverance; God had fixed on seventy years, but they wished immediately to break through and extricate themselves from the yoke laid on them. Hence Jeremiah, in writing to the captives and exiles, intended to accommodate what he said to the Jews who still remained at Jerusalem, and who thought their case very fortunate, because they were not driven away with their king and the rest of the multitude. But at the same time his object was to benefit also the miserable exiles, who might have been overwhelmed with despair, had not their grief been in some measure mitigated. The Prophet, as we

shall see, bids them to look forward to the end of their captivity, and in the meantime exhorts them to patience, and desires them to be quiet and peaceable, and not to raise tumults, until the hand of God was put forth for their deliverance.

he says that he wrote a book [201] to the remaining elders; [202] for many of that age had died; as nature requires, the old who approach near the goal of life, die first, he then says that he wrote to them who still remained alive. We hence conclude that his prophecy was designed for them all; and yet he afterwards says, ``Take wives and propagate;'' but this, as we shall see, is to be confined to those who were at that time in a fit age for marriage. He did not however wish to exclude the aged from the comfort of which God designed them to be partakers, and that by knowing that there would be a happy end to their captivity, provided they retained resignation of mind and patiently bore the punishment of God justly due to them for having so often and in such various ways provoked him. Then he adds, the priests, and the prophets, and then the whole people. [203]

But we must notice that he not only exhorts the people to patience, but also the priests and the prophets. And though, as we shall hereafter see, there were among them impostors, who falsely boasted that they were prophets, [204] it is yet probable that they are also included here who were endued with God's Spirit, either because the spirit was languid in them, or because God did not always grant to them the knowledge of everything. It might then be that the prophets, to whom God had not made known this, or whose minds were oppressed with evils, were to be taught.

As to the priests, we hence conclude that they had from the beginning neglected their office, for they would have been God's prophets, had they faithfully performed their sacerdotal office; and it was, as it were, an extraordinary thing when God chose other prophets, and not without reproach to the priests; for they must have become degenerated and idle or deceptive, when they gloried in the name alone, when they were destitute of the truth. This then was the reason why they were to be taught in common with the people. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 29:2

2. (After that Jeconiah the king, and the queen, and the eunuchs, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, and the carpenters, and the smiths, were departed from Jerusalem;)

2. Postquam egressus fuerat Jechaniah rex et domina (id est, regina, mater ejus,) et proceres, principes Jehudah et Jerusalem, et artifex et sculptor ex Jerusalem;

[201] So it is rendered by the Sept., Vulg., and Targ.; but "epistle," or letter, by the Syr. The word properly means a narrative; but as that is included in a book or in a letter, it is often used for both. It is rendered "book" in our version in Exodus 24:7; and "letter" in 2 Samuel 11:14. — Ed.

[202] Rather, "old men;" literally it is, "to the remainder of the aged of the transmigration." Age, and not authority, seems to be intended, though Grotins thinks they were the members of the Sanhedrim. The word commonly rendered "captivity," and when a verb, "to lead captive," means properly to be removed, to migrate, and transitively, to remove, to carry away, to transfer, to translate. The idea of captivity is not included in it, though sometimes implied. — Ed.

[203] Here in the original ends the preceding Lecture; but as this chapter has no connection with the foregoing, the prayer which occurs here has been removed to the end of the last chapter. — Ed.

[204] The Targ. has "scribes;" the Sept. and Syr., "false prophets;" and the Vulg., "prophets." They were probably teachers, and not those higher prophets who were favored with visions, and sent forth by God to deliver special messages. — Ed.

He mentions the time when the book was sent, even after the calamity which had happened, when King Jeconiah and his mother were driven into exile, and Zedekiah, his successor, was made governor in his place, as we shall presently see. It was then during these beginnings of a change that Jeremiah wrote. All things were then in such a ferment, that some feared more than what was necessary, and others entertained vain hopes, as the case usually is in a disordered state of things. It was then after this fresh calamity that Jeremiah wrote, as his words most especially shew. He might indeed, as in other instances, have mentioned the year; but as he plainly declares that this happened after the departure of Jeconiah, his purpose is sufficiently evident, even that he wished in due time to give some relief to their sorrow, who might have succumbed under it, had not God in a manner stretched forth his hand to them. For we know that fresh grief is difficult to be borne; and hence it is that it is called a bitter grief; for it was a grievous novelty, when they were violently and suddenly dragged out of their quiet nests. It was then Jeremiah's object at that time to give them some comfort; he also saw that those who were left in Judea were greatly disturbed and continually agitating new schemes; for Zedekiah's kingdom was not as yet established, and they despised him and were ever looking for their own king. As, then, things were thus in disorder at home, and as the miserable exiles especially, were at first very grievously afflicted, Jeremiah set before them a seasonable remedy. This then is the reason why he points out the time.

The mother of Jeconiah, we know, was led away with him into captivity; and she is called, {הגבירה}, egebire; [205] for though she was not properly the queen, she yet ruled in connection with her son. Some render {סריסים}, sarisim, eunuchs; [206] but I prefer the word ``chiefs;'' and hence is added the word {שרי}, shari, princes, that is, the courtiers, who governed the people, not only in Jerusalem, but through the whole of Judea. He also adds the artificers and sculptors, [207] for Nebuchadnezzar had chosen the best of them; he had deprived the city of its nobles, that there might be none of authority among the Jews to venture on any new attempt; and then he had taken away those who were useful and ingenious, so that he left them no sculptors nor artificers. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 29:3-6

3. By the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, (whom Zedekiah king of Judah sent unto Babylon to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon) saying,

3. Per manum Eleasah filii Saphan et Gamariae filii Helchiae, quos miserat Zedechias rex Jehudah ad Nebhadnezer regem Babylonis Babylonem, dicendo,

4. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon;

4. Sic dicit Jehovah exercituum, Deus Israel, universae captivitati quam captivam

[205] Rendered "governess" or lady — "domina," by the Vulg.; but "queen" by the Sept., the Syr., and the Targ. It was a title most commonly given to the queen-mother. — Ed.

[206] The Versions have "eunuchs," but the Targ., "princes." The word means an officer or an attendant on a sovereign. It is rendered "officer" in Genesis 37:36; and "chamberlain" in Esther 2:3. That such officers were often eunuchs there can be no doubt, but the word does not designate such a thing. — Ed.

[207] See note on Chapter 24:1

adduxi e Jerusalem Babylonem,

5. Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them;

5. AEdificate domos, et inhabitate; plantate hortos, et comedite fructus eorum;

6. Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished.

6. Accipite uxores et generate filios et filias; et accipite filiis vestris uxores, et filias vestras date nuptum viris, ut generent filios et filias; et crescite (aut, multiplicamini) illic, et ne minuamini.

This is the substance of the message, which the Prophet, no doubt, explained to them at large; but here he touches but briefly on what he wrote to the captives, even that they were patiently to endure their exile until the time of their deliverance, which was not to be such as many imagined, but such as God had fixed. Well known indeed at that time was Jeremiah's prophecy, not only in Judea, but also to the captives, that their exile could not be completed in a shorter time than seventy years.

It is said that he sent his letter by the hand of the king's ambassadors. It is probable that this was done by the permission of Zedekiah; for there is no doubt but that in sending his ambassadors he intended to obtain favor with King Nebuchadnezzar, by whose nod he had come to the throne; for he was not of such dignity as to be made king, though of the royal seed, had not Nebuchadnezzar thought that it would be more advantageous to himself. For had he appointed any other governor over the Jews, a sedition might have been easily raised; he therefore intended in a measure to pacify them, for he knew that they were a very refractory people. However, Zedekiah ruled only by permission, not through his own power, nor on account of his wealth, but through the good pleasure of a conqueror. He then sent his ambassadors to promise all kinds of homage, and to know what was to be done in future. As, then, he did not wish the return of Jeconiah, he permitted his ambassadors to carry the letter of Jeremiah, not indeed that he wished to obey God. It was not, then, owing to any sincere regard for religion, but because he thought that it would be advantageous to him, that the Jews should remain in Chaldea till the death of Jeconiah; for he thus hoped that his kingdom would be confirmed, for Jeconiah was, as it were, his rival. Nor is there a doubt, but that Nebuchadnezzar wished to hold Zedekiah bound by this fetter; for he could any day restore Jeconiah, who was his captive, to his former state.

Now, then, we understand why Zedekiah did not prohibit Jeremiah's letter to be carried to the captives: he thought that it would serve to tranquilize his kingdom. But the holy Prophet had another thing in view; for his anxious object was, not to gain the favor of the king, but to shew, as God had commanded him, how long the captivity would be. Zedekiah indeed might have wished that a permission should be given to the exiles to return; for those who remained in Judea were only the dregs and offscourings of society; it was not an honorable state of things: and it may be that he had also this in view, in sending ambassadors to Nebuchadnezzar, that Jerusalem might not remain desolate, but that a portion at least of the exiles might return, and

that there might also be some to cultivate the land which had been nearly stripped of its inhabitants. But Jeremiah declared what he knew was by no means acceptable to the king, that a return was in vain expected before the termination of seventy years. We hence see that he spoke nothing to gain the favor of the king; and yet the king did not regard with displeasure, that the letter was sent to allay all commotions, and to restrain all the violence of those who would have been otherwise too prone to make some new attempts. This accounts for the circumstance, that the letter was sent by the hand of Elasah and Gemariah

He adds, at the same time, that they were sent by Zedekiah to Babylon, that is, to gain the favor of King Nebuchadnezzar, or, at least, to secure his friendship. I now come to the message itself:

God commanded the captives to build houses in Chaldea, to plant vineyards, and also to marry wives, and to beget children, as though they were at home. It was not, indeed, God's purpose that they should set their hearts on Chaldea, on the contrary, they were ever to think of their return: but until the end of the seventy years, it was God's will that they should continue quiet, and not attempt this or that, but carry on the business of life as though they were in their own country. As to their hope, then, it was God's will that their minds should be in a state of suspense until the time of deliverance.

At the first view these two things seemed inconsistent, --- that the Jews were to live seventy years as though they were the natives of the place, and that their habitations were not to be changed, --- and yet that they were ever to look forward to a return. But these two things can well agree together: it was a proof of obedience when they acknowledged that they were chastised by God's hand, and thus became willingly submissive to the end of the seventy years. But their hope, as I have just observed, was to remain in suspense, in order that they might not be agitated with discontent, nor be led away by some violent feeling, but that they might so pass their time as to bear their exile in such a way as to please God; for there was a sure hope of return, provided they looked forward, according to God's will, to the end of the seventy years. It is then this subject on which Jeremiah now speaks, when he says, Build houses, and dwell in them; plant vineyards, and eat of their fruit For this whole discourse is to be referred to the time of exile, he having beforehand spoken of their return; and this we shall see in its proper place.

But the Jews could not have hoped for anything good, except they were so resigned as to bear their correction, and thus really proved that they did not reject the punishment laid on them.

We now see that Jeremiah did not encourage the Jews to indulge in pleasures, nor persuade them to settle for ever in Chaldea. It was, indeed, a fertile and pleasant land; but he did not encourage them to live there in pleasure, to indulge themselves and to forget their own country; by no means: but he confined what he said to the time of the captivity, to the end of the seventy years. During that time, then, he wished them to enjoy the land of Chaldea, and all its advantages, as though they were not exiles but natives of the place. For what purpose? not that they might give themselves up to sloth, but that they might not, by raising commotions, offend

God, and in a manner close up against themselves the door of his grace, for the time which he had fixed was to be expected. For when we are driven headlong by a vehement desire, we in a manner repel the favor of God; we do not then suffer him to act as it becomes him: and when we take away from him his own rights and will, it is the same as though we were unwilling to receive his grace. This would have been the case, had they not quietly and resignedly endured their calamity in Chaldea to the end of the time which had been fixed by God.

We now perceive that the Prophet's message referred only to the time of exile; and we also perceive what was the design of it, even to render them obedient to God, that they might thus shew by their patience that they were really penitent, and that they also expected a return in no other way than through God's favor alone.

In bidding them to take wives for their sons, and to give their daughters in marriage, he speaks according to the usual order of nature; for it would be altogether unreasonable for young men and young women to seek partners for themselves, according to their own humor and fancy. God then speaks here according to the common order of things, when he bids young men not to be otherwise joined in marriage than by the consent of parents, and that young women are not to marry but those to whom they are given.

He then adds, Be ye multiplied there and not diminished; as though he had said, that the time of exile would be so long, that except they propagated, they would soon come to nothing: and God expressed this, because it was not his will that Abraham's seed should fail. It was indeed a kind of death, when he had driven them so far, as though he had deprived them of the inheritance which he had promised to be perpetual: he, however, administers comfort here by commanding them to propagate their kind: for they could not have been encouraged to do so, except they had their eyes directed to the hope of a return. He then afforded them some taste of his mercy when he bade them not to be diminished in Chaldea. He then adds, ---

Jeremiah 29:7

7. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace.

7. Et quaerite pacem urbis ad quam transtuli vos illuc (sed abundat), et orate pro ea Jehovam, quia in pace ejus erit vobis pax.

Jeremiah goes still farther, even that the Jews had been led to Babylon, on the condition of rendering willing obedience to the authority of King Nebuchadnezzar, and of testifying this by their prayers. He not only bids them patiently to endure the punishment laid on them, but also to be faithful subjects of their conqueror; he not only forbids them to be seditious, but he would have them to obey from the heart, so that God might be a witness of their willing subjection and obedience.

He says, Seek the peace of the city; this may be understood of prayers; for {דרש}, daresh, often means to pray: but it may suitably be taken here, as I think, in reference to the conduct of the people, as though he had said, that the Jews were to do what they could, to exert themselves to the utmost, so that no harm might happen to the Chaldean monarchy; for they are afterwards directed to pray It may indeed be,

that the same thing is repeated in other words; but if any one weighs the subject more fully, he will, I think, assent to what I have stated, that in the first clause the Prophet bids them to be faithful to King Nebuchadnezzar and to his monarchy. Seek, then, the peace of the city: [208] by peace, as it is well known, is to be understood prosperity.

But he was not satisfied with external efforts, but he would have them to pray to God, that all things might turn out prosperously and happily to the Babylonian king, even to the end of their exile; for we must bear in mind that the Prophet had ever that time in view. We hence learn that he exhorted the exiles to bear the yoke of the king of Babylon, during the time allotted to the captivity, for to attempt anything rashly was to fight against God, and that he thus far commanded them quietly to bear that tyrannical government.

He repeats again what he had said, (though I had passed it by,) that they had been carried away captives: for he had spoken of it, ``all the captivity which,'' he says, ``I made to migrate,'' or removed, or led captive, ``from Jerusalem.'' Now, again, he repeats the same thing, that he had carried them away captives, {הגליתי} {אשו}, asher egeliti; [209] and he said this, that they might not regard only the avarice, or the ambition, or the pride of King Nebuchadnezzar, but that they might raise up their eyes to heaven, and acknowledge Nebuchadnezzar as the scourge of God, and their exile as a chastisement for their sins. God thus testified that he was the author of their exile, that the Jews might not think that they had to do with a mortal man, but on the contrary, understand that they were kicking against the goad, if they murmured and complained, because they lived under the tyranny of a foreign king. That they might not then be agitated with vain thoughts, God comes forth and says, that the exile was imposed on them by his just judgment, in order that they might know that they would gain nothing by their perverseness, and that they might not be disturbed by an anxious disquietude, nor dare to attempt anything new, for this would be to resist God, and as it were to carry on war with heaven. I will finish here.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that we may be more and more habituated to render obedience to thee, and that whenever thou chastisest us with thy scourges, we may examine our own consciences, and humbly and suppliantly deprecate thy wrath, and never doubt but thou wilt be propitious to us, after having chastised us with thy paternal hand; and may we thus recumb on thy fatherly kindness, that we may ever look forward with quiet minds, until the end appears, which thou hast promised to us, and that when the warfare of this present life shall be finished, we may reach that blessed rest, which has been prepared for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

[208] To, "seek the peace of the city" was, no doubt, to promote it by their efforts, to be careful in preserving it. To "seek the land," in Deuteronomy 11:12, was to care for it; "not to seek the day," in Job 3:4, was not to regard it. Hence, to "seek the peace of the city," was to care for, or regard it, so as to do everything to promote it. It is said of Mordecai that he was "seeking the wealth (rather, the good) of his people." (Esther 10:3) His whole conduct was a proof of this. To "seek one's hurt," as in Psalm 38:12, was not to pray for it, but to use all means to effect it. Therefore the first sense given by Calvin is the right one. — Ed.

[209] It is literally, "whom I have removed," or transplanted; "moved from home," is the Sept.; "transferred," the Vulg.; "made to migrate," the Targ. — Ed.

Lecture One Hundred and Tenth

In the last Lecture we did not finish the seventh verse, in which the Prophet says that the Jews, as long as God would have them to be exiles, were to be so fixed in Babylon, that they ought to have deemed their union such, as though they were of the same body. For by saying that their peace would be in the peace of Babylon, he intimates that they could not be considered as a separate people until the time of seventy years was completed. He therefore commanded them to pray for the prosperity of Babylon.

At the first view this may seem hard; for we know how cruelly that miserable people had been treated by the Chaldeans. Then to pray for the most savage enemies, might have appeared unreasonable and by no means suitable. But the Prophet mitigates the hardness of the work by saying, that it would be profitable to them to pray for the happy condition of Babylon, inasmuch as they were the associates of their fortune. We know how much the prospect of what is profitable avails to persuade us, as we think not of undertaking anything except what we deem will be successful. For this reason then the Prophet teaches the Jews that they ought not to refuse what was required from them, when God bade them to pray for Babylon, because the prosperity of that kingdom would be for their benefit, he intimates also, as I have already hinted, that they were so connected with

Babylon, that they could not expect to be exempt from all trouble and annoyance, if any adversity happened to Babylon, for they were of the same body. We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet.

But we may hence deduce a very useful doctrine, --- that we ought not only to obey the kings under whose authority we live, but that we ought also to pray for their prosperity, so that God may be a witness of our voluntary subjection. For if it was the duty of the Jews to pray for the wellbeing of the Chaldeans for this reason, because they were for a certain time under their authority, there is no excuse for us, when we live under any legitimate prince, and that not only for a few days, unless we testify our voluntary submission before God; and he who prays to God for the happy state of the country in which he lives, will not surely neglect his other duties. [210] The principal thing indeed is to testify before God what our feeling is; and then other things must be added, such as promptitude to perform all duties of obedience and everything of the like kind. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 29:8

8. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Let not your prophets and your diviners, that be in the midst of you, deceive you, neither hearken to your dreams which ye cause to be dreamed.

8. Quoniam sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Ne decipiant vos prophetae vestri, qui sunt in medio vestri, et divini vestri; et ne attendatis ad somnia vestra, quae vos somniatis.

As the minds of almost all were taken up, as we have seen, with that vain and false confidence which they had imbibed from false prophecies, that they should return

[210] "To pray for the peace of a city or country, and for the health or eternal salvation of rulers, is very different from wishing success to their ambitious, rapacious, or sanguinary undertakings; though this distinction is not generally attended to." — Scott.

after two years, the Prophet gives this answer, and reminds them to beware of such impostures. And thus we see that it is not sufficient for one simply to teach what is right, except he also restores from error those who have been already deceived or are in danger of being deceived. For to assert the truth is only one-half of the office of teaching, because Satan ever leads his ministers to corrupt the pure doctrine with falsehoods. It is not then enough to proclaim the truth itself, except all the fallacies of the devil be also dissipated, of which there is at this day a manifest instance under the Papacy; for as the minds of almost all are there inebriated with many corrupt inventions, were any one only to shew that this or that is right, he would certainly never in this way eradicate errors from the hearts of men. And hence Paul bids bishops not only to be furnished with doctrine in order to shew the right way to the teachable, but also to be so armed as to be able to resist adversaries and to close their mouths. (Titus 1:9.)

Inasmuch then as from the beginning of the world Satan has never ceased to try and attempt, as far as he could, to corrupt the truth of God, or to immerse it in darkness, it has hence been always necessary for God's servants to be prepared to do these two things --- faithfully to teach the meek and humble, --- and boldly to oppose the enemies of truth and break down their insolence. This is the rule which the Prophet now follows; he had exhorted the Jews to bear patiently the tyranny to which they were subject, because it was God's yoke; but as on the other hand the false prophets boasted that there would be a return in two years, it was necessary for him to oppose them; on this point then he now speaks.

And that what he was going to say might have more weight, he speaks again in God's name, Let not your prophets who are in the midst of you deceive you For while Jeremiah had many adversaries at Jerusalem, the devil was also deceiving the miserable exiles in Chaldea. He then warns them not to believe these impostors; and though by way of concession he calls them prophets who were wholly unworthy of so honorable a name, he yet by way of reproach gives them afterwards the name of diviners Then the first name refers to that outward profession in which they gloried, when they boasted that they were sent by God and brought his commands. He then conceded to them the name of prophets, but improperly, or as they say, catachristically; as the case is at this day; for we do not always fight about names, but we call those priests, bishops or prelates, who are so brutal that they ought not to be classed among men. In like manner, as it has already often appeared, the prophets spoke freely, and never hesitated to call those prophets who had already gained some estimation among the people. But that they might not be proud of such fallacious boasting, he afterwards designated them by another name; he called them diviners, and then dreamers; and afterwards he adds, Attend not to your dreams He addresses here the whole people; and there were a few who, under the color and pretense of having a prophetic spirit, announced prophecies.

But Jeremiah did not without reason transfer to the whole people what belonged to a few; for we know that the devil's ministers are cherished not only through the foolish credulity of men, but also through a depraved appetite. For the world is never deceived but willingly, and men, as though they were given up to their own

destruction, seek for themselves falsehoods in every direction, and though unwilling to be deceived, they yet for the most part seek to be deceived. Were any one to ask, does the world wish to be deceived? all would cry out, from the least to the greatest, that they shun and fear nothing so much; and yet whence is it that as soon as Satan gives any sign, he attracts vast multitudes, except that we are by nature prone to what is false and vain? Then there is another evil, that we prefer darkness to light. Jeremiah then did no wrong to the people by telling them to beware of the dreams which, they dreamt.

Some indeed take {מחלמים}, mechelmim, in a transitive sense, as it is in Hiphil, and ought to have been written here {מחליימים}, mechelimim; but it may be taken in the neuter gender. [211]

However this may be, the meaning of the Prophet is not ambiguous; for he imputes this to all the Jews, that they were deceived by vain dreams, and that the fault could not be confined to a few impostors, for it was an evil common to them all. And the pronoun {אתם}, atere, is emphatical, ye, he says, dream; for he sets these false dreams in opposition to prophecies. We know that God formerly revealed his will either by visions or by dreams. There were then dreams, which were divine, of which God was the author. But he shews here that the people devised all these impostures for themselves, so that it availed them nothing to pretend that they were prophets, the interpreters of God, and that they announced what they had received by dreams; for what makes the difference is, whether one dreams from his own brain, or whether God reveals to him in a dream what ought to be deemed oracular. We now then understand the design of the Prophet. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 29:9

9. For they prophesy falsely to you in my name: I have not sent them, saith the LORD.

9. Quoniam fallaciter (vel, in mendacio) ipsi prophetant vobis in nomine meo; non misi eos, dicit Jehova.

He confirms what he had said by this reason, that they ran without being called, according to what we found in Jeremiah 23:21. He then repudiates these false prophets, for they spoke not from the mouth of God. But the difference was rendered very obscure and indistinct, when they pompously alleged the name of God and professed that they brought forward nothing but what they had learnt from him; yet as we have elsewhere said, no one can be deceived except willingly and knowingly; for God never leaves his faithful people destitute of the spirit of discernment, provided they offer themselves cordially and sincerely to be taught by his true and legitimate servants. And then the Jews ought to have examined all the doctrines and all the prophecies by the rule of the Law. But if the Law was difficult to be understood, they ought, as I have said, to have sought of God the spirit of wisdom and

[211] All the ancient versions, and the Targ. too, render this clause, "Your dreams which ye dream." To dream a dream is a common phraseology in Hebrew. There is no instance of the noun here for dreams, in which it means dreamers, as Blayney renders it; the marginal reading in our version in Jeremiah 27:9, is no doubt correct, as the word is in every other passage rendered "dreams;" and the word is in another form when it means "dreamers," see Psalm 126:1. The last word is not found but here in the Hiphil form; but this form has not invariably a causative meaning, nor does it seem to have it here. Then the clause would be, "neither attend to your dreams which you are dreaming." — Ed.

discernment.

Jeremiah then did not without reason reject whatever the false prophets boasted of, for the purpose of gaining the approbation and applause of the people; for they were not sent nor approved by God. So also at this day, every one who wishes to distinguish with certainty between various doctrines, by which the world is agitated, nay, shaken, can without difficulty attain his object, provided he offers himself as a scholar to Christ, and connects the Law and the Prophets with the Gospel, and makes use of this rule to prove all doctrines; and provided in the meantime he trusts not to his own acumen, but submits himself to God and seeks of him the spirit of judgment and discrimination. It ought also to be observed, that in the same way the false prophets can be abundantly exposed when we thus shew that they are not sent by God; and we further convince them of vanity, when we prove their doctrine to be inconsistent with the Law and the Gospel.

However this may be, this principle ought to be held, that none ought to be attended to, but those who can shew that they bring messages from God and are furnished with his word. We have said elsewhere, that in order that any one may be accounted as sent by God, it is necessary, first, that he should be rightly called, and secondly, that he should faithfully execute his office; for whosoever thrusts in himself without the command of God, though he may speak what is true and holy, he yet deserves not the name of a Prophet or teacher; and then vocation itself will not be sufficient, except there be faithfulness and integrity. But what Jeremiah mainly insists on here is, that those who promised the people a return in a short time did not speak from the mouth of God: They prophesy falsely, he says, in my name; how? Because I have not sent them. It follows ---

Jeremiah 29:10

10. For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place.

10. Quia sic dicit Jehova, secundum mensuram (nam {מלאת} accipitur metaphorice pro mensura; sed adhuc aspera esset loquutio, ideo simplicius vertendum est, quia ubi impleti fuerint) in Babylone septuaginta anni, visitabo vos, et suscitabo super vos sermonem meum bonum, ut reducam vos ad locum hunc.

In order to expose the dreams by which the false prophets had inebriated the people, he again repeats what he had said, that the end of their exile could not be expected until the end of seventy years. And this way of teaching ought to be particularly observed, for the truth of God will ever avail to dissipate all the mists in which Satan never ceases to envelop the pure truth. As then we have before seen, that when the people are imbued with any error, it ought to be boldly resisted; so now we see with what weapons all God's servants ought to fight, in order to expose all those fallacies by which pure doctrine is assailed, even by setting in opposition to them the word of God: for this is the way which Jeremiah points out to us by his own example. He had spoken of the false prophets, he warned the people not to believe them; but as the minds of many were still vacillating, he confirms what he had said that they were not sent by God, because God never varies in his purpose, and never

changes, and is never inconsistent with himself: ``Now he has prefixed seventy years for your exile; whoever, then, tries to impugn that truth, is a professed and an open enemy to God.'' We now perceive the object of the Prophet; When seventy years then shall be fulfilled, etc [212]

The Prophet here puts a restraint on the Jews, that they might not hasten before the time; and then he gives them the hope of a return, provided they quietly rested until the end fixed on by God. There are then two things in this verse, --- that the people would ill consult their own good, if they hastened and promised to themselves a return before the end of seventy years, --- and that when that time was completed, the hope of a return would be certain, for God had so promised.

He adds, And I will raise up my good word towards you By good word he means what might bring joy to the Jews. Though God's word is fatal to the unbelieving, yet it never changes its nature; it ever remains good. And hence Paul says that the Gospel is a fatal odor to many, but that it is, nevertheless, a sweet odor before God, (2 Corinthians 2:16;) for it ought to be imputed to the fault of those who perish, that they receive not the doctrine of the Gospel to their own salvation. The word of God is then always good: but this commendation is to be referred to experience, that is, when God really shews that he is propitious to us. And a shorter definition cannot be given, than that the good word denotes the promises, by which God testifies his paternal favor. But we have seen elsewhere that threatenings are called an evil word: why so? This character cannot, indeed, as it has been just said, be suitably applied to God's word; yet God's word which threatens destruction is called evil, as it is said,

``I am he who create good and evil,'' (Isaiah 45:7)

but it is so according to our apprehension of its effects. And all this reasoning seems nearly superfluous, when we understand that God by the word of evil strikes the unbelieving with fear, but that the Prophet now means no other thing than to bear testimony to God's favor to the Jews: and hence he says, that they would find by experience, that God had not in vain promised what he had before mentioned.

But he is said to rouse up [213] his good word, that is, when it produced its effects before their eyes; for when God only speaks, and the thing itself does not yet appear, his word seems in a manner to he dormant and to be useless. And for seventy years the Jews could perceive no other thing than that God was displeased with them, and thus they were continually in fear; for the promise continued as it were dormant, as its effects were not as yet visible. God then is said to rouse up his word, when he proves that he has not promised anything in vain. The meaning is, that the prophecy which Jeremiah had related would not be fruitless; but if the people did not soon

[212] The words literally are, “When at the mouth (or extremity) of fillings (or, of fulfilments) in Babylon shall be seventy years,” etc., that is, when seventy years shall be completed, the whole number or measure being filled up. Blayney’s version is, “Surely when seventy years have been completed at Babylon.” But {{פ here is not rendered ``surely,'' but ``when,'' by the Targ. and the ancient versions. --- Ed

[213] The Vulg. is the same, “suscitabo — I will awaken,” etc.; and so the Sept. and the Targ.; but the Syr. is, “I will ratify,” or confirm. The primary meaning of {{קום is to rise, and in Hiphil, as here, to cause to rise, that is, to rouse, to awaken; its secondary meaning is, to stand, and in Hiphil, to cause to stand, that is, to ratify or confirm. The first idea is the most striking: the word of promise was as it were lying down and dormant for seventy years, and now it was to be roused up: ``I will rouse up for you the very word of mine, the good.'' This is the literal rendering, except we take the secondary meaning of the verb, which is also very suitable, ``I will ratify for you,'' etc. --- Ed

know this, yet God, when the time came, would really prove that he deceives not his people, nor allures them when he promises anything, by vain hopes.

And the Prophet explains himself, for he says that God would restore them to their own country: for this was the good word, the promise of deliverance, as the word, according to what the people felt, was evil, and bitter, and bad, when God had threatened that he would cast away the reprobate. But it is an accidental thing, as I have said, that men find God's word to be evil for them or adverse to them; for it proceeds from their own fault, and not from the nature of the word. It follows ---

Jeremiah 29:11

11. For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.

11. Quia ego cognosco cogitationes meas, quas ego cogito super vos, dicit Jehova, cogitationes pacis, et non in malum; ut dem vobis finem et expectationem.

He confirms the same thing, and employs many words, because it was difficult to raise up minds wholly broken down. For the world labors under two extreme evils, --- they sink in despair, or are too much exalted by foolish pride: nay, there is no moderation except when ruled by God's Spirit we recumb on his word; for when they devise vain hopes for themselves, they are immediately rapt up above the clouds, fly here and there, and in short think that they can climb into heaven; this is the excess of vain and foolish confidence: but when they are dejected, then they fall down wholly frightened, nay, being astonished and lifeless they lose every feeling, receive no comfort, and cannot taste of anything which God promises. And both these evils prevailed evidently among the Jews. We have seen how much the Prophet labored to lay prostrate their pride and arrogance; for they laughed at all threatenings, and remained ever secure; though God, as it were, with an armed hand and a drawn sword menaced them with certain destruction, yet nothing moved them. And when they were driven into exile, they were extremely credulous when the false prophets promised them a quick return; while, in the meantime, God, by his servants, shewed to them that he would be gracious to them, and after seventy years would become their deliverer; but they were deaf to all these things, nay, they rejected with disdain all these promises, and said,

``What! will God, forsooth, raise up the dead!'' *
*(Ezekiel 37:12)

This, then, is the reason why the Prophet now speaks so largely of their future redemption: it was difficult to persuade the Jews; for as they thought that they would soon return to their own country, they could not endure delay, nor exercise the patience which God commanded. They were at the same time, as we have said, quite confident, inasmuch as the false prophets filled their minds with vain hopes.

He therefore says, I know the thoughts which I think towards you Some think that God claims here, as what peculiarly belongs to him, the foreknowledge of future things; but this is foreign to the Prophet's meaning. There is here, on the contrary, an implied contrast between the certain counsel of God, and the vain imaginations in which the Jews indulged themselves. The same thing is meant when Isaiah says,

``As far as the heavens are from the earth, so far are my thoughts from your

thoughts,'' (Isaiah 55:9)

for they were wont absurdly to measure God by their own ideas. When anything was promised, they reasoned about its validity, and looked on all surrounding circumstances; and thus they consulted only their own brains. Hence God reproved them, and shewed how preposterously they acted, and said, that his thoughts were as remote from their thoughts as heaven is from the earth. So also in this place, though the two parts are not here expressed; the Prophet's object was no other than to shew, that the Jews ought to have surrendered themselves to God, and not to seek to be so acute as to understand how this or that would be done, but to feel convinced that what God had decreed could not be changed.

It must yet be remarked, that he speaks not here of his hidden and incomprehensible counsel. What then are the thoughts of which Jeremiah now speaks? They were those respecting the people's deliverance, after the time was completed, for God had promised that he would then be propitious to his Church. We hence see that the question here is not about the hidden counsels of God, but that the reference is simply to the word which was well known to the Jews, even to the prophecy of Jeremiah, by which he had predicted that the Jews would be exiles for seventy years, and would at last find that their punishment would be only a small chastisement, as it would only be for a time: I know then my thoughts But still he indirectly condemns the Jews, because they entertained no hope of deliverance except from what came within the reach of their senses. He then teaches us that true wisdom is to obey God, and to surrender ourselves to him; and that when we understand not his counsel, we ought resignedly to wait until the due time shall come.

He says that they were thoughts of peace, [214] that is, of benevolence. Peace, as it has been often said, is taken for felicity, as in Jeremiah 29:7,

``For the peace of Babylon shall be your peace;''

that is, if Babylon be prosperous, you shall be partakers of the same happiness. So now, in this place, God declares that his thoughts were those of peace, for he designed really to shew by the effect his paternal kindness towards his people.

He afterwards adds, that 1 may give you the end and the expectation By {אחרית}, achrit, which means in Hebrew the last thing, we are to understand here the end, as though he had said, that it was to be deemed as final ruin, when people had been driven away to a foreign land. For it was no small trial when the Jews were deprived of that land which was the rest and habitation of God; it was the same as though they had been cut off from every hope: it was then a sort of repudiation, and repudiation was a kind of death. But here God declares that he would put an end to their exile, as it was to be only for a time. It is hence to be inferred, that the people did not perish when they were led into exile, but that they were only chastised by God's hand.

[214] The word for "thoughts" might often be rendered "purposes," as it is sometimes in our version. The thoughts of God are his purposes. So here: "For I — I know the very purposes which I am purposing respecting you, saith Jehovah, — purposes of peace and not for evil, to restore you to this place." God, in saying, "to this place," represented himself as dwelling at Jerusalem, in the temple, where he had promised his presence. In mentioning purposes and not purpose, the intention probably was to shew its firmness and certainty. The Hebrews sometimes used the plural number in order to enhance the meaning, as "wisdoms" for perfect wisdom, in Proverbs 9:1. Then the meaning of the word would be, "the very sure purpose;" and in a version, the meaning, and not the word literally, ought to be given. — Ed.

He adds expectation, which Jerome has rendered ``patience,'' but in a very forced manner. There is, indeed, no doubt but that by this second word the Prophet more fully and clearly expressed what he meant by the first word, {אחרית}, achrit, even the end that was wished or desired, I will then give you the end, even that ye may enjoy the promises, as ye wish and expect, and ought to hope for, since God has made them. [215] Here I will make an end.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast been pleased kindly to shew to us thy paternal love, and givest us daily a testimony of it in thy Gospel, --- O grant, that we may not go astray, following our vagrant and erring thoughts, but acquiesce in thy simple truth; and though we must be exercised in this world by many conflicts, as our life is to be as it were a continual warfare, may we yet never doubt but that there is prepared for us a sure rest in heaven through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Eleventh

Jeremiah 29:12

12. Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you.

12. Et invocabitis me et ibitis; et orabitis me, et exaudiam vos.

Jeremiah pursues the same subject, even that the Jews, after having undergone the punishment allotted to them by God, would at length return to their own country and find God merciful, and hence learn that their chastisement in exile would prove useful to them. He had indeed in the last verse explained this with sufficient clearness, but he now expresses the manner; and that would be by calling on God. he uses two words, Ye shall call on me, he says, and pray. The verb put between these two {הלכתם}, elcatem, is regarded almost by all as referring to a right course of life, as though the Prophet had said, that those who before wandered after their own lusts would now walk in the way of God, that is, in his Law; but this seems to me to be too forced an explanation. I doubt not then, but that the Prophet here indirectly reproves the indifference of the people in not immediately acknowledging that they were chastised by God's hand, that they ought in due time to repent. To go then or to walk is the same thing, in my judgment, as though he had said, ``After having suffered the exile, not of one year, but of seventy years, ye shall then begin to be wise.''

It was not only sloth but stupidity, that they were not subdued by God's scourges so as to call on him; but as they were of a disposition so rude and refractory the Prophet here briefly reminds them that many years had been necessary to subdue them, as twenty or thirty years were not sufficient. We now then understand the design of the word {הלק}, elek, to walk. [216] The meaning then is, that after having

[215] These two words are omitted in the Sept.; "the end and patience," is the Vulg.; "the end and hope," the Targ.; "the hope," only, the Syr. It is better to retain the words apart than to unite them, as many have done: "the end" was that of their troubles and exile, and "the expectation" was that of a return to their own country, — two things completely distinct though cotemporaneous: "To give you the end (of your exile) and the expectation (of a return,)" that is, the fulfillment of it. It is a metonymy, expectation is put for its object, or the thing expected. — Ed.

[216] The two first verbs are wanting in the Sept. and the Targ., and the second in the Syr. The Vulg. is according to our version, which is literally the Hebrew: and there are no various

profited under the scourges of God, they would become humble so as to deprecate his wrath.

But there is added a promise, that God would hear them. It may however appear, that God promised conversion even in the first clause; and, no doubt, prayer is the fruit of repentance, for it proceeds from faith; and repentance is the gift of God. And further, we cannot call on God rightly and sincerely except by the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit; for he it is who not only dictates our words, but also creates groanings in our hearts. And thus Augustin, writing against the Pelagians, understands the passage, and proves that it is not in the power of man either to convert himself or to pray; ``for God,'' he says, ``would in vain promise what is in the power of man to do; and this is the promise, ye shall pray; it then follows, that we do not pray through the impulse of our own flesh, but when the Holy Spirit directs our hearts, and in a manner prays in us.'' I do not, however, know whether the Prophet intended to speak in so refined a manner. From other passages of Scripture it is easy to prove, that we cannot pray to God, except he anticipates us by his own Spirit. But as to this passage, I prefer to take a simpler meaning, that God would hear, when they began to pray; but yet he shews that it would not be after a short space of time, because they were almost untameable, and would not repent until after many years. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 29:13

13. And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.

13. Et quaeretis me, et invenietis, quia quaeretis in toto corde vestro.

He confirms in other words the same thing; and yet the repetition, as we said yesterday, is not useless; for as the Jews perversely despised all threatenings, so it was difficult for them to receive any taste of God's goodness from his promises. This then is the reason why the Prophet employs many words on this subject. By the word seek, he means prayers and supplications, as mentioned in the last verse. And Christ also, exhorting his disciples to pray, says, ``Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened to you.'' There is no doubt but that he speaks there of prayer; he yet adopted various modes of speaking, derived from the common habits of men. But to seek, when we feel the need of God's grace, is nothing else than to pray. Hence the Prophet says, ye shall seek me and ye shall find me And though he addresses here the Israelites, yet this doctrine ought to be extended to the whole Church; for God testifies that he will be propitious to all who flee to him.

But as hypocrites are abundantly noisy, and seem to surpass the very saints in the ardor of their zeal, when the external profession is only regarded, the Prophet adds, Because [217] ye shall seek me with your whole heart There is no doubt but that

readings. It is difficult to understand the meaning here of the second verb, go, or proceed. Some give this meaning, "And ye shall call upon me and shall go to your country; and ye shall pray to me, and I will hearken to you." But the sense most suitable appears to be the following, — "And ye shall call on me, and ye shall go on and intercede with me, and I will hearken to you." The verb {{הלך is used in the sense of advancing or of going on in a course that is begun. See Genesis 26:13; Exodus 19:19. To ``intercede for themselves and others, was more than to call upon God. From calling they would go on to intercede, earnestly to plead for themselves and others, and then the promise is that God would hear them. --- Ed

[217] The {{כי here is rendered ``when'' in our version, and in the ancient versions, except the Sept., where it is; {ὅτι}, ``for,'' or because. The most usual meaning of the particle is ``because;'' and it may be so rendered here; for sincerity may be justly

the Jews groaned a thousand times every year when oppressed by the Chaldeans; for they had to bear all kind of reproaches, and then they had nothing safe or secure. They were therefore under the necessity, except they were harder than iron, to offer some prayers. But God shews that the seasonable time would not come, until their prayers proceeded from a right feeling; this he means by the whole heart. It is indeed certain that men never turn to God with their whole heart, nor is the whole heart ever so much engaged in prayer as it ought to be; but the Prophet sets the whole heart in opposition to a double heart. Perfection, then, is not what is to be understood here, which can never be found in men, but integrity or sincerity.

We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet's words, --- that the Jews, when they began in earnest to flee to God, would find him propitious, provided only they did this in sincerity of heart and not in dissimulation; and also that this would not take place soon, for their hardness and obstinacy were greater than that they could be brought to repent in a short time. Therefore God reminds them that there was need of many evils, so that they might at length turn and divest themselves of that perverseness to which they had wholly surrendered themselves.

Now the whole of this, as I have already observed, ought to be applied to the benefit of the Church; for this promise is to be extended to all the godly, --- that when they call on God in their miseries, he will hear them. And Jeremiah seems to have taken this sentence from Isaiah,

``As soon as thou callest on me, I will hear thee; before thou speakest, I will stretch forth my hand.'' (Isaiah 58:9)

And this circumstance also ought to be noticed, that the Prophet addressed the Jews who were miserably oppressed. Let us then know that this sentence is rightly addressed to those in distress, who seem to have God against them and displeased with them; and this is the seasonable time which is mentioned by David in Psalm 32:6.

This passage also teaches us, that it is no wonder that the Lord doubles his scourges and does not immediately pardon us, because we are not so ready to bend as to return to him on the first day. He is therefore constrained by our perverseness to chastise us for a longer time; and yet this promise is still to be held valid, that if we even late repent, God will be still propitious to us, only that the reprobate are not under this pretext to indulge in their vices; for we see that profane men trifle with God, and wickedly abuse his paternal indulgence. Let the sinner then beware lest he should lay up for himself a store of vengeance, if he waits till the end of life. But there is still a hope set before those who have been long torpid in their sins, that if they at length come, though late, they shall still come in time, for God will hear them. But the exception ought to be carefully observed, that God will not be intreated, except he is sought with the whole heart, that is, in sincerity. So there is

assigned as a reason why prayers are heard, without the implication of any merit. Indeed, in the very nature of things, prayer without sincerity cannot possibly be accepted. In our version the meaning of the two verbs is reversed; the first ought rather to be rendered as meaning ``to search for,'' and the latter to ``seek.'' With the first is connected ``finding,'' and this implies searching, and the verb {בקש} means sometimes to search for what is lost. The verse should be, --- ``And ye shall search for me and ye shall find me, because ye shall seek me with all your heart.'' To seek God means to seek his favor. They would search for him whom they had, as it were, lost, and they would find him because they would seek his favor with all sincerity; it would not be for a mercenary purpose, but for the sake of enjoying God's favor. --- Ed

no reason for us to wonder that his ears are often closed to our prayers, because we only pretend to seek him, and that we are endued with no sincerity appears from our life. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 29:14

14. And I will be found of you, saith the LORD: and I will turn away your captivity, and I will gather you from all the nations, and from all the places whither I have driven you, saith the LORD; and I will bring you again into the place whence I caused you to be carried away captive.

14. Et inveniar a vobis, dicit Jehova, et reducam captivitatem vestram, et colligam (vel, congregabo) vox ex omnibus gentibus et ex omnibus locis quo expulero vos illue, dicit Jehova; et redire faciam vos ad locum e quo expuli vos illinc (abundat).

The Prophet now applies what he seemed to have spoken generally. He then shews the effect of God's favor, after having been reconciled to his people, even that he would restore their captivity, and gather them from all places. This was particularly said to the Jews; but the two former verses contain, as I have said, a general doctrine. He had before said, Ye shall find me; but he says now, I shall be found by you, or, I will shew myself to you. There is an implied contrast between the hiding and the manifestation, for God had in a manner hid himself during the time of exile; but he suddenly made his face to shine forth, and thus manifested himself as a Father, after having apparently forgotten his people. Suitably then does the Prophet speak here; for though the Lord ever looks on us, we on the other hand do not see him, nay, we think that he is far from us. But he then only appears to us, when we perceive that he cares for our salvation.

By saying, from all nations and from all places, he evidently obviated a doubt which otherwise might have crept into the minds of many, ``How can it ever be that God will gather us after we have been thus dispersed?'' For no certain region had been allotted to them, in which they might dwell together so as to form one body; but they had been scattered as by a violent whirlwind like chaff or stubble; and God had so driven them away that there was no hope of being again gathered. As then it was incredible, that a people so dispersed could be collected together, the Prophet says, ``from all nations and from all places.'' The same thing is declared in the Psalm,

``He will gather the dispersions of Israel.'' (Psalm 147:2)

For when the Jews looked on their dreadful dispersion, they could entertain no hope. We see then how the Prophet encouraged them still to hope, and bade them to struggle against this trial. The sentence seems to have been taken from Moses, for he says,

``Though you be scattered through the extreme parts of the world, yet God will gather you.'' (Deuteronomy 30:1-3)

We see that Moses there expressly reproves the unbelief of the people, if they despaired of God's mercy and salvation, because they were torn and scattered. he therefore shews that God's power was abundantly sufficient to collect them again, though they were scattered to the four quarters of the world. We now perceive the object of the Prophet. [218]

[218] The order found in this deserves notice; restoration is mentioned first, and then the means

And hence we may gather a useful doctrine, --- that God in a wonderful manner gathers his Church when scattered, so as to form it into one body, however he may for a time obliterate its name and even its very appearance. And of this he has given us some proof in our time. For who could have thought that what we now see with our eyes, would ever take place? that God would in a secret manner gather his elect, when there was everywhere a dreadful desolation, and no corner found in the world where two or three faithful men could dwell together. We hence see that this prophecy has not been fulfilled only at one time, but that the grace of God is here set forth, which he has often manifested, and still manifests in gathering his Church. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 29:15-17

15. Because ye have said, The LORD hath raised us up prophets in Babylon;

15. Quoniam dixistis, Excitabit nobis Jehova prophetas in Babylone;

16. Know that thus saith the LORD of the king that sitteth upon the throne of David, and of all the people that dwelleth in this city, and of your brethren that are not gone forth with you into captivity;

16. Ideo sic dicit Jehova regi sedenti super solium Davidis et toti populo sedenti in hac urbe (hoc est, habitanti, nam {יושב} hic diversis modis accipitur,) fratribus vestris, qui non egressi sunt vobiscum in exilium;

17. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will send upon them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, and will make them like vile figs, that cannot be eaten, they are so evil.

17. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Ecce ego mitto in eos gladium, famem, pestem; et ponam eos tanquam ficus sordidas (aut, foetidas,) quae non comeduntur prae malitia (id est, prae amaritudine.)

Many interpreters connect the first of these verses with the preceding ones, and they seem not to think so without reason; for the reason given is not unsuitable, if we refer to what the Prophet had said, even that the Jews were by no means to hope for a return until the end of seventy years. But the meaning I adopt is more probable; the particle {כי}, ki, is repeated; the first is causal, and the second an illative; [219] and consistently with the usage of Scripture the learned and the experienced think that this is the real meaning of the Prophet. He then says, that the captives were very foolish who hoped for a quick end to their exile, because they had false prophets who gave them such a promise; ye have then said, that prophets have been given you, in Chaldea, and that God had there pitied you, because there are those who prophesy

necessary for the purpose, the gathering of the people from all places; "I will restore your captivity," or captives, "and I will gather," etc. The concluding sentence is, "where I have removed you from there;" where, and from there, instead of whence. — Ed.

[219] Gataker approves of this and says, evidently referring to Calvin, "So an interpreter of prime note rendereth it." That {{כי is sometimes an iliative is generally admitted; and here the connection cannot otherwise be seen. There is a large gap after the 15th verse (Jeremiah 29:15) in the Sept., the verses 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20 (Jeremiah 29:16-20), are omitted, but not in the other versions nor in the Targ.; and Blayney has thereby been led to put the 15th verse out of its place and set it between the 20th and the 21st, but without sufficient reason. The connection, as shewn by Calvin, is suitable as the verse now is, and by removing it, the drift of what follows is not so clearly seen. Another thing advanced by Blayney, though countenanced by Houbigant and Horsley, two rival innovators, is not to be admitted, --- that the letter terminates at the end of the 20th verse (Jeremiah 29:20), and not at the end of the 23d (Jeremiah 29:23), and that what follows forms another letter. It is evident that what is contained in the 24th (Jeremiah 29:24) and in the following verses to the end, was written in consequence of an answer from Babylon to this letter. Compare verse 5th (Jeremiah 29:5) with the 28th (Jeremiah 29:28). --- Ed.

of a return in a short time. As then ye are so foolishly credulous, Thus saith Jehovah to your brethren, he then turns his discourse to the exiles, and exhorts them not to suffer themselves to be led astray. But here he indirectly reproves them, because they could not bear a condition which was even better than that of the residue, as though he had said, ``What means this your unreasonableness! that when all your ways are closed up against you, and the power of your conqueror is so great that ye cannot move a finger without his nod, ye should yet think that you shall be set free in two years! and surely if you were before foolishly secure and confident, your calamities ought now to make you humble. But your brethren, who seem yet to enjoy liberty because they dwell at Jerusalem, (for those alone were then remaining,) even these your brethren suffer far more grievously than ye do.''

We now perceive for what purpose the Prophet, after having addressed the captives, turned his discourse to King Zedekiah and to the Jews, who as yet remained at home or in their own country; it was, that the captives might hence know how great was their madness to promise to themselves a return, after having been driven to remote lands, when final ruin was nigh both the king and the people, who as yet remained at Jerusalem; Thus then saith Jehovah to the king who sits on the throne of David, and to all the people who sit in this city, etc

To sit, as I have already said, is to be taken here in two different senses; the king is said to sit on his throne while he retains his dignity; but the people are said to sit while they rest and dwell quietly in any place. It is not without reason that the word king is here expressly mentioned, for the exiles were ever wont to connect it with the hope of their return; ``The Temple still remains, God is there worshipped, and the kingdom still exists; these things being secure, it cannot be all over with our nation.'' The safety of the people depended on the kingdom and the priesthood. When therefore, on the one hand, they fixed their eyes on royalty, and on the other hand, on the priesthood and sacrifices, they felt persuaded that it could not be otherwise but that God would soon restore them; for God had promised that the kingdom of David would be perpetual, as long as the sun and moon would shine in heaven. Except then this splendor or glory had been extinguished, the Israelites could not have been humiliated, especially as those who had been led into exile were of the tribe of Judah. We now understand why the word king was expressly mentioned. Though, then, a king still sat on the throne of David, he yet declares that his condition and that of his people was harder than that of the captive multitude.

He says, I will pursue them with the sword, and famine, and pestilence The surrender of Jeconiah, as we have elsewhere seen, was voluntary; he was therefore more kindly received by the king of Babylon. At length the city was attacked, and as the siege was long, there was more rage felt against the king and the whole people, for the Chaldeans had been wearied by their obstinacy. Hence it was, that they dealt more severely with them. But nothing happened except through the just vengeance of God; for though they exasperated the Chaldeans, there is no doubt but that God blinded their minds so that they procured for themselves a heavier judgment. It was, then, a punishment inflicted on them by God; and hence rightly does Jeremiah testify that God was the author of those calamities, for the Chaldeans, as we have

seen elsewhere, were only ministers and executioners of God's vengeance; Jehovah of hosts then says, Behold, I will pursue you, etc.

He then adds, And I will make them like worthless figs He calls the figs here {שערים}, sherim, worthless; but in the twenty-fourth chapter he called them bad; still the meaning is the same. There is no doubt but that he refers to the prophecy which we there explained. For the Prophet saw two baskets of figs, in one of which were sweet figs, and in the other bitter. God asked, ``What seest thou?'' he said, ``Good figs, very good, and bad figs, very bad.'' God afterwards added, ``The good and sweet figs are the captives; for I will at length shew mercy to them, and liberty to return shall be given them. They shall then be good figs, though now a different opinion is formed; for they who still lived at Jerusalem, think themselves more happy than the exiles; but the bad and bitter figs,'' he says, ``are this people who pride themselves, because they have not been led into captivity; for I will consume them with the pestilence, and the famine, and the sword.'' This was the Prophet's language in that passage. He now again declares that King Zedekiah and all the people would be like bitter and putrid figs, which, being so bad, are not fit to be eaten. He then adds, ---

Jeremiah 29:18-19

18. And I will persecute them with the sword, with the famine, and with the pestilence, and will deliver them to be removed to all the kingdoms of the earth, to be a curse, and an astonishment, and an hissing, and a reproach, among all the nations whither I have driven them:

18. Et persequar (ad verbum est, post eos: persequar eos) gladio, fame et peste; et ponam eos in commotionem (vel, concussionem) cunctis regnis terrae, in execrationem, et in stuporem, et in sibilum, et in probrum inter cunctas gentes ad quas expulero eos (vel, quo expulero eos illuc:)

19. Because they have not hearkened to my words, saith the LORD, which I sent unto them by my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them; but ye would not hear, saith the LORD.

19. Propterea quod non audierunt sermones meos, inquit Jehovah, quos misi ad eos peer servos meos Prophetas, mane surgendo et mittendo; et non audistis, inquit Jehova.

He goes on with the same subject, --- that he would not cease to consume them with pestilence, famine, and the sword, until he wholly destroyed them, according to what we find in the twenty-fourth chapter. He repeats what is in that chapter; but the words are taken from the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, and from the twenty-ninth. The prophets, we know, drew the substance of their doctrine from the fountain of the Law, and, strictly speaking, brought forward nothing new, but accommodated the doctrine of Moses to the circumstances of the time in which each lived.

Hence we find among the curses of the Law these words, I will set them for a commotion, or a concussion. The word may be explained in two ways, --- either that the nations would tremble at such a sad spectacle, --- or that they would shake their head. The second view is to be preferred, according to what I have stated elsewhere,

I will then set them for a commotion, that is, every one who shall see their miseries, will shake his head in contempt, as though he had said, ``All will assent to the just vengeance of God, and ye shall be objects of reproach among all the heathens; for all will acknowledge that ye suffer most justly for your sins.''

He adds, for a curse The word {אלה}, ale, is properly an oath, but is taken in many places for a curse, which is introduced or understood when we swear. But as men often expose themselves to punishment for perjury, the word means, frequently, a curse; and what is to be understood, as it has been explained elsewhere, is a pattern or formula of a curse; and we have seen in what sense the Prophet said this, that is, that every one who wished to curse himself or others, or to imprecate, as they say, some dire things, would take the Jews for an example, ``May God curse thee as he did the Jews;'' or, ``May he draw forth his severity to thy ruin, as he did to the Jews.'' He then says that they would be for a curse, that is, that they would be so miserable that they would be taken as an example in imprecations.

He afterwards adds, for an astonishment, as he had spoken of the shaking of the head, so now he mentions astonishment, which is something more grievous, that is, when such a spectacle presents itself as makes all men to stand astonished, as not knowing what it means. Hissing is mentioned; as it is said elsewhere that they would be a proverb, {משל}, meshel, and also a taunt, so Jeremiah says in this place, that they would be a hissing, as he has spoken of the shaking of the head.

And lastly he adds, that they would be a reproach even to all nations, for all would deem them worthy of their calamities, however grievous they were, when a comparison would be made between their iniquities and God's vengeance. The reason follows, because they hearkened not to God But I cannot now finish.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast given so remarkable a proof both of thy wrath and of thy paternal kindness in thy dealings with thine ancient people, --- O grant, that we may not by our obstinacy provoke thine extreme wrath, but in time anticipate thy judgment, so that we may find thee reconcilable, and never doubt but that thou wilt be merciful to us when we sincerely turn to thee; and as we are so prone to all evil, yea, and rush headlong into it, and as our wickedness and hardness are so great, grant to us, we pray thee, the spirit of meekness, that we may in all things submit ourselves to thee, and thus render ourselves thy children, that we may also find thee to be our Father in thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Twelfth

The Prophet, after having denounced God's judgment on those who remained in their own country as well as on the exiles, subjoins this reason, because they hearkened not to the word of the Lord; and this was a most grievous sin. Though ignorance is no excuse before God, for those who are without the Law must perish; yet the servant who knew his Lord's will and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes. And the more abundant God's grace is in calling us to the right way of salvation, the more base is our ingratitude when we close our ears and disregard the concern and care which he manifests for our salvation. Let us then know that nothing is less tolerable than the rejection of the prophetic word.

And we must notice what follows, which I sent them by my servants the prophets The Jews might have otherwise objected and said, that they did not intend to be rebellious against God, but that there were many contentions among the prophets. Lest, then, they should seek an evasion by a pretense of this kind, he says that the word, brought by his ministers and witnesses the prophets, was worthy of no less reverence than if angels came down from heaven to them. And this passage serves to shew the use of external doctrine, which fanatical men despise, thinking the hidden word sufficient, that is, whatever they may dream. But God thus proves the obedience of our faith, while he rules us by the hand and labor of men. Whosoever then rejects the faithful teachers of the word, shews that he is a despiser of God himself. The meaning is, that God defines his word, not as an oracle of any kind, but as the doctrine which has been deposited with faithful teachers.

He afterwards adds, rising up early and sending The metaphor is taken from men who are sedulous and diligent. We indeed know that God never awakes and never changes place; but he could not otherwise express his paternal care toward his people, as though he had said, that he was sedulously engaged in admonishing them. And thus the more inexcusable was rendered the sloth of the people; for God hastened as it were to rise up early, as they who spare no labor, but willingly deprive themselves of some portion of their sleep, that they may complete their work or their journey. As God then manifested so much diligence in securing the wellbeing of men, the more shameful is the sloth of men, when they become deaf, or are not moved, but remain in their indifference. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 29:20-21

20. Hear ye therefore the word of the LORD, all ye of the captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon:

20. Et vos audite sermonem Jehovae cuncta captivitas, quam misi Jerosolyma Babylonem;

21. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, of Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and of Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, which prophesy a lie unto you in my name; Behold, I will deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes;

21. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, ad Achab filium Colaniah, et ad Zedechiam filium Maassiae, prophetantes vobis in nomine meo mendacium, Ecce ego ponam eos (vel, tradam) in manum Nebuehadnezer regis Babylonis; et percutiet eos coram oculis vestris:

Jeremiah announces a special prophecy, but in confirmation of his former doctrine. His object is still the same, to prevent the captives, as they had begun, to listen to flatteries, and to make them feel assured that they were to bear their exile till the end of seventy years. But he speaks here of three impostors; he connects two of them together, and mentions the third by himself. He directs his discourse especially to all the captives, for he deigned not to address those who professed to be God's enemies, and sold themselves as slaves to the devil for the purpose of deceiving. It was therefore useless to spend labor on them. But he addressed the whole people, and at the same time foretold what would happen to these two false prophets, even Ahab

and Zedekiah. He calls one the son of Kolaiah, and the other the son of Maaseiah; for Ahab was a name then in frequent use, and Zedekiah was a name which, on account of the memory of a pious and godly king, was in high esteem among the good. To prevent then any mistake, he mentioned their fathers.

The import of the prophecy is, that a judgment would soon overtake them, as they would be killed by King Nebuchadnezzar. They were in exile, but such madness had possessed them, that they hesitated not to provoke the wrath of that tyrant whom they knew to be cruel and bloody. Then Jeremiah declares, that as they thus deceived the people, they would soon be punished, as Nebuchadnezzar would slay them. There is yet no doubt but that Nebuchadnezzar had regard to his own private advantage; for before they were brought before him, he wished to allay every cause of tumult. As they ceased not to encourage the hope of a speedy return, without some check, it could not be otherwise but that frequent disturbances would arise. Therefore Nebuchadnezzar, as it is usual with earthly kings, consulted his own benefit. But he was in the meantime the servant of God; for those two impostors who had promised a return to the people, were to be exposed to contempt. Their death then disclosed their vanity, for it thereby appeared that they were not sent by God. It is indeed true that God's faithful servants are often cruelly treated, nay, even slain by the ungodly. But the case was different as to these two. For they were not proved guilty of falsehood, because they happened to have unhappily prophesied, but because they raised up a standard as it were, and said, that the people would soon return to their own country; and hence it was that they were slain. We then see that what would take place was not without reason foretold by Jeremiah; for from their death it might have been concluded, that whatever they had promised respecting the return of the people, were mere fallacies; and they were slain even before the time which they had predicted. We now perceive the meaning. We shall now notice the words.

He says, Hear ye, the, whole captivity, the word of Jehovah He would have the Jews to be attentive, for if a thousand impostors had been killed, yet their faith in falsehood would never have been destroyed, had not Jeremiah prophesied before the time what would take place. He then sits here as a judge; for though Nebuchadnezzar ordered them to be killed, yet it appears evident that it was ordained by God, and indeed for this end, that the people might learn to repent. We hence see that Jeremiah was their judge; and Nebuchadnezzar afterwards executed what God by the mouth of his servant had pronounced as a judgment. This is the reason why he addressed his words to the whole people.

He yet at the same time adds, that they had been sent by God, whom I have sent, etc. and he said this, in order that they might not imagine that they went there by chance or by adverse fortune, and that they might acknowledge that when they were deprived of their own country, it was a just punishment for their sins.

By saying, I will give (or deliver) them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the Prophet still more clearly expresses what I have just said, that they would be thus slain by the order of the king, because God had determined what was to be done to them. And he assigns the cause of their death or mentions its author, that the Jews

might not fix their eyes on the king of Babylon. What had Nebuchadnezzar in view? to preserve a peaceable kingdom; he saw the danger of a tumult if he pardoned these two men, who had disturbed the people. Lest, then, the Jews should look only on the design of the king, God here sets before them another and a higher reason, even because they prophesied falsely in his name. A clearer explanation follows, ---

Jeremiah 29:22

22. And of them shall be taken up a curse by all the captivity of Judah which are in Babylon, saying, The LORD make thee like Zedekiah, and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire;

22 Et sumetur ab ipsis maledictio apud omnem captivatem Jehjudah, quae ist in Babylone, dicendo, Statuat to Jehova ut Zedechiam et sicut Achab, quos combussit rex Babylonis igni (vel, ustalavit, vel, frixit etiam, ut alii vertunt; {קלה} non tantum significat comburere, sed ustulare, vel paulatim urere, quod idem est, sed Hieronymus vertit fuisse frictos;)

Here we are to notice the circumstances; for if Jeremiah had only spoken of their death, the Jews might still have been doubtful whether he had delivered a prophecy; but when now is added what kind of punishment was inflicted on them, Jeremiah points out as by the finger what was as yet unknown, and even incredible. It might indeed have happened to the captives that the king should order them to be slain, but it could not have occurred to any man to suppose what Jeremiah declares, that they would be roasted [220] in the fire We hence see that God here obviates the evasions of perverse minds, so that there would be no room for evading, when he specifies the very kind of death which they were to undergo.

But he says first, Taken from them shall be a curse, that is, the form of cursing. Mentioned yesterday was {אלה}, ale, an oath; he puts down now {קללה}, kolle; and {קלל}, koll, is to curse. The meaning then is, that they would become an exemplar of a curse to all the captives, who would say, May God make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab whom the king of Babylon roasted The cause of their death is again repeated; and the Prophet did not without reason dwell on this, that he might turn away the eyes of the people from the immediate cause, which was commonly known, that is, that Nebuchadnezzar would not endure any tumults to be raised in his dominions; that they might therefore acknowledge God to be the author of this punishment, he says, ---

Jeremiah 29:23

23. Because they have committed villany in Israel, and have commited adultery with their neighbours' wives, and have spoken lying words in my name, which I have not commanded them; even I know, and am a witness, saith the LORD.

23. Propterea quod fecerunt (vel, patrarunt) flagitium in Israel, et scortati sunt cum uxoribus sociorum suorum, et locuti sunt sermonem in nomine meo mendaciter; quod (vel, quem sermonem) non mandaveram ipsis; ego autem sum cognitor et testis, dicit Jehova.

We perceive why the Prophet mentions the cause of their death; it was, that the

[220] "Fried" is the word used by the Sept., the Vulg., the Syr., and the Targ. The Hebrew word is found as a verb in no other passage, but as a participle applied to parched corn, Leviticus 2:14; Joshua 11. — Ed

Jews might regard the event, not according to their own thoughts, but that they might feel assured that God took vengeance on the impiety of those who had falsely pretended his name. For we know that we always look here and there, and that when we find an immediate cause, we neglect and esteem as nothing the judgments of God. In order then to correct this evil, Jeremiah again repeats that Zedekiah and Ahab were not punished by the king of Babylon, but by God himself, because they committed villany in Israel. Some render, {נבלה}, nubele, enormity or abomination; but I am disposed to render it villany, or turpitude, or filthiness. [221] They, then, committed a filthy thing He afterwards specifies two kinds, that they committed adultery with the wives of their friends, and that they falsely prophesied in the name of God

By the first clause we see how great was the stupidity of the people, for they did not consider what was the life of those who pretended to be witnesses for God, as though they were angels come down from heaven. Their wickedness might indeed have been concealed; but there is no doubt but that the Jews were extremely stupid, for they had willingly seized on the vain promises, which afforded them gratification. As, then, they were anxious to return, and wished to be restored to their own country as it were against the will of God, and sought to break through all obstacles by the force of their own obstinacy; it was a just punishment, that they were so blinded as not to see what was yet sufficiently manifest, even that these vaunting prophets were adulterers, and that the filthiness of their life was so great, that it was certain that they had nothing divine or heavenly in them.

Then there is another kind of evil added, that they prophesied falsely in God's name. This was an atrocious crime; for as his truth is precious to God, so it is a sacrilege that he cannot bear, when his truth is turned into falsehood. But as the minds of them all were so corrupted, that no one would open his eyes, God testifies, that though their adulteries might be unknown to the people, that though their vanity in their false prophecies might not be perceived, yet it was enough that he knew and was a witness

Now this passage is worthy of special notice; for hypocrites, until they find that they are proved guilty before men, fear nothing, nay, they haughtily exalt themselves, even when things are justly laid to their charge. Since, then, the hardness and dishonesty of hypocrites are so great, it is necessary to summon them before God's tribunal, that they may know that they may a hundred times be acquitted by the world, and yet that this derogates nothing from God's judgment. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 29:24-27

24. Thus shalt thou also speak to Shemaiah the Nehelamite, saying,

24. Et ad Semaiah Nehelamitem dices, dicendo, (sic dices,)

[221] "Iniquity" is the Sept.; "folly," the Vulg.; "crime" or offense, the Syr.; and "disgrace," the Targ. Vileness, or abomination, is its meaning. It is applied to the sin of prostitution, Genesis 34:7, — of stealing, Joshua 7:15, — of murder, Judges 20:6, — of sodomy, Judges 19:24, — of incest, 2 Samuel 13:12, — and of base ingratitude, 1 Samuel 25:25. The most suitable term for all these places is abomination, and not "folly," as in our version. It means what is hateful, vile, contemptible, or abominable. It refers here to what was abominably filthy — adultery; and to what was abominably wicked and presumptuous — speaking lies in God's name. — Ed

25. Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Because thou hast sent letters in thy name unto all the people that are at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, and to all the priests, saying,

25. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, dicendo, Propterea quod tu misisti in nomine meo literas ad totum populum, qui est Jerosolymae, et ad Zephaniam filium Maassiae, et ad cunctos sacerdotes, dicendo,

26. The LORD hath made thee priest in the stead of Jehoiada the priest, that ye should be officers in the house of the LORD, for every man that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet, that thou shouldest put him in prison, and in the stocks.

26. Jehova posuit to (vel, constituit to) sacerdotem pro Jehoiada sacerdote, ut sitis praefecti domus Jehovae super omnem virum insanum (vel, arreptitium) et prophetantem, ut ponas ipsum in carcem (alii vertunt, in cippum) et in compedes (vel, manicas, quod aliis magis placet.)

27. Now therefore why hast thou not reproved Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you?

27. Et tu quare non increpuisti Jeremiam Anathotitem, qui prophetat vobis?

Here Jeremiah prophesies respecting a third person, who had written a letter to the priests and to the whole people against himself, and had expostulated with the chief priest and with others, because Jeremiah had, with impunity, long exhorted the people to bear their long exile. This is the import of the passage; but as to his punishment we shall see what it was at the end of the chapter. I did not wish to give the whole, because I cannot finish this prophecy today. I have therefore taken the former part only, even that Shemaiah had not only encouraged the people, as others did, to hope for a return, and to raise a commotion, but had also scattered his poison at Jerusalem, and had endeavored to load Jeremiah with ill-will, that he might be slain as a false prophet, and an enemy to the public good, as well as to the Law and the Temple.

Thou shalt then say to or of Shemaiah, for {אל}, al, may be taken in either sense.[222] His crime is now related, we shall hereafter see what his punishment was. His crime was, that he wrote in God's name Had he only been a fanner of cruelty, he would have deserved no pardon; but his crime was doubled, for he dared to pretend the authority of God, and to boast that he was as it were his scribe, as though he had said that his letter had been dictated by the Holy Spirit, that he had not spoken his own thoughts, or presumptuously, but that God could not endure the liberty given to Jeremiah; for though he continually preached of long exile, yet the chief-priest suffered him, and no one of the whole priestly order opposed him; and at the same time he blames the people for their indulgence. That he did all this in God's name was far more grievous than if he had written as a private individual. And it is said that he had written to the whole people, even in order that they might all in a body unite against Jeremiah. For, had he written only to the priests, they might have objected that they were not at liberty to act so violently against Jeremiah, as sedition might be raised. We hence see the craft of this base man; though he despised the people,

[222] He is called the "Nehelamite." Some render the word "a dreamer:" but, as Blayney observes, "the termination speaks it to be a patronymic." It refers probably to the place of his birth. — Ed.

yet that all of them, even the least, might help the priests to do this act of cruelty, and that there might be the union of all, he included the whole people in his letter.

He afterwards mentioned the priest and all the priests The word priest, in the singular number, meant the high-priest: then the priests were not only those descended from Aaron, but all the Levites. There was the high-priest, and then the descendants of Aaron were the chief, and, as it were, the colleagues of the high priest; but the Levites were an inferior order, though here by the priests he means also the Levites.

Here follows the subject of the letter, Jehovah hath made thee a priest, etc. Here the impostor Shemaiah accuses the high-priest of ingratitude, because he had been chosen in the place of another. For it is probable that Jehoiada was still living, but that he had been led away into Chaldea with the other exiles. As then so high a dignity had, beyond hope, and before the time, come to the high-priest, the false prophet reproves him, because he did not rightly acknowledge this favor of God, as though he had said, that he was rendering an unworthy reward to God, who had raised him to that high station: God, he said, hath made thee a priest in the place of Jehoiada the priest Thus the ministers of Satan transform themselves into angels of light; and yet they cannot so dexterously imitate God's servants, but that their deceit makes itself presently known; for craftiness is very different from a right and prudent counsel. God endues his servants with counsel and wisdom; but Satan, with craft and guile. Though, then, at the first view, some artifice appears in this letter of the false prophet, yet we may gather from its contents, that he falsely pretended the name of God, that he falsely alleged that the chief priest was chosen in the place of Jehoiada. That ye should be, he says: at first he addresses the high-priest, but now he includes also others, that ye should be the keepers, or the rulers of the house of God [223] For though the chief power was in the high-priest, yet as he could not alone undertake everything, it was necessary for him to have others connected with him. This is the reason why Shemaiah not only says that the high-priest was a ruler in the Temple of God, but after having placed him in the highest honor, mentions also others.

He says against every man that is mad; so {משגע}, meshego, is rendered by Jerome, and I think not unsuitably; for the word means properly one that is insane: but this was applied to false teachers, because they boasted that they were under a divine impulse, when they spoke their own thoughts. This appears evident from the

[223] The Hebrew is, "that there might be overseers in the house of Jehovah for every one," etc. He was a priest under the high-priest for this purpose. Zephaniah was second in authority, as it appears from chapter 52:24. He was probably the ruler or governor of the Temple, as Pashur was, Jeremiah 20:1. Hence the paraphrase of the Targum as to this clause, "That thou mightest be made the chief of the priests in the house of the sanctuary of the Lord for every one," etc. Blayney thinks it probable that Zephaniah succeeded a priest called Jehoiada, in that office, who had been either deposed for bad conduct or carried away into exile. Gataker and Grotins think that the reference is to Jehoiada the priest, the zealous reformer in the reign of Jehoash, 2 Kings 11 and 12; and that Shemaiah's object was to rouse Zephaniah to shew similar zeal for the house of God. If so, here is an instance, not uncommon, in which a good example of zeal was perverted for the purpose of encouraging zeal in exercising tyranny and suppressing the truth. It is somewhat singular that all the ancient versions, as well as the Targum, give "overseers," or officers, in the singular number; the Vulg. is, "That thou mightest be a commander… over every one;" the Sept., "That thou mightest be an umpire;" the Syr., "That thou mightest be a censor." But there are no MSS. in favor of such a reading. — Ed.

ninth chapter of Hosea, where it is said that the people would at length acknowledge that the prophets, who had flattered them, were insane, and that the men of the Spirit were mad. The Prophet conceded to them both names, that they were prophets and men of the Spirit, that is, spiritual; but he proved that they had only the names and not the reality: for prophets were called spiritual men, because God inspired them with his Spirit; but the ungodly, when they wished to revile the true prophets, called them mad. So did they speak who were with Jehu, when a prophet came to anoint him, ``What means this mad fellow?'' this word {משגע}, meshego, is what they used; and they called him in contempt mad, who had yet spoken by the secret impulse of the Spirit. (2 Kings 9:11.) So, in like manner, do the ungodly rave in contempt of God against everything found in Scripture. [224]

But as it has been already stated, it was necessary to distinguish between the true servants of God and those only in name; for many boasted that they were called by God, and yet were impostors. God then called these mad and insane; but what did the ungodly do? they transferred the reproach to the lawful servants of God. So, in this place, Shemaiah says, that Jeremiah was mad, who falsely pretended the name of God, and prophesied falsely.

He adds, That thou shouldest put him in prison, or cast him into prison or the stocks, as some render the word. Then he says, in manacles, that is, thou shouldest bind him, until his impiety be known, so that thou mayest detain him in prison. [225] It is, indeed, probable that the chief priests had assumed this power during the disordered state of things. This proceeding no doubt resulted from a good principle; for God ever designed that his Church should be well governed: he therefore commanded in his Law, that when any dispute or question arose, the chief priest was to be the judge, (Deuteronomy 17:8, 9;) but when mention is here made of prison and of manacles, it: was an act, no doubt, beyond the Law. It is therefore probable that it was added to the Law of God when the state of things was in disorder and confusion among the Jews. And whence was the origin of the evil? from the ignorance and sloth of the priests. They ought to have been the messengers of the God of hosts, the interpreters of the Law, the truth ought to have been sought from their mouth; but they were dumb dogs, nay, they had so degenerated, that nothing priestly was found in them; they had forgotten the Law, there was no religion in them. As then they had neglected their office, it was necessary to choose other prophets: and as we have said elsewhere, it was as it were accidental that God raised up prophets from the common people. There was, indeed, a necessity of having prophets always in the ancient Church; but God would have taken them from the Levites, except that he designed to expose them to reproach before the whole people, when he made prophets even of herdsmen, as in the case of Amos.

[224] The word {משגע is rendered ``frantic'' by the Sept., --- ``mad,'' by the Vulg., --- ``raving in lies,'' by the Syr., --- and ``foolish,'' by the Targ. As applied to prophets it means one in an ecstasy, or in raptures, whether true or false, --- an enthusiast, but taken mostly in a bad sense. The next word is in Hithpael, ``self-prophesying,'' or prophesying of himself, not made a prophet by God; imperfectly rendered, ``prophesying,'' by the Sept., Vulg., and Syr. It may be rendered ``pretending to be a prophet.'' --- Ed.

[225] The last word is found only here, and is rendered “dungeon” by the Sept., and “prison” by the Vulg., Syr., and Targ. The Samaritan version, says: Parkhurst, uses it as a verb in Exodus 14:3, in the sense of confining, shutting up. The noun, therefore, may well designate a prison. — Ed.

As then the priests suffered the prophetic office to be transferred to the common people, a new way was devised, that it might, not be any loss to them, as under the Papacy; for we know that bishops are for no other reason made rulers in the Church, but that there might be pastors and teachers. For of what use could these asses be, whom we know to be for the most part destitute of any learning? What could these men do, who are profane, and given up to their own pleasures and enjoyments? In short, what could gamesters and panders do? for such are almost all the Papal bishops. It was therefore necessary to give up their office to brawling monks, ``You shall teach, for we resign to you the pulpits.'' But, at the same time, they retained the power of judgment in their own hands: when any controversy arose, neither the noisy brawlers nor the dumb beasts could of themselves decide anything; for ignorance prevented the latter, and power was wanting to the former. How, then, did the bishops formerly condemn heretics? and how do they condemn them still? Why, thus: When one was a Carmelite, they called in the Franciscans; and when one was an Augustinian, the Dominicans were summoned. For, as I have said, these mute animals had no knowledge nor wisdom. And yet a certain dignity was maintained by the bishops or their vicars, when they pronounced sentence in condemning heretics. And such was probably the case among the ancient people; for those who pretended to be prophets were summoned, and that by the authority of the high-priest, under the pretext of law, but not without some corruption added to it; for God had not given fetters and manacles to the priests, that they might thus restrain those who might create disturbance and corrupt the pure truth. But what remains I shall defer to the next Lecture.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since we are prone to what is false, and wholly devoted to vanity, we may be governed by thy Spirit, and desire no other thing than to be obedient to thee; and as we offer ourselves to thee, as thy disciples, grant that having the light of thy word shining before us, we may follow the way which thou shewest to us, and thus persevere in a right course, until we shall at length come to that blessed rest which is prepared for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Thirteenth

We saw in the last Lecture the substance of the letter which Shemaiah had written to the chief priest. He reproved him for his neglect, because he did not silence Jeremiah according to the right and duty of his office. This had a plausible appearance; but it was a false principle which he assumed, --- that Jeremiah falsely pretended God's name, and was not sent, and had no command to prophesy; [226] this was false. Justly then does the Prophet now oppose him, and pronounce the punishment which he deserved. It then follows, ---

Jeremiah 29:28-29

[226] The verb for prophesying is in Hithpael as before; he still represents Jeremiah as one who made himself a Prophet, — "Who of himself prophesies to you;" and not as Blayney renders the clause, "Who giveth himself out as a Prophet among you." What he meant is, that what Jeremiah prophesied came from himself, the very thing which God ascribed to the false prophets; thus wicked men impute to the good the very sin of which they themselves are guilty. — Ed.

28. For therefore he sent unto us in Babylon, saying, This captivity is long: build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them.

28. Nempe quia misit (vel, quia ideo, ad verbum, quia ob id, vel, propterea) ad nos in Babylonem, dicendo, Longum est (tempus exilii,) aedificate domos et habitate, plantate hortos et comedite fractum eorum.

29. And Zephaniah the priest read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet.

29. Legerat autem Zephania epistolam hanc in auribus Jeremiae prophetae.

The crime ascribed to Jeremiah was, --- that he rendered the captives indifferent, so that they cast off every hope of deliverance, and disregarded their own country. But the design of Jeremiah was far different; it was, that the people might not by too much haste anticipate the promises of God, and that he might also extend their hope to the end, prefixed. As there are two causal particles here found, -{על} {כי} {כן}, ki ol-ken, some give this rendering, ``For for this cause,'' that is, because he claimed the name of a Prophet. The simpler meaning however is, that he gives a reason why Shemaiah blamed the neglect of the priest, even because he (Jeremiah) had habituated the captives to bear their exiles. But he reproached the holy man, as though he had made them indifferent through long delay. Jeremiah had indeed said that the time would be long; but this particular phrase, It is long, means a different thing, as though Jeremiah wished to bury in oblivion the hope of a return, because it would have been foolish to languish so long.

It follows, And Zephaniah had read, etc The past perfect tense is more suitable here, for the verse ought to be put in a parenthesis. The Prophet obviates a doubt which might have been entertained. He then shews how the prophecy was made known to him; he was one of the hearers when the letter was read. And it is probable that the priest called Jeremiah on purpose, that he might be proved guilty by his own accuser. However this may have been, he wished to expose the holy man to the hatred of the people, or rather to their fury. The constancy of Jeremiah was worthy of greater praise, while he boldly reproved the arrogance of them all, who had nothing else in view but to suppress God's truth by force and tyranny.

Jeremiah 29:30-32

30. Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,

30. Et fuit sermo Jehovae ad Jeremiam, dicendo,

31. Send to all them of the captivity, saying, Thus saith the LORD concerning Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie:

31. Mitte ad totam captivitatem, dicendo, Sic dicit Jehova de Semaiah Nehelamita, Propterea quod prophetavit vobis Semaiah, cum ego non miserim ipsum, et confidere vos fecit super mendacio;

32. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my people, saith the LORD; because he hath taught rebellion against the LORD.

32. Ideo sic dicit Jehova, Ecce ego visitans (id est, visitabo) super Semaiah Nehelamitam, et super semen ejus, non erit illi vir, qui habitet in medio populi hujus, et

non videbit bonum quod ego faciam populo meo, dicit Jehova, quia aversionem (vel, defectionem) loquutus est contra Jehovam.

Jeremiah distinctly declares that this impostor would not escape unpunished, because he had dared falsely to pretend the name of God, and avowedly opposed Jeremiah. Here, then, the Prophet makes no long discourse, but on the contrary simply declares by the power of the Spirit what would take place. He speaks in God's name, for he had been sent as a herald to proclaim this judgment. This, then, is the reason why he is so brief; for there was to be no dispute, though the impostor on the other hand was carrying himself very high, and hesitated not to overthrow the revealed truth of God, which had been confirmed by many witnesses.

The sum of what is stated is, that Shemaiah would not see the favor of God, and that none of his seed would remain alive. It was a curse under the Law, as it is well known, that one should have no seed left. (Deuteronomy 28:18.) Jeremiah then denounces on Shemaiah this punishment, that no one of his seed would remain alive, but that he would die childless; and then he excludes him from the enjoyment of the benefit which the Lord had determined to bestow on his people. He wished to return after two years to his own country; Jeremiah commanded the people patiently to endure their exile to the end of seventy years, which was the time of their deliverance. As, then, Shemaiah despised the lawful time, he was deprived of the favor of seeing that event.

Added then is the reason; first, because he had abused the name of God; he prophesied and I had not sent him, said the Lord; the second reason was, that he deceived the people with a vain hope; falsehood of itself is worthy of a heavy punishment; but when it was pernicious to God's people, it became still more heinous, and therefore worthy of a twofold punishment.

Now we see that Jeremiah esteemed as nothing that he was condemned by Shemaiah; for he retained his own dignity; though the impostor attempted to subvert his authority, yet the Prophet speaks as though he was wholly unstained and not hurt nor affected by any calumny. The same magnanimity of mind is what all faithful teachers ought to possess, so as to look down, as from on high, on all deceivers, and their chatterings, and curses, and to go on in their course, however insolently the despisers of God may rise up against them, and tear and overwhelm them with reproaches. Let then all those who seek to serve God and his Church follow this example of the Prophet, so that they may not be discouraged in their minds when they find that they have to contend with dishonest men.

But Jeremiah is bidden to write to all the captives, for Shemaiah was not worthy of being reproved; but God had a regard for the public safety of the exiles, and reminded them of what would take place. It is indeed probable that this prophecy was without any fruit, until it was known by the event itself that Jeremiah had not without reason thus prophesied. Until, then, Shemaiah died, and died without any to succeed him, the people disregarded what had been predicted; but at length they were constrained to acknowledge that Jeremiah had not spoken his own thought, but had been furnished with a message from God; for God really fulfilled what he had predicted by the mouth of his Prophet.

The two reasons follow, why God resolved to punish Shemaiah: the first is, that he had seized on the prophetic office without a call; and hence we conclude, according to what has already appeared, that this office which had been instituted by God, was perverted, when any one intruded into it without a commission. Let us then know that no one ought to be deemed a legitimate teacher, except he can really shew that he has been called from above. I have in several places stated that two things belonged to a call; the inward call was the chief thing when the state of the Church was in disorder, that is, when the priests neglected the duty of teaching, and wholly departed from what their office required. When, therefore, the Church became disordered, God applied an extraordinary remedy by raising up prophets. But when the Church is rightly and regularly formed, no one can boast that he is a pastor or a minister, except he is also called by the suffrages of men. But as I have spoken on this subject more at large on the twenty-third chapter, I only slightly refer to it now.

As to the present passage in which God condemns Shemaiah for having thrust in himself without being called, what is meant is, that he brought forward his own dreams, having been furnished with no commission; for the prophetic office was then special. Then Shemaiah is here rejected as an impostor, because he had only brought forward prophecies suggested by his own brains, which yet he falsely pretended to have been from God; and it was a most atrocious crime, as it was a sacrilege to abuse, as Shemaiah did, the name of God. But the atrocity of his sin the Prophet still further sets forth, by saying that his prophecies were pernicious and fatal to the people. We hence conclude how solicitous God was for the safety of his people, in thus avenging the falsehoods which were calculated to lead them to ruin; and Jeremiah shews that Shemaiah's teaching was ruinous, because he inebriated the people with false confidence; he made you, he says, to trust in falsehood; for he promised them a quick return, when it was God's will, that the Jews should patiently bear their exile till the end of the seventy years.

But we may deduce from this passage a useful doctrine, --- that nothing is more pestiferous in a Church than for men to be led away by a false confidence or trust. For it is the foundation of all true religion to depend on the mouth or word of God; and it is also the foundation of our salvation. As, then, the salvation of men as well as true religion is founded on faith and the obedience of faith; so also when we are drawn away to some false trust, the whole of true religion falls to the ground, and at the same time every hope of salvation vanishes. This ought to be carefully observed, so that we may learn to embrace that doctrine which teaches us to trust in no other than in the only true God, and reject all those inventions which may lead us away from him, even in the least degree, so that we may not look around us nor be carried here and there.

For this reason, as I have said, the Prophet declares that Shemaiah would die childless, and be precluded from enjoying the favor which God had resolved and even promised to bestow on his people. And all this, as I have reminded you, was said for the sake of the people; for this prophecy did no good to Shemaiah nor to his posterity; but his punishment ought to have benefited the miserable exiles so as to

lead them to repentance, however late it may have been. This is the import of the passage.

Jeremiah 30

CHAPTER 30

Jeremiah 30:1-3

1. The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

1. Sermo qui fuit ad Jeremiam a Jehova dicendo,

2. Thus speaketh the LORD God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book.

2. Sic dicit Jehova, Deus Israel, dicendo, Scribe tibi omnes sermones quos loquutus sum ad to in libro:

3. For, lo, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith the LORD: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.

3. Quoniam ecce dies veniunt, dicit Jehova, et reducam captivitatem populi mei Israel et Jehudah, dicit Jehovah; et reducam eos in terram quam dedi patribus ipsorum et possidebunt cam.

This and the next chapter contain, as we shall see, a most profitable truth; and that the people might be the more attentive, God introduced these prophecies by a preface. Jeremiah spoke many things which afterwards, as it has elsewhere appeared, had been collected and inserted in one volume by the priests and Levites; but God reminds us in these words, that the prophecies which are to follow respecting the liberation of the people, were especially to be remembered.

There is, however, another circumstance to be noticed. We have seen that such was the stubbornness of the people, that Jeremiah spent his labor among them in vain, for he addressed the deaf, or rather stocks and stones, for they were so possessed by stupor that they understood nothing, for God had even blinded them, a judgment which they fully deserved. Such was the condition of the people. We must further bear in mind the comparison between the doctrine of Jeremiah and the fables of those who fed the miserable people with flatteries, by giving them the hope of a

return after two years. God knew what would be the event; but the people ceased not to entertain hope and to boast of a return at the end of two years. Thus they despised God's favor, for seventy years was a long period: ``What! God indeed promises a return, but after seventy years who of us will be alive? Hardly one of us will be found then remaining, therefore so cold a promise is nothing to us.'' They, at the same time, as I have said, were filled with a false confidence, as with wind, and behaved insolently towards God and his prophets, as though they were to return sound and safe in a short time.

But profane men always run to extremes; at one time they are inflated with pride, that is, when things go on prosperously, or when a hope of prosperity appears, and they carry themselves proudly against God, as though nothing adverse could happen to them; then when hope and false conceit disappoint them, they are wholly disheartened, so that they will receive no comfort, but plunge into the abyss of despair. God saw that this would be the case with the people, except he came to their aid. Hence he proposes here the best and the fittest remedy --- that the Prophet, as he had effected nothing by speaking, should write and convert as it were into deeds or acts what he had spoken, [227] so that after the lapse of two years they might gather courage, and afterwards acknowledge that they had been deceived by unprincipled men, and thus justly suffered for their levity, so that they might at length begin to look to God and embrace the promised liberation, and not wholly despond. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet was commanded to write the words which he had before declared with his mouth.

Now, as we understand the design of God, let us learn that when it happens that we go astray and wander after false imaginations, we are not on that account to cast away the hope of salvation; for we see that God here stretches forth his hand to those who had erred, and who had even wilfully cast themselves into ruin, for they had been more than enough admonished and warned by true and faithful prophets; their ears they had stopped; their hearts they had hardened; and yet when they had sought as it were designedly to ruin themselves, we see how God still recalled them to himself.

He says that God had commanded him to write in a book all the words which he had heard; and the reason follows, For, behold, come shall the days, saith Jehovah, in which I will restore the captivity of my people Israel and Judah [228] There is to be understood a contrast between the restoration mentioned here and that of which the false prophets had prattled when they animated the people with the hope of a return in a short time; for, as I have said, that false expectation, when the Jews sought unseasonably to return to their own country, was a sort of mental inebriety. But when they found that they had been deceived, despair only remained for them. Hence the

[227] "In a book:" the {{אל before ``book'' is in some copies ,{על} as in other places when preceded by ``write.'' It may be more literally rendered, ``on a roll;'' but if {אל} be retained, the rendering may be, ``for a record,'' or memorial. Venema thinks that these two chapters were written after the destruction of Jerusalem, and that as there were no people to be addressed, Jeremiah was bidden to commit to writing what he had often previously delivered by word of mouth. --- Ed.

[228] The words literally are, "For behold the days coming, saith Jehovah, when I shall restore the migration of my people, Israel and Judah, saith Jehovah; and I will restore them to the land which I gave to their fathers, and they shall inherit it." To render {{ו when, when preceded by a participle, is what may be done, and ought, in my view, to be commonly done. The word {שבות} means a migration, as given in the Targum, rather than captivity. It is rendered by the Sept. {ἀποικία}, removal from home. --- Ed.

Prophet recalls them here to a quietness of mind, even that they might know that God would prove faithful after they found out that they had rashly embraced what impostors had of themselves proclaimed We then see that there is here an implied comparison between the sure and certain deliverance which God had promised, and the false and stolid hope with which the people had been inebriated: come, then, shall the days Now it appears that two years had taken away every expectation; for they believed the false prophets who said that God would restore them in two years; after the end of that time all the hope of the people failed. Therefore the Prophet here removes that erroneous impression which had been made on their minds, and he says that the days would come in which God would redeem his people; and thus he indirectly derides the folly of the people, and condemns the impiety of those who had dared to promise so quick a return.

We now, then, see why he says, come shall the days; for every hope after two years would have been extinguished, had not God interposed. Come, then, shall the days in which I wll restore the captivity of Israel and Judah The ten tribes, we know, had been already led into exile; the tribe of Judah and the half tribe of Benjamin only remained. Hence the ten tribes, the whole kingdom of Israel, are mentioned first. The exile of Israel was much longer than that of Judah. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 30:4-6

4. And these are the words that the LORD spake concerning Israel and concerning Judah.

4. Hi vero sunt sermones quos loquutus est Jehova de Israele et Jehudah (vel, ad Israelera et ad Jehudah:)

5. For thus saith the LORD; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace.

5. Certe ita dicit Jehova, Vocem trepidationis audivimus, pavorem et non pacem (vel, pavoris et non pacis)

6. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?

6. Inquirite et aspicite an pariat masculus? quare video cunctos viros manibus suis super lumbos tanquam parturiens (solet mulier, subaudiendum est, vel, sicuti solet mulier parturiens) et conversae sunt omnes facies in pallorem (vel, in aurigi-nem, ut alii vertunt, sed nomen palloris melius convenit?)

Both Jews and Christians pervert this passage, for they apply it to the time of the Messiah; and when they hardly agree as to any other part of Scripture, they are wonderfully united here; but, as I have said, they depart very far from the real meaning of the Prophet.

They all consider this as a prophecy referring to the time of the Messiah; but were any one wisely to view the whole context, he would readily agree with me that the Prophet includes here the sum of the doctrine which the people had previously heard from his mouth. In the first clause he shews that he had spoken of God's vengeance, which rested on the people. But it is briefly that this clause touches on that point, because the object was chiefly to alleviate the sorrow of the afflicted people; for

the reason ought ever to be borne in mind why the Prophet had been ordered to commit to writing the substance of what he had taught, which was, to supply with some comfort the exiles, when they had found out by experience that they had been extremely perverse, having for so long a time never changed nor turned to repentance. The Prophet had before spoken at large of the vices of the people, and many times condemned their obstinacy, and also pointed out the grievous and dreadful punishment that awaited them. The Prophet then had in many a discourse reproved the people, and had been commanded daily to repeat the same thing, though not for his own sake, nor mainly for the sake of those of his own age, or of the old. But after God had destroyed the Temple and the city, his object was to sustain their distressed minds, which must have otherwise been overwhelmed with despair. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet here touches but slightly on the vengeance which awaited the people. There is, however, as we shall see, great force in this brevity; but he is much fuller as to the second part, and for this end, that the people might not succumb under their calamities, but hope in the midst of death, and even begin to hope while suffering the punishment which they deserved.

Now he says, Thus saith Jehovah, A cry, or, the voice of trembling, or of fear, have we heard. The word {חרדה}, cherede, is thought to mean properly that dread which makes the whole body to tremble, and is therefore rendered trembling. God speaks, and yet in the person of the people. Why? In order to expose their insensibility; for as they were obstinate in their wickedness, so they were not terrified by threatenings, however many and dreadful. God dictated words for them, for they were altogether void of feeling. We now see why God assumed the person of those who were secure, though Jeremiah daily represented to them God's vengeance as near at hand. The meaning is, that though the people were asleep in their sins, and thought themselves beyond the reach of danger, even when God was displeased with them, yet the threatenings by which God sought to lead them to repentance would not be in vain. Hence God says, We have heard the voice of fear; that is, ``Deride and scoff as you please, or remain insensible in your delusions, so as to disregard as the drunken what is said, being destitute of feeling, reason, and memory, yet God will extort from you this confession, this voice of trembling and fear.''

He then adds, and not of peace This is emphatically subjoined, that the Prophet might shake off from the people those foolish delusions with which they were imbued by the false prophets. He then says, that they in vain hoped for peace, for they could not flee from terror and fear. He enhances this fear by saying, Inquire and see whether a man is in labor? Some one renders this absurdly, ``Whether a man begets?'' by which mistake he has betrayed a defect of judgment as well as ignorance; he was indeed learned in Hebrew, but ignorant of Latin, and also void of judgment. For the Prophet here speaks of something monstrous; but it is natural for a man to beget. he asks here ironically, ``Can a man be in labor?'' because God would put all men in such pains and agonies, as though they were women travailing with child. As, then, women exert every nerve and writhe in anguish when bringing forth draws nigh, so also men, all the men, would have their hands laid on their loins, on account of their terror and dread. Then he says, and all faces are turned

into paleness; that is, God would terrify them all.

We now understand the meaning of the Prophet; for as the Jews did not believe God's judgment, it was necessary, as the Prophet does here, to storm their hardness. If he had used a common mode of speaking, they would not have been moved. Hence he had respect to their perverseness; and it was on this account that he was so vehement. Inquire, then, he says, and see whether a man is in labor? God would bring all the men to a condition not manly, such as that of a woman in labor, when in her last effort to bring forth, when her pain is the greatest and the most bitter. Men would then be driven into a state the most unbecoming, strange, and monstrous. It follows: ---

Jeremiah 30:7

7. Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it; it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.

7. Heus, quia magnus hic dies a non esse sicut ipsum (hoc est, ut non sit similis, ut nunquam fuerit similis) et tempus afflictionis (vel, augustiae), hoc ipsi Jacob. (hoc est, populo Israelitico) et ab ea servabitur.

The Prophet goes on in this verse to describe the grievousness of that punishment for which the people felt no concern, for they disregarded all threatenings, as I have already said, and had now for many years hardened themselves so as to deem as nothing so many dreadful things. This, then, was the reason why he dwelt so much on this denunciation, and exclaimed, Alas! great is that day: ``great'' is to be taken for dreadful; and he adds, so that there is none like it It was a dreadful spectacle to see the city destroyed, and the Temple partly pulled down and partly consumed by fire: the king, with all the nobility, was driven into exile, his eyes were put out, and his children were slain; and he was afterwards led away in a manner so degraded, that to die a hundred times would have been more desirable than to endure such indignity. Hence the Prophet does not say without reason, that that day would be great, so that none would be like it: and he said this, to shake away the torpidity of the people, for they thought that the holy city, which God had chosen for his habitation, could not fall, nor the Temple perish, he further says, that it would be a time of distress to the people. But at the end of the verse he gives them a hope of God's mercy, even deliverance from this distress. We now, then, see the design of the Prophet in these verses. [229] --- There will be no Lecture tomorrow on account of the Consistory.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we cease not in various ways perversely to provoke thy wrath against us, --- O grant that we may at length be turned to obedience by thy kind admonitions, and at the same time submit also to thy just severity, and know

[229] "That day" in this verse, and "that day" in the following verse, seem to be the same. Then {{הוי must not be rendered ``Alas,'' but ``Ho!'' or ``Hark!'' according to its most common meaning. The passage from verse the 4th (Jeremiah 30:4,) to the end of this, including the beginning of the 8th (Jeremiah 30:8), may be thus rendered, --- 4. Even these are the words which Jehovah hath said respecting Israel and respecting Judah: 5. Verily thus hath Jehovah said --- (The voice of trembling have we heard, Of fear and not of peace: 6. Ask ye now and see, Does a man travail with child? How is it? I see every man With his hands on his loins like a woman in travail, And turned are all faces to paleness:) 7. Hark! for great shall be that day, none like it; Though a time of distress shall be to Jacob, Yet from it shall he be saved: 8. And it shall be in that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, That I shall break, etc.. etc.. The parenthesis accounts for what is said at the end of the 7th verse (Jeremiah 30:7) and is intended as a contrast with the great day of deliverance that is promised. --- Ed.

that whenever thou severely chastisest us, we are dealt with as we deserve: may we yet never despond, but flee to thy mercy, not doubting but that thou in the midst of wrath rememberest thy paternal love, provided we rely on that favor which thou hast promised to us through thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fourteenth

Jeremiah 30:8

8. For it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off thy neck, and will burst thy bonds, and strangers shall no more serve themselves of him:

8. Et erit die illo, dicit Jehova exercituum, confringam jugum a collo tuo, et vincula tua disrumpam et non adigent amplius eum ad servitutem alieni:

Jeremiah proceeds with what he touched upon in the last verse, even that the Lord, after having chastised his people, would at length shew mercy to them, so as to receive them into favor. He says, in short, that their captivity would not be perpetual. But we must remember what we have before stated, that is, that deliverance is only promised to the faithful, who would patiently and resignedly submit to God and not disregard his paternal correction. If, then, we desire God to be propitious to us, we must suffer ourselves to be paternally chastised by him; for if we resist when goaded, no pardon can by any means be expected, for we then, as it were, wilfully provoke God by our hardness.

He therefore says, in that day, that is, when the appointed time was completed. The false prophets inflamed the people with false expectation, as though their deliverance was to take place after two years. God bade the faithful to wait, and not to be thus in a hurry; he had assigned a day for them, and that was, as we have seen, the seventieth year. He then mentions the yoke, that is, of the king of Babylon, and taking another view, the chains The yoke was what Nebuchadnezzar laid on the Jews; and the chains of the people were those by which Nebuchadnezzar had bound them. At last he adds, And rule over them shall no more strangers The verb {עבד}, obed, is to be taken here in a causative sense; even the form of the sentence shews this, and they who render the words, ``and strangers shall not serve them,'' wrest the meaning; for it could not be a promise; and this is inconsistent with the context, and requires no confutation, as it is evidently unsuitable. If the verb be taken in the sense of serving, then ``strangers'' must be in the dative case. We have seen before a similar phrase in Jeremiah 25:14, where the Prophet says that neither kings nor strong nations would any longer rule over the Jews. The same verb is used, and the same form of expression. Strangers, then, shall make them serve no more; that is, they shall not rule over them so as slavishly to oppress them. [230]

We now perceive the design of the Prophet; he exhorts the Jews to patience, and shews that though their exile would be long, yet their deliverance was certain. It follows, ---

[230] I render the verse as follows, — 8. And it shall be in that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, That I shall break his yoke from thy neck, And thy chains will I burst: And make him to serve shall strangers no more: 9. But serve shall they Jehovah, etc.. The transition from the second to the third person, “thy” and “him,” and from the singular to the plural, “him” and “they,” is very common in the Prophets. On the last line in the 8th verse (Jeremiah 30:8). — Ed.

Jeremiah 30:9

9. But they shall serve the LORD their God, and David their king, whom I will raise up unto them.

9. Et servient Jehovae Deo suo et Davidi regi suo quem suscitabo ipsis.

The former promise would have been defective had not this clause been added; for it would not be enough for men to live as they please, and to have liberty promised them, except a regular order be established. It would, indeed, be better for us to be wild beasts, and to wander in forests, than to live without government and laws; for we know how furious are the passions of men. Unless, therefore, there be some restraint, the condition of wild beasts would be better and more desirable than ours. Liberty, then, would ever bring ruin with it, were it not bridled and connected with regular government. I therefore said that this verse was added, that the Jews might know that God cared for their welfare; for he promises that nothing would be wanting to them. It is then a true and real happiness, when not only liberty is granted to us, but also when God prescribes to us a certain rule and sets up good order, that there may be no confusion. Hence Jeremiah, after having promised a return to the people into their own country, and promised also that the yoke would be shaken off from their neck, makes this addition, that having served strangers they would be now under the government of God and of their own king. Now this subjection is better than all the ruling powers of the world; that is, when God is pleased to rule over us, and undertakes the care of our safety, and performs the office of a Governor.

We hence see that the design of the Prophet was to comfort the faithful, not only with the promise of liberty, but also with this addition, that in order that nothing might be wanting to their complete happiness, God himself would rule over them. Serve, then, shall they their God The word king is added, because God designed that his people should be governed by a king, not that the king would sit in the place of God, but added as his minister. Now this was said a long time after the death of David; for David was dead many years before Jeremiah was born: nor did he live again in order that he might rule over the people; but the name of David is to be taken here for any one that might succeed him.

Now, as God had made a covenant with David, and promised that there would be always one of his posterity to sit on his throne, hence the Prophet here, in mentioning David, refers to all the kings until Christ: and yet no one after that time succeeded him, for the kingdom was abolished before the death of Jeremiah; and when the people returned into their own country there was no regal power, for Zerubbabel obtained only a precarious dignity, and by degrees that royal progeny vanished away; and though there were seventy chosen from the seed of David, yet there was no scepter, no crown, no throne. It is therefore necessary to apply this prophecy to Christ; for the crown was broken and trodden under foot, as Ezekiel says, until the lawful king came. He intimated that there was no king to be for a long time, when he said,

``Cast down, cast down, cast down the crown.''
(Ezekiel 21:27)

He therefore commanded the name of a king to be abolished, together with all its

symbols, and that not for a short time but for ages, even until he came forth who had a just right to the crown or the royal diadem. We hence see that this passage cannot be otherwise explained than by referring to Christ, and that he is called David, as the Jews were always wont to call him before Christ appeared in the world; for they called the Messiah, whom they expected, the Son of David. We now understand the meaning of the Prophet.

But we may hence gather a very useful doctrine, even this, --- that nothing is better for us than to be in subjection to God; for our liberty would become that of wild beasts were God to allow us to live according to our own humor and inclinations. Liberty, then, will ever be destructive to us, until God undertakes the care of us, and prepares and forms us, that we may bear his yoke. Hence, when we obey God, we possess true and real happiness. When, therefore, we pray, let us learn not to separate these two things which ought necessarily to be joined together, even that God would deliver us from the tyranny of the ungodly, and also that he would himself rule over us. And this doctrine is suitable to our time: for if God were now only to break down the tyranny of the Pope and deliver his own people, and suffer them to wander here and there, so as to allow every one to follow his own will as his law, how dreadful would be the confusion! It is better that the devil should rule men under any sort of government, than that they should be set free without any law, without any restraint. Our time, indeed, sufficiently proves, that these two things have not, without reason, been joined together; that is, that God would become the liberator of his people, so as to shake off the yoke of miserable bondage and to break their chains, and also that he would be a king to govern his people.

But we ought also carefully to notice what follows, --- that God would not otherwise govern his Church than by a king. He designed to give an instance, or a prelude, of this very thing under the Law, when he chose David and his posterity. But to us especially belongs this promise; for the Jews, through their ingratitude, did not taste of the fruit of this promise: God deprived them of this invaluable benefit, which they might justly and with certainty have expected. As the favor which they have lost has now been transferred to us, what Jeremiah teaches here, as I have said, properly belongs to us; that is, that God is not our king except we obey Christ, whom he has set over us, and by whom he would have us to be governed. Whosoever, then, boast that they willingly bear the yoke of God, and at the same time reject the yoke of Christ, are condemned by this very prophecy; for it is not God's will to rule uninterveniently, so to speak, his Church; but his will is that Christ, called here David, should be king; unless, indeed, we accuse Jeremiah of stating an untruth, we must apply the word David to the person of Christ. Since it is so, God then will not otherwise rule over us than by Christ, even to the end of the world; we must obey him and render him service.

He adds, Whom I will raise up It was also the office and work of God to raise up Christ, according to what is said in the second Psalm,

``I have anointed my King.''

We must always come to the fountain of God's mercy, if we would enjoy the blessings of Christ, according to what is said,

``God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.''

We shall, indeed, find in Christ whatever is necessary for our salvation; but whence have we Christ, except from the infinite goodness of God? When he pitied us, he designed to save us by his only begotten Son. Salvation then is laid up for us in Christ, and is not to be sought anywhere else: but we ought, ever to remember that this salvation flows from the mercy of God, so that Christ is to be viewed as a testimony and a pledge of God's paternal favor towards us. This is the reason why the Prophet expressly adds, that God would raise up a king to rule over his people. It follows ---

Jeremiah 30:10

10. Therefore fear thou not, O my servant Jacob, saith the LORD; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid.

10. Et tu ne timeas, Jacob, serve mi, dicit Jehova, et ne paveas, Israel, quia ecce ego servans to a longinquo, et semen tuum e terra captivitatis eorum; et sedebit Jacob et quiescet et tranquillus erit, et nemo exterrebit (nemo exterrens, ad verbum)

The Prophet enforces his doctrine by an exhortation; for it would not be sufficient simply to assure us of God's paternal love and goodwill, unless we were encouraged to hope for it, because experience teaches us how backward and slow we are to embrace the promises of God. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet exhorts and encourages the faithful to entertain hope. Were there in us that promptitude and alacrity which we ought to have, we should be content even with one word; for what can be wished for beyond God's testimony respecting his favor? But our listlessness renders many goads necessary. Hence, when doctrine precedes, it is necessary to add exhortations to stimulate us; and these confirm the doctrine, so that the grace of God may flourish effectually in our hearts.

He addresses ``Jacob'' and ``Israel;'' but they mean the same, as in many other places. These duplicates, as they are called, are common, we know, in the Hebrew language; for the same words are repeated for the sake of emphasis. So, in this passage, there is more force when Jeremiah mentions two names, than if he had said only, ``Fear not thou, Jacob, and be not afraid.'' He then says, Fear not thou, Jacob; and Israel, be not thou afraid [231] And he does this, that the Jews might remember that God had not only been once propitious to their father Jacob, but many times; for from the womb he bore a symbol of that primogeniture which God had destined for him; and he afterwards had, for the sake of honor, the name of Israel given to him. As, then, God had in various ways, and in succession, manifested his goodness to Jacob, the people might hence entertain more hope.

He calls him his servant; not that the Jews were worthy of so honorable a title; but God had regard to himself, and his gratuitous adoption, rather than to their

[231] The word is stronger than “fear;” it means to be broken down in mind, to be dispirited, so as to give up all hope. The distance, mentioned in the following clause, was calculated to dispirit them, and they feared lest their children should continue in bondage. Hence it is said, “Fear not,” that is, as to a final return; and “be not dispirited,” or disheartened, with respect to the distance. The order, as is commonly the case, is reversed. — Ed.

merits. He did not then call them servants, because they were obedient, for we know how contumaciously they rejected both God and his Prophets; but because he had adopted them. So when David says,

``I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid,''
(Psalm 116:16)

he does not boast of his obedience, nor claim to himself any deserving virtue, but, on the contrary, declares, that before he was created in the womb, he was God's servant through his gratuitous adoption. Hence, he adds, ``I am the son of thine handmaid,'' as though he had said, ``I belong to thee by an hereditary right, because I am descended from that nation which thou hast been pleased to choose for thy peculiar people.'' We now then see that the name servant, ought not to be understood as intimating the merits of the people, and that their obedience is not here commended, as though they had truly and faithfully responded to the call of God, but that their gratuitous adoption is alone extolled.

He adds, Behold, I will save thee from far He first declares that he would be ready to save the people when the suitable time came; for behold here intimates certainty. And he subjoins, from far, lest the people should fail in their confidence; for they had been driven into distant exile; and distance is a great obstacle. Were any one to promise to us an advantageous retreat, without calling us away to some unknown country, we could more easily embrace the promise; but were any one to say, ``I promise to you the largest income in Syria, and you shall have there whatever may be deemed necessary to make your life happy;'' would you not reply, ``What! shall I pass over the sea, that I may live there? it is better for me to live here in comparative poverty than to be a king there.'' As, then, a difficulty might have presented itself to the Jews, when they saw that they had been driven away into very remote countries, the Prophet adds, that this circumstance would be no obstacle so as to prevent God to save them: I will save you then from far; as though he had said, that his hands were long enough, so that he could extend them as far as Chaldea, and draw them from thence.

He then adds, and thy seed from the land of their captivity As the expectation of seventy years was long, God refers what he promises to their seed. There is no doubt but that the Prophet reminded the Jews, that the time determined by God was to be waited for in patience, as was the case with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; for though they knew that they would be strangers in the land which God had promised them, yet they did not on that account despise or disregard the favor promised them. Abraham received in faith what he had heard from God's mouth,

``I will give thee this land;''

and yet he knew that he would be there a stranger and a sojourner. (Genesis 12:7) His children had to exercise the same patience. Abraham had indeed been warned of a very long delay; for God had declared that his seed would be in bondage for four hundred years. (Genesis 15:13) Here, then, the Prophet exhorts the people of his time to entertain hope, according to the example of their father, and not to despise God's favor, because its fruit did not immediately appear; for Abraham did not enjoy the land as long as he lived, and yet he preferred it to his own country; Isaac did the

same; and Jacob followed the example of his fathers. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet mentions seed, as though he had said, ``If the fruit of redemption will not come to you, yet God will not disappoint your hope, for your posterity shall find that he is true and faithful.''

If any one had then objected, and said, ``What is that to me?'' the objection would have been preposterous; for why had God promised to their posterity a return to their own country? was it not thus to testify his love towards them? And whence came their freedom, and whence God's paternal love, except from the covenant? We hence see that the salvation of the fathers was included in the benefit which their sons enjoyed. And therefore, though the fruition of that benefit was not visibly granted to the fathers, yet they partook in part of the fruit, for it was made certain to them, that God would become the deliverer of his people even in death itself.

He adds that which is the main thing in a happy life, that they would be at rest and in a quiet state, so that none would terrify them; [232] for a return to their own country would not have been of any great importance, without a quiet possession of it. Hence the Prophet, after having said that God would come to save the people, and that distance would not prevent him to fulfill and complete what he had promised, now adds, that this benefit would be confirmed, for God would no more allow strangers to lead the Jews into exile, or to rule over them as they had done. God then promises here the continuance of his favor.

But as this did not happen to the Jews, we must again conclude that this prophecy cannot be otherwise interpreted than of Christ's kingdom. And Daniel is the best interpreter of this matter; for he says, that the people were to be exposed to many miseries and calamities after their return, and that they were not to hope to build the Temple and the city except in great troubles. The Jews then were always terrified. We also know, that while building the Temple, they held the trowel in one hand and the sword in the other, for they often had to bear the assaults of their enemies. (Nehemiah 4:17) Since, then, the Jews ever suffered inquietude until the coming of Christ, it follows, that until his coming, this promise was never accomplished. Then the benefit of which the Prophet speaks here is peculiar to the kingdom of Christ. Now, since from the time Christ was manifested to the world, we see that the world has been agitated by many storms, yea, all things have been in confusion; it follows, that this passage cannot be explained of external rest and earthly tranquillity. It ought, therefore, to be understood according to the character of his kingdom. As, then, Christ's kingdom is spiritual, it follows that a tranquil and quiet state is promised here, not because no enemies shall disturb us or offer us molestation, but because we shall especially enjoy peace with God, and our life shall be safe, being protected by the hand and guardianship of God. Then spiritual tranquillity is what is to be understood here, the fruit of which the faithful experience in their own consciences, though always assailed by the world, according to what Christ says,

[232] Calvin renders {,{שב ``dwell,'' as though it came from {ישׁ} but most render it ``return,'' as in our version. Then, ``to be at rest,'' and ``in a quiet state,'' are not sufficiently distinct. I render the clause thus, --- And return shall Jacob and be at rest, And secure shall he be, and none making him afraid. Security is freedom from disturbance: ``he shall be prosperous,'' as rendered by some, is by no means suitable. ``Jacob,'' being the father of the twelve patriarchs, is to be understood as including both Israel and Judah, according to the 4th verse (Jeremiah 30:4). --- Ed.

``My peace I give to you, not such as the world gives,''
(John 14:27)

and again,

``In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.'' (John 16:33)

It follows ---

Jeremiah 30:11

11. For I am with thee, saith the LORD, to save thee: though I make a full end of all nations whither I have scattered thee, yet will I not make a full end of thee: but I will correct thee in measure, and will not leave thee altogether unpunished.

11. Quoniam ego tecum, dicit Jehova, ad servandum to; nam faciam consumptionem in cunctis gentibus, ad quas dispergam to illuc; atqui tecum non faciam consumptionem, et castigabo to in judicio, et mundando non mundabo to (vel, purgando non purgabo to, vel, succidendo non succidam to: dicemus postea de verbo)

He repeats in other words what we have already stated, but for the purpose of giving fuller support to trembling and wavering minds. God then promises that he would be present with his people to save them. Now as this could not easily be believed, and as the Jews looking only on their state at that time could not but despair, the Prophet added this comparison between them and the Gentiles. The Chaldeans and the Assyrians flourished seventy years in every kind of wealth, in luxuries, in honor --- in short, they possessed every thing necessary for an earthly happiness. What, then, could the Jews have thought, but that unbelievers and God's enemies were happy, but that they were miserable, being oppressed by hard servitude and loaded with many reproaches, and living also in poverty, and counted as sheep destined for the slaughter? When, therefore, all these things were plain before their eyes, what but despair must have laid hold on their minds? Therefore God obviates this evil; [233]

And he says that he would make a consummation among the nations, as though he had said, ``When I begin to punish the Gentile nations, I will destroy them with an utter destruction, no hope will remain for them. But as to thee, I will not make a consummation.'' Thus he makes a difference between the punishment inflicted on the reprobate and ungodly and that by which he would chastise the sins of his people; for the punishment he would inflict on the wicked would be fatal, while the punishment by which he would chastise his Church would be only for a time; it would therefore be to it for medicine and salvation.

We now, then, perceive what the Prophet had in view: he mitigated the bitterness of grief as to the faithful, for God would not wholly cast them away. And he shews that their scourges ought to be patiently borne, because they were to hope for an end of them; but that it would be different when he visited the reprobate, because he would leave them without any hope. In short, he says, that he would be a severe

[233] There is no verb in the first clause, "Because I with thee." The context shews that the future is meant; then the rendering ought to be, "Because I shall be with thee;" that is, at the restoration of the people to their own land, mentioned in the preceding verse. So Calvin understood the clause, though the early versions, like our own, gave the verb in the present tense, which is by no means correct. — Ed.

judge to the last degree as to the unbelieving, but that he would chastise his own people as a Father.

Other passages seem, however, to militate against this view; for God declares that he would make a consummation as to his chosen people, as in Isaiah 10:23, and in other places. But the explanation is obvious; for there he refers to the whole body of the people, which were alienated from him; but here his word is addressed to the faithful,

``the remnant of grace,''

as Paul calls them, (Romans 11:5) We ought, therefore, ever to consider who those are whom the Prophets address; for at one time they refer to the promiscuous mass, and at another time they address apart the faithful, and promise them salvation. Thus, then, we have before seen that God would make a consummation as to his people, that is, the reprobate; but the Prophet here turns his discourse to the Church and the seed which God would preserve in safety among a people apparently cut off and lost. Whenever, therefore, the devil would drive us to despair, whenever we are harassed in our minds when God deals with us more severely than we expect, let this consolation be remembered, that God will not make a consummation with us; for what is here said of the Church may and ought to be applied to every individual believer. God, indeed, handles them often roughly when he sees it necessary for them, but he never wholly consumes them.

I will not make, he says, a consummation with thee, but I will chastise thee in judgment Here the copulative ought to be taken as an adversative particle, and ``judgment'' has the sense of moderation, as we have seen in Jeremiah 10:24,

``Chastise me, O Lord, but not in thy wrath;''

he had mentioned ``judgment'' before. In this sense is judgment used here, that is, for that moderation which God adopts towards his chosen, for he is ever mindful of his mercy, and regards not what they deserve, but what they can bear. When, therefore, God withholds his hand and gently chastises his people, he is said to punish them in judgment, that is, moderately. For judgment is not to be taken here for rectitude, because God never exceeds due limits so as to be subject to the charge of cruelty; judgment is also opposed to just rigor, and it is often opposed to injustice; but in this place we are to understand that the contrast is between judgment and the just rigor of God. Then judgment is nothing else but the mitigation of wrath.

At last he adds, By cleansing I will not cleanse thee, or, ``by cutting down I will not cut thee down.'' The verb, {נקה}, nuke, means sometimes to cleanse, or to render innocent; and it means also intransitively to be pure and harmless; but it is to be taken here transitively. It cannot, then, be rendered otherwise than ``by cleansing I will not cleanse thee,'' or, ``I will not cut thee down;'' for it has also this meaning, and either of the two senses is suitable. If we read, ``I will not cut thee down,'' it is the continuation of the same subject; ``I will chastise thee in judgment, and I will not therefore cut thee down,'' that is, I will not make a consummation. It would then be, as it is evident, a very suitable connection, and it would run smoothly were we to read, ``I will not cut thee down.'' But the other version is also appropriate, though it may admit of a twofold meaning; some take it adversatively, ``Though I

shall not make thee innocent;'' that is, though I shall not spare thee, but chastise thee moderately; and this intimation was very seasonable; for the flesh ever seeks impunity. Now God sees that it is not good for us to escape unpunished when we offend; it is then necessary to bear in mind this doctrine, that though God will not allow us to be exempt from punishment, nor indulge us, but smite us with his rods, he is yet moderate in his judgment towards us. But others refer to this passage in Isaiah,

``I made thee to pass through the furnace and refined thee, but not as silver, otherwise thou wouldest have been consumed.''
(Isaiah 48:10)

God then tries his people, or cleanses them with chastisements; but how? or, how long? --- not as silver and gold, for that would wholly consume them. For when silver is purged from its dross, and also gold, the purer and clearer portion remains; but men, as there is nothing in them but vanity, would be wholly consumed, were God to try them as silver and gold. But as this interpretation is too refined, I am more disposed to adopt one of the two first, that is, that God would not wholly cut them down, though he would chastise them, or, that though he would not count or regard them wholly innocent, nor so indulge them as to let them go unpunished, he would yet be merciful and propitious to them, as he would connect judgment with his chastisements, that they might not be immoderate. [234]

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are born wholly alienated from thy kingdom and the hope of salvation, and as a dreadful scattering awaits us except thou gatherest us by the power and grace of thy Spirit, --- O grant, that as thou hast once adopted us as thy people, and hast been pleased to gather us under the yoke of Christ, we may remain in obedience to him, and thus continue under thy government, that after having completed our course in this life, we may at length come unto that kingdom where we shall enjoy all those good things which we now only by hope taste, through the same, Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifteenth

Jeremiah 30:12

12. For thus saith the LORD, Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous.

12. Quoniam sic dicit Jehova, gravitas confractioni tuae (vel, fracturae alii vertunt, contritionem, qued idem est, nam {שבר} significat etiam centerere) segra plaga tua.

The design of the Prophet is first to be noticed: he was fighting with those impostors who gave hope of a return in a short time to the people, while seventy years,

[234] This clause is rendered by the Vulg., "that thou mayest not seem to thyself innocent;" by the Syr., "but I will not suffer thee to be wholly unpunished;" and by the Targ., "and destroying I will not destroy thee." Both Venema and Blayney follow the meaning of the Targum; the later version is, "And will not make thee altogether desolate." The phrase occurs in Jeremiah 25:29, and also in Exodus 34:7; Numbers 14:18; Nahum 1:3; in which places the idea of the verb is, to hold guiltless or innocent, to acquit, to let go unpunished, and not to make desolate, to cut off or to destroy. That the former is its meaning in Exodus 34:7, is evident from the explanation which follows, "holding guiltless he will not hold guiltless, visiting the iniquity of the fathers," etc.; visiting the fathers' iniquity proves that it is not held guiltless or suffered to go unpunished. The verb, {{נקה means to be free, or to count one free, from pollution, crime, guilt, or punishment. To let free from punishment, is the idea most suitable here; God would chastise them in some measure, and would not suffer them to be wholly unpunished. --- Ed.

as it has been said, were to be expected. The Prophet then wished to shew to the people how foolishly they hoped for an end to their evils in so short a time. And this is what ought to be carefully observed, for it was not without reason that the Prophet dwelt much on this point; for nothing is more difficult than to lead men to a serious acknowledgment of God's judgment. When any thing adverse happens, they are tender and sensitive as to the evils they endure; but at the same time they look not to God, and comfort themselves with vain imaginations. It was therefore necessary for the Prophet to dwell on his doctrine at large; for he saw that the Israelites promised to themselves a return after two years, though they had been warned by the Prophets that they were to bear the scourge of God for seventy years.

This is the reason why the Prophet speaks here of the grievousness of evils, not because the Israelites were insensible, but because they had been credulous, and were still hoping for a return, so that they deceived themselves with false comfort. He therefore says, that the breaking was grievous; some give this rendering, ``Unhealable, or hopeless, is thy bruising.'' But {אנוש}, anush, is here a substantive, for it is followed by the preposition {ל}, lamed; nor can what the Prophet says be rendered otherwise than in this manner, ``Grievousness is to thy bruising,'' or breaking. He afterwards adds that the wound was grievous, that is, difficult to be healed; for so I understand the passage. [235] But the end was to be hoped for; yet the people were not to think it near at hand; they were, on the contrary, to prepare themselves for patient waiting until the end prescribed by God had come. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 30:13

13 There is none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up: thou hast no healing medicines.

13. Nemo judicans (hoc est, nemo est qui judicet) judicium tuum (hoc est, qui suscipiat causam tuam) ad sanitatem medelae et curatio non sunt tibi (alii vertunt, Nemo judicans judicium tuum, ut emplastrum adhibeat; sed hoc durius; deinde, medela et curatio non sunt tibi; sed videtur mihi simplex esse verborum sensus, quod nemo judicet judicium, deinde quod nihil ad curationem remedii suppetat)

The Prophet speaks first without a figure, then he illustrates the simple truth by a metaphor. He says that there was no one to undertake the cause of the people; as though he had said, that they were destitute of every aid. This was, indeed, in a measure already evident; but so supine was the security of the people, that they daily formed for themselves some new hopes. Then Jeremiah declared what had already in part happened and was still impending; and thus he proved the folly of the people, who still flattered themselves while they were involved in evils almost without a remedy. ``Thou seest,'' he says, ``that there is no one to stretch forth a hand to thee, or who is ready to help thee; and yet thou thinkest that thou wilt soon be free: whence is this vain expectation?'' He then comes to a metaphor, There is no one to apply medicine for thy healing In one sentence he includes the whole first chapter of Isaiah, who handles the subject, but explains more fully his meaning.

[235] The {ל in Hebrew is sometimes the, {κατὰ} in Greek; it means, as to, with regard to; so here, --- Incurable as to thy bruise, Grievous has been thy stroke. Or we may give this rendering, inverting the order, --- As to thy bruise, it is incurable; Grievous has been thy stroke. The ``bruise'' occasioned by the ``grievous stroke'' was incurable, that is, by human means. The effect is mentioned first, ``the bruise;'' then the cause, ``the stroke.'' --- Ed.

There is, however, nothing obscure when the Prophet says that there was no one to heal the evils of the people. [236]

We must ever bear in mind his object, that is, that the people were too easily deceived, when they hoped to return shortly to their own country. But we may hence gather a general truth, --- that men never understand the favor of God until they are subdued by many and severe reproofs: for they always shun God's judgment, and then they become blind to their own sins, and foolishly flatter themselves. And, further, when they only in words confess that they have sinned, they think that they have done abundantly enough. They ought therefore to be urged to the practice and duty of repentance. It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 30:14

14. All thy lovers have forgotten thee; they seek thee not; for I have wounded thee with the wound of an enemy, with the chastisement of a cruel one, for the multitude of thine iniquity; because thy sins were increased.

14. Omnes amici tui obliti sunt tui, et non requirunt; quia plaga tibi (hoc est percussi to) castigtione crudelis (hominis, aut, saevi) propter multitudinem iniquitatum tuarum, invaluerunt scelera tua.

The Prophet again repeats, that nothing remained for Israel as coming from men, for no one offered to bring help. Some, indeed, explain the words as though the Prophet had said, that friends, as it is usually the case, concealed themselves through shame on seeing the condition of the people hopeless: for as long as friends can relieve the sick, they are ready at hand, and anxiously exert themselves, but when life is despaired of, they no longer appear. But the Prophet, I have no doubt, condemns here the Jews for the false confidence with which they had been long fascinated; for we know, that at one time they placed hope in the Egyptians; at another in the Assyrians; and thus it happened that they brought on themselves many calamities. And we have seen elsewhere, in many passages, that these confederacies are compared to impure lusts; for when the people sought at one time the friendship of the Egyptians, at another, that of the Assyrians, it was a kind of adultery. God had taken the Jews under his care and protection; but unbelief led them astray, so that. they sought to strengthen themselves by the aid of others. Hence, everywhere in the Prophets the Egyptians and the Assyrians are compared to lovers. And this view will suit well here; for it was not enough to point out the miseries of the people, without making known the cause of them.

Then the Prophet refers to those false counsels which the Jews had adopted, when they thought themselves secure and safe while the Egyptians, or the Assyrians, or the Chaldeans were favorable to them. For this reason he says, that all their friends had forgotten them, and also that they did not inquire for them, that is, that they

[236] According to Calvin, the verse reads thus, — No one undertakes thy cause; For a cure, medicines and healing thou hast not. This division is made by the Sept., though not by the other versions, nor the Targ. Venema adopts it. The word {,תזור rendered above ``cure,'' means evidently a wound. It only occurs here, and Obadiah 7, and twice in Hosea 5:13, where it is rendered ``wound.'' It comes from ,{זור} in the sense of compressing or binding up; but the noun taken passively, signifies what is compressed or bound up, and that is a wound. Then the literal rendering would be --- None is pleading thy cause; As to the wound, medicatives, binding up, none to thee; or in other words, --- As to the wound, thou hast no medicatives, no binding up. The word {רפאות} means medicatives or medicaments, rather than medicines, as it designates here, and in most places, outward applications to wounds and bruises. The order, as in the foregoing verse, is reversed, the medicaments are put before the binding up. See Ezekiel 30:21. --- Ed.

had cast off every care for them. And he adds the reason, because God had smitten, the people with an hostile wound Here the Prophet summons them again to God's tribunal, that they might learn to consider that these evils did not happen by chance, but that they were the testimonies of God's just wrath. God then comes forth here, and declares himself the author of all those calamities; for the Prophet would have spoken to no purpose of the miseries of the people, had not this truth been thoroughly impressed on their minds, --- that they had to do with God.

Now, that God calls himself an enemy, and compares himself to a cruel enemy, must not be so understood as that the covenant had been abolished by which he had adopted the children of Abraham as his own; for he, through his mercy, always reserved some remnants. Nor ought we to understand that there was excess in God's severity, as though he raged cruelly against his people, when he executed his judgments: but this ought to be understood according to the common perceptions of men. God also calls elsewhere the Israelites his enemies, but not without lamentation,

``Alas!'' he says, ``I will take vengeance on my enemies.'' (Isaiah 1:24)

He assumed there the character of one grieving, as though he had said, that he unwillingly proceeded to so much rigor, for he would have willingly spared the people, had not necessity forced him to such severity. But, as I have already said, when God calls himself the enemy of his people, it ought to be understood of temporal punishment, or it ought to be explained of the reprobate and lost, who had wholly alienated themselves from God's favor, and whom God had also cut off from the body of his Church as putrid members. But as the Prophet here addresses the faithful, there is no doubt but that God calls himself an enemy, because, according to the state of things at that time, the Jews could not have otherwise thought than that God was angry with them.

With regard to cruel one, we have already said, that excess is thereby denoted, as though too much rigor or severity were ascribed to God: but the Jews could not have been otherwise awakened to consider their sins, nor be sufficiently terrified so as to be led seriously to acknowledge the judgment of God. And God himself, in what follows, sufficiently proves, that though he compares himself to a severe or cruel man, yet nothing wrong could be found in his judgments.

For he adds, for the multitude of thine iniquity, because thy sins have prevailed Though the Jews thought that God acted severely, when he threatened them with long exile, here their mouth was closed by the multitude of their iniquity; as though he had said, ``Set in a balance on one side, the weight of the punishment of which ye complain, and on the other side the heap of sins by which ye have often, and for a long time, provoked my wrath against you.'' God then, by multitude of iniquity, shews that it could not be ascribed to him as a fault that he so severely punished the Jews, because they deserved to be so punished. And he confirms the same thing in other words, not that there was anything ambiguous in what he had said, but because the Prophet saw that he had to do with perverse men. That he might then

reprove their indifference, he says, that their sins had grown strong [237] It follows ---

Jeremiah 30:15

15. Why criest thou for thine affliction? thy sorrow is incurable for the multitude of thine iniquity: because thy sins were increased, I have done these things unto thee.

15. Quid vociferaris propter confractionem tuam? aeger est (vel, gravis) dolor tuus propter multitu-dinum iniquitatis tuae, quoniam invaluerunt scelera tua, feci haec tibi.

The Prophet now anticipates an objection, lest the Jews should expostulate with God; for it sufficiently appears that they always complained of God's extreme severity, when they indulged themselves in their vices. As soon then as God treated them as they deserved, they became exasperated and enraged against him. Hence the Prophet now meets their perverse and unjust complaints, and asks, why they cried out for their bruising, as though he had said, that these clamors were much too late, when they had passed by the season for repentance. For God had suspended his extreme threatenings until the people had betrayed so much obstinacy, that there was no room for mercy. When, therefore, the people's wickedness had become unhealable, the Prophet, as we have seen, proclaimed their exile.

Now, indeed, he derides their late crying, for they had been too long torpid in their contempt of God: Why, then, dost thou cry for thy bruising? grievous is thy sorrow, or, grievousness is to thy sorrow; [238] but for the multitude of thine iniquity, and because thy sins have grown strong, have I done these things to thee Here God frees himself from the calumnies of the people, and shews that those who murmured or made a clamor, acted unjustly, having not considered what they merited: for they were worthy of the heaviest punishment, because they not only in one way brought ruin on themselves, and more and more kindled God's vengeance, but had also for many years hardened themselves in their sins; and they had, besides, given themselves up, in various ways, to every kind of wickedness, so that the Prophet justly upbraided them with a multitude of iniquity, and also with a mass of sins. God then says, that he had not exceeded the limits of moderation in the punishment he inflicted on the people, because their desperate wickedness and perverseness compelled him. But consolation is immediately subjoined, ---

Jeremiah 30:16

16. Therefore all they that devour thee shall be devoured; and all thine adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil thee shall be a

[237] It is better to retain the literal word "lovers," than "friends," as rendered by the Sept., the Syr., and the Targ., though not by the Vulg. The particle {{עַל is commonly a preposition, but not when preceding a verb, as here; and that {רב} is a verb here is proved by the sentence which follows, which is in apposition; and it is so rendered by Blayney. The verse may be thus rendered --- 14. All thy lovers have forgotten thee, Thee they seek not: Verily with the stroke of an enemy have I struck thee, --- With a violent correction; Because multiplied had thine iniquity, Grown strong had thy sins, etc. The word for ``violent,'' or cruel, is so construed in the early versions; the Targ. alone countenances our version. The last line conveys a different idea from the preceding. The verb, indeed, means strong in number as well as strong in power; but as number is expressed in the previous line, we may justly consider that power is meant here: their sins were not only many, but strong and vigorous, so strong as to resist all exhortations and all threatenings. --- Ed.

[238] Rather "sore," or wound. The word {{מַכְאֹב indeed means sometimes the soreness or wound of the mind, that is, sorrow or grief; but here, no doubt, it retains its primary idea, correspondently with stroke, bruise, and wound. The Targ. retains this meaning, while the versions go all astray. Then it is, ``Miserable is thy sore.'' The rest of the verse is as follows, --- Because multiplied had thine iniquity, Grown strong had thy sins, Have I done these things to thee. --- Ed.

spoil, and all that prey upon thee will I give for a prey.

16. Propterea omnes qui devorant to devorabuntur, et omnes hostes tui, omnes, inquam, in captivitatem ibunt; et erunt qui to diripiunt in direptionem, et omnes qui to praedantur erunt in praedam.

Here, again, the Prophet promises that God would be gracious to his people, but after a long time, when that perverseness would be subdued, which could not be soon cured. We ought, then, ever to bear in mind the difference between the promise of favors, of which Jeremiah was a witness and a herald, and those vain boastings, by which the false prophets deceived the people, when they encouraged them to expect a return in a short time, and said that the term of deliverance was at hand.

And this difference ought to be noticed on this account, because a most useful doctrine may hence be gathered: the unprincipled men who basely pretend God's name, have this in common with his true and faithful servants, --- that they both hold forth the favor of God: but those who falsely use God's name bury the doctrine of repentance; for they seek only to soothe people with flatteries: and as they hunt for favor, they wholly omit the doctrine that may offend, and is in no way sweet and pleasant to the flesh. Jeremiah did not, indeed, deal so severely with the people, but that he gave them some hope of pardon, and always mitigated whatever severity there was in the doctrine of repentance: but at the same time he did not, by indulgence, cherish the vices of the people, as was wont to be done by the false prophets. But what did these do? they boasted that God was merciful, slow to wrath, and ready to be reconciled to sinners: hence they concluded that exile would not be long; and at the same time, as we have said, they perfidiously flattered the people. So then, it ought to be borne in mind, that we are not fit to receive the favor of God, nor are capable of it, so to speak, until all the pride of the flesh be really subdued, and also all self-security be corrected and removed.

We now see why the Prophet subjoined the promise of favor, after having spoken of the dreadful judgment of God. But the illative, {לכן} laken, does not seem suitable; for how can this verse be connected with the threatenings which we have noticed? Therefore they who devour thee shall be devoured But therefore refers to what he had before said. [239] It is not then strange, that he draws the inference, --- that God having taken vengeance on the wickedness of the people, would also execute vengeance on their enemies. Then the illative is not unsuitable, because the time of mercy had arrived when the Jews became subdued, so as to humble themselves before God and to repent of their sins.

But there is here a common doctrine which we meet with everywhere in the Prophets, even that God, after having made a beginning with his Church, becomes then a judge of all nations; for if he by no means spares his elect, his own family, how can he leave aliens unpunished? And it is the perpetual consolation of the Church,

[239] What seems to be his meaning is, that as God had punished his people, therefore he would punish the nations. The versions and the Targ. render it "therefore;" but Lowth gives "yet surely;" and Blayney, "afterwards." But we may render it "therefore," or for this reason, as anticipative of what is contained at the end of the next verse, "Because an outcast have they called thee. Sion, whom no one seeks." Venema, apprehending this to be the sense of the passage, supposed that the two verses have been transposed: but this kind of construction is not unfrequent in Scripture. — Ed.

that though God employs the wicked as scourges to chastise his people, vet their condition is not better, for when they have triumphed for a moment, God will soon bring them to judgment. There is, therefore, no reason why the faithful should envy their enemies when they are chastened by God's hand, and when their enemies exult in their pleasures; for their prosperity will soon come to an end, and with the same measure will God mete unto them the reward of the wrong done to his people.

Whosoever, then, devours thee shall be devoured, and all thine enemies, yea, all, shall go into captivity; and, lastly, they who plunder thee, etc., which is rendered by some, ``they who tread thee shall be for treading.'' But as the verb means plundering, to avoid repetition, I prefer the former meaning: ``They, then, who spoil thee shall become a spoil, and they who plunder thee shall be for plunder.'' The reason follows, ---

Jeremiah 30:17

17. For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD; because they called thee an Outcast, saying, this is Zion, whom no man seeketh after.

17. Quia adducam sanationem tibi, et a doloribus tuis sanabo to, dicit Jehova; quoniam expulsam vocarunt to Sion, quam nemo requirit.

When God promised favor to the Jews, he referred to their enemies; for it would have been a grievous temptation, which would have otherwise not only disturbed and depressed their minds, but also extinguished all faith, to see their enemies enjoying all they could wish, and successful in everything they attempted, had not this consolation been granted them, --- that their enemies would have at length to render an account for the wickedness in which they gloried. But now the main thing is here expressed, --- that God, when reconciled to his people, would heal the wounds which he had inflicted; for he who inflicts wounds on us, can alone heal us. He exercises judgment in punishing, he afterwards undertakes the office of a Physician, to deliver us from our evils. It is, therefore, the same as though the Prophet had said, ``When the right time shall pass away, which God has fixed as to his people, deliverance is to be hoped for with certainty; for the Lord has decreed to punish his people only for a time, and not wholly to destroy them.''

Iwill bring thee, he says, healing, and will heal thee of thy wounds And this admonition was very necessary, for the Jews had nearly rotted in their exile when God delivered them. They might have then been a hundred times overwhelmed with despair; but God bids them here to raise upwards their minds, so as to expect help from heaven, for there was none on earth. And he adds, because they called thee, Zion, an outcast whom no one seeketh; that is, of whom, or of whose welfare, no one is solicitous. He confirms what I have before said, --- that the extreme evils of the people would be no hinderance when God came to deliver them, but, on the contrary, be the future occasion of favor and mercy. When, therefore, the people should become so sunk in misery as to make all to think their deliverance hopeless, God promises that he would then be their Redeemer. And this is what we ought carefully to notice: for we look around us here and there, whenever we hope for any help; but God shews that he will be then especially propitious to us, when we are in

a hopeless state according to the common opinion of men. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 30:18

18. Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwellingplaces; and the city shall be builded upon her own heap, and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof.

18. Sic dicit Jehova, Ecce ego reducens captivitatem tabernaculorum Jacob et habitaculorum ejus miserabor; et adificabitur urbs super excelsum suum (vel, super acervum suum; vel, culmen) et palatium in sua statione (vel, regula) sedebit.

Jeremiah goes on with the same subject, and dwells on it more at large; for as it was difficult to lead the people seriously to repent, so it was difficult to raise up desponding minds after they had been subjected to a multitude of calamities. God then declares here again that he would come to restore his people from captivity.

Behold, he says, I restore, etc., as though he was already prepared with an outstretched hand to liberate his people. Let it be noticed, that the Prophet did not in vain represent God as present; but he, no doubt, had regard to the want of faith in the people, and sought to remove this defect. Since then the Jews thought themselves wholly forsaken, the Prophet testifies that God would be present with them, and he introduces him as speaking, Behold, I restore, etc., as though he was already the liberator of the people. He names the restoration of tents and habitations, because they had been long sojourners in Chaldea and other countries, where they had been scattered. As then they had their own dwellings, the Prophet reminds them that they were yet but strangers among the nations, for God would restore them to their own country, which was their real dwelling-place. This is the reason why he speaks of tents and habitations. He, at the same time, points out the cause of their redemption, even mercy, so that the Jews might at length learn to flee to this their sole asylum, and know that there was no other remedy for their calamities than this, --- that God should look on them according to his mercy, for he might have justly destroyed them altogether. In short, the Prophet reminds them that they must have perished for ever, had not God at length shewed mercy to them.

He mentions a fuller display of his favor, --- that he would again build Jerusalem upon its own heap, or hill, as some render it; for the situation of the city was high, and towered above other parts of Judea. But it seems to me that the Prophet means that the city would be built on its own foundations, for he calls here the ruins heaps, or piles. For the city had been destroyed in such a manner, that yet some ruins remained, and some vestiges of the walls. It is then the same as though he had said, that the city, however splendid and wealthy in former times, would yet be so restored, that its dignity would not be less than before. But he speaks of its extent when he says, that it would be built upon its heaps, that is, on its ancient foundations.

And this point is confirmed by what immediately follows, the palace shall be set in its own form or station, {משפטו} {על} al meshephthu. The word {שפט} shepheth, properly means judgment, but it means also form, measure, manner, custom. Here, no doubt, the Prophet means that the king's palace would be equally splendid to what it had been, and in the same place. Some think that {ארמון} armun, means the Temple; and this sense I do not reject; but as the Hebrews for the most part

understand by this term a splendid, large, or high building, I prefer the former sense, that is, that he speaks of the royal palace: stand then will the king's palace in its own form or place, as though it had never been destroyed. [240] In short, he promises such a restoration of the city and kingdom, that no less favor from God was to be expected in the second state of the Church, than it had formerly; for God would obliterate all memory of calamities when the Church again flourished, and the kingdom became so eminent in wealth, honor, power, and other excellencies, that it would evidently appear that God had only for a time been displeased with his Church.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since we are so slow to consider thy judgments, and become continually hardened in our sins, --- O grant, that being really touched by those many warnings by which thou not only invitest, but also stimulatest us to repent, we may learn to humble ourselves, and so Submit to thy chastisements, that we may be capable of receiving that mercy which turns whatever evil may happen to us to our good and salvation, until we shall at length be gathered into that blessed rest which is prepared for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Sixteenth

Jeremiah 30:19

19. And out of them shall proceed thanksgiving and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, and they shall not be few; I will also glorify them, and they shall not be small.

19. Et egredietur ab ipsis laus et vox laetitiarum; et augebo eos, et non minuentur; et decorabo eos, nec attenuabuntur.

The Prophet confirms what he had said. We have stated that the Jews, while any hope remained for them, were perverse towards God, but that, after they were brought to extremities, they became extremely dejected; for they lost all hope as to their state, and became so desponding that they would receive no consolation. It was not therefore enough, slightly, or in a few words, to promise them restoration; it was necessary that the promise should be repeatedly confirmed. This then is now the subject of the Prophet; he promises that praise and the voice of joy would proceed from them.

We ought to notice here the contrast between sighings, groanings, complaints, lamentations, and giving of thanks; for as long as they were detained in exile, no praise could have been heard among them. Sorrow is, indeed, no hinderance to prevent us to bless God in extreme misery; but we cannot with a full mouth, so to speak, bless God, except when some cause of joy is presented to us. Hence is that saying of James,

``Is any joyful among you? let him sing.'' (James 5:13)

As then the Prophet speaks of thanksgiving, he intimates that God's favor would

[240] The versions and the Targ. render the word for "palace," temple; and as the former clause has "on its heap," or, on its ruins, so in this the same preposition is used, and seems to require a similar construction, "on its former spot," or, on its wonted place. The word {{משפט denotes what is customary or usual, as well as what is right and just. Then the two lines would read thus, --- And built shall be the city on its ruins, And the palace on its wonted seat shall be fixed, (or shall stand.) But the versions and the Targ. vary the meaning of the preposition. The Vulg., with which the rest essentially agree, is, ``And the temple according to its order, shall be founded.'' Blayney renders the line thus, --- And the palace shall be established upon its (former) plan. As in the previous line, the place is designated, it is probable that the place also is meant here. --- Ed.

be so great as to remove every sorrow and sadness from the Jews. But he indirectly exhorts the faithful to celebrate God's kindness. Had he only said, ``Go forth from them shall the voice of joy,'' it would, indeed, have been a complete sentence; but it was also necessary to remind the faithful for what end God would deal so kindly with his people, even that they might proclaim his goodness; for this is the design for which we receive every good from God's hand. Thanksgiving is then usually connected with joy, when mention is made of the Church.

But we have said that the faithful cannot with so much alacrity praise God, when they are pressed down by distresses, as when God makes their hearts to rejoice; for grief holds bound all the feelings of men; but joy, proceeding from a perception of God's paternal favor, dilates as it were their souls; and hence also their tongues are set loose. For this reason it is said in Psalm 51:15,

``O Lord, open thou my lips,
and my mouth shall shew forth thy praise.''

David there intimates that he had been for a time silent; when God hid from him his face, he could not taste of his paternal goodness. During that time David had his heart as it were bound and his mouth closed; but he prays the Lord to open his mouth, that is, to grant him joy that he might give him thanks.

We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet: he intimates, that though the Jews would be in sorrow for a time, would groan and mourn, yet this condition would not be perpetual; for God would at length comfort them, so that they would not only rejoice, but also proclaim his mercy when liberated.

He adds, I will increase them, and they shall not be lessened; I will adorn them, etc. Some render this also, ``I will increase them:`` but the words are different; and {כבד} cebed, means sometimes to increase, and sometimes to adorn, to glorify, to honor. The words which follow are also different, {מעת} moth, and {צער} tsor. And though the Prophet meant to repeat nearly the same thing, yet there is no doubt but that he intended to set forth the favor of God by this variety, as though he had said, that so remarkable would be the mercy of God, that the Jews would acknowledge, that what had been promised to their father Abraham had been fillfilled to them,

``Thy seed shall be as the sand of the sea, and as the stars of heaven.'' (Genesis 22:17)

The perpetuity also, or the continuity of his favor is denoted, when he says, they shall not be lessened, they shall not be made small. It is possible for a people to increase for a short time; but such a thing is often of no long duration, for the form of this world passeth away. God then promises stability and perpetuity to his Church, for he would manifest his favor to it from day to day, and from year to year. [241] This is the meaning. It follows ---

Jeremiah 30:20

[241] The meaning of the latter verbs in these clauses is to be ascertained by the preceding verbs: "I will multiply," or increase "them;" then the opposite to this is, "and they shall not be lessened," or decreased: and when it is said, "I will glorify," or honor "them," the corresponding contrast to this is, "they shall not be degraded," or dishonored. The first clause refers to number, and the second to honor, dignity, or renown. Then the right version would be as follows, — And I will multiply them, and they shall not be lessened, I will also honor them, and they shall not be degraded. — Ed.

20. Their children also shall be as aforetime, and their congregation shall be established before me, and I will punish all that oppress them.

20. Et erunt filii ejus sicut ab initio, et coetus ejus coram facie mea stabilietur (vel, dirigetur, nam {כון} utrumque significat) et visitabo super omnes oppressores ejus.

This abundance of words which the Prophet employs is by no means useless; for we ought always to remember how hard were their temptations when no token of God's favor appeared for seventy years. It was hence necessary to sustain minds overwhelmed with evils by many supports, so that they might not wholly faint; and he adds promises to promises, that the Jews might see as it were a spark of light from the deep abyss. And hence, also, we may gather a useful admonition: Though the Lord may favor us today, so that we are not exercised by very grievous trials, yet every one knows by his own experience, how prone we are to despond; and then when we once begin to faint, how difficult it is to be raised up to the confidence of hope. Let us then learn to join promises to promises, so that if one will not suffice, another may.

He now says that their children would be as from the beginning Some give this refined explanation, that the children of the Church would be as from the beginning, that is, before the Law; for the covenant of grace was made by God with Abraham before the Law was proclaimed: they hence think that the abrogation of the Law is here denoted, as though he had said, that the Church would be free when Christ came, and that the servile yoke of the Law would then be removed. But this kind of refinement I cannot approve; for I do not think that such a notion ever entered into the mind of the Prophet. I have then no doubt but that the reference here is to the kingdom of David, as though the Prophet had said, that the state of the Church would be no less prosperous and happy under Christ than formerly under David. Were any one to object and say, that Christ's kingdom is much more happy than that of David: this I grant; but the prophets ever compare the kingdom of Christ with the kingdom of David, and they were content with this way of teaching, as it exceeded the hope of the people; for the Jews thought it not credible that they could ever attain their ancient renown. When, therefore, he says here, that the children of Judah would be as at the beginning, there is no doubt with me but that he had a regard to that promise, which declares that the seed of David would be for ever on his throne, as long as the sun and moon shone in the heavens. (Psalm 89:37)

The meaning is, that though the kingdom would through a dreadful ruin become extinct, together with all its dignity, the Jews would yet, through Christ, recover what they had lost through their sins, ingratitude, and perverseness.

He afterwards adds, His seed shall be established before my face, and I will visit all his oppressors Here again God confirms the promise concerning the perpetuity of his Church. He therefore says that the assembly of the people would be established before him, [242] by which words he bids the Jews to look upwards, for in the world

[242] It would be better to observe the order of the original, "And his assembling before me shall be confirmed," or according, to the Vulg. and Syr., "shall continue." The reference is to the assembling at the stated festivals. The verb means to be confirmed, to be fixed, to be made certain; so that "continue" conveys the right idea: the assembling was to be made fixed, so as

nothing was to be found but despair. God then calls the attention of the Jews to himself, when he says that the Church would be established before his face. And as the power of enemies was so great, that the faithful might justly object and say, that every avenue was closed up against God's favor, he adds, that God on the other hand had sufficient power to destroy and to reduce to nothing all their enemies; and he mentions all, because the Chaldean monarchy was widely extended and consisted of many nations; and there was no part of it which was not most hostile to the Jews. As, then, the miserable exiles saw that not only the Chaldeans were inimical to them, but also other nations, so that they were hated almost by the whole world, God here comes to their aid, and declares that he had power enough to destroy all their enemies.

A useful doctrine may be hence deduced: The Church was in such a manner perpetual, that its condition was yet variable; for it often seemed good to God to break off the course of his favor before the coming of Christ. What then happened we may accommodate to our own time. As, then, the Prophet says here, that the children of the Church would be as at the beginning, we need not wonder when the Church happens at any time to be scattered, as indeed the case was under the Papacy. For the Church was not only dead, but also buried, and was not only as a putrid carcase, but like the dust it had wholly vanished; for what remnants could have been found fifty years ago? We hence see that what happened under the Law has also taken place under the kingdom of Christ; for the Church has sometimes been overwhelmed with troubles, and has been hid without any glory or beauty. But, in the meantime, we embrace this promise, that the children of the godly shall be as formerly; for as the kingdom of Christ in former times flourished, so we ought to feel assured that there is sufficient power in God to restore to the Church its glory, so that Christ's kingdom may again rise up, and all God's blessings shine forth in it. But as many enemies surround the Church on every side, and the Devil ever excites everywhere commotions and disturbances, let us know that there is another clause added, even that God will be the defender of his people; so that how much soever the whole world may attempt to tread under foot his favor, he will yet not suffer them to accomplish their fury; for he has the power not only to restrain their assaults, but also wholly to destroy them and to obliterate their memory; for this is what is implied in the word visiting. It then follows ---

Jeremiah 30:21

21. And their nobles shall be of themselves, and their governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me: for who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? saith the LORD.

21. Et erit fortis ejus (vel, magnificus) ab ipso, et dominator ejus e medio ejus exibit, et appropinquare eum faciam, et aceedet ad me; nam (vel, certe) quisnam hic qui applicet, (vel, qui adaptet) cor suum ut accedat ad me? (alii vertunt, qui alliciat cor suum; dicemus postea de sensu) dicit Jehova.

The Prophet, no doubt, explains here more at large what he had said of the restora-

to become permanent; and it is said to be before God, in order to distinguish it from any other kind of assembling · — Ed.

tion of the Church; for we know that the Jews had been so taught, that they were to place their whole confidence as to their salvation on David, that is, on the king whom God had set over them. Then the happiness and safety of the Church was always founded on the king; he being taken away, it was all over with the Church, as the Anointed is said to be the Lord, in whose spirit is our spirit. (Lamentations 4:20) Hence God has even from the beginning directed the attention of his people to their king, that they might depend on him, not that David was able by his own power to save the people, but because he typically personated Christ. We have not now an earthly king who is Christ's image; but it is Christ alone who vivifies the Church. But it was at that time set forth figuratively, that the king was, as it were, the soul of the community; and we have before seen, that when the Prophet animated the Jews with hope, he set before them David, and afterwards the Son of David.

For the same reason, he says here, His valiant one, or, illustrious one, shall be from himself For we must remember the condition of that miserable and calamitous time when God took away every source of joy, by depriving the people of all the dignity with which they had been honored. It was the same then as though Jeremiah had promised the Jews a resurrection, for they were in their exile as dead men, as their hope of public safety had vanished when their king was destroyed. Here, then, he bids them to entertain good hope, because the Lord was able to raise them from death to life. And doubtless it was a wonderful resurrection when the Jews returned to their own country, a way having been opened for them; for they had been driven away, as it were, into another world. And who could have ever thought that so many obstacles could have been removed, when the Chaldeans extended their dominion even over Judea? The miserable exiles had certainly no refuge. It was not then to no purpose that Jeremiah testifies here, that the strong or valiant, that is, the king, would be from the people, and that there would come forth a Ruler from the midst of them. To come or go forth does not mean here to depart, as though the king would go elsewhere; but to go forth signifies here to proceed: Go forth then, or proceed, shall a Ruler from the midst of the people: how this took place it is well known.

But Isaiah had foretold what his successor here confirms, saying,

``Come forth shall a shoot from the root (or stem) of Jesse, and a rod shall spring up from the root of his tree.'' (Isaiah 11:1)

He calls it there the house of Jesse, which was a private house: he would have dignified the favor with a more glorious name, had he mentioned David; but as there was then no kingdom, he refers to Jesse; for as David came forth as an unknown rustic from the folds of the sheep, so also the Lord would raise up a shoot from the stem of a tree that had been cut down. We hence see in what sense Jeremiah uses the expression, ``Come forth;'' for Christ rose up beyond the expectation of men, and rose up as a shoot when a tree is cut down, that is, when there was no resemblance of majesty among the people.

He afterwards adds, I will cause him to draw near, and he will come to me This may be either confined to the head or extended to the whole body; and the second idea is what I mostly approve; for the people were a long time removed from the presence of God, even as long as they were exiled from their country. Hence God adds, ``I will

cause them again to draw nigh, and they shall come to me.'' If, however, any one prefers to explain this of the head, or of the king himself, I offer no objection.

Now, we are taught from this passage, that whenever God speaks of the restoration of the Church, he ever declares that he will be entreated by us; in short, that whenever he invites us to the hope of favor and salvation, we ought always to look to Christ; for except we direct all our thoughts to him, all the promises will vanish away, for they cannot be valid except through him; because in Christ only, as Paul says, they are yea and amen. (2 Corinthians 1:19, 20) But as this truth often occurs in the Prophets, it is enough here to touch on it by the way, as I have handled it more fully elsewhere.

As to the latter part of the verse, there is some ambiguity, --- for who is he, this, etc There are two demonstrative pronouns, {זה} {הוא} hua, ze. Afterwards comes {ערב} oreb, fitting his heart. The verb {ערב} oreb, means to be a surety, and also to fit, to adapt, to accommodate, or to form, and sometimes to render sweet or pleasant; and on this account some have thus translated, ``Who will allure his heart?'' He then adds, that he may come to me, saith Jehovah? I have said that this passage is obscure, and it has hence been turned into various meanings by interpreters. Some apply the words to Christ, that he alone has of his own accord come to the Father. Others consider a negative to be understood, as though it was said, that no one prepares his heart to come to God. But there are some who regard the passage as an exhortation, ``Who is he who will apply his heart that he may come to me?'' Now, if we read it as expressing astonishment or wonder, it would be, in my view, its real meaning. I am not aware that any one has mentioned this; but the Prophet, I have no doubt, intended his words to be so understood.

He said before, ``I will cause him to draw nigh; that he may come to me.'' I have already explained this of the people, who had been long rejected. God then promises here a gathering, as though he had said, ``For a time I scattered the people here and there like chaff; I will now gather them again together, and they shall be under my care and protection as formerly.'' Having said this, he now touches on the ingratitude of the people by this question, ``Who is there who comes to me? who will frame his heart that he may be reconciled to me?'' It is, then, an expression of wonder, intended to make the Jews know that their hardness and insensibility are condemned; for when God kindly invited them, they rejected his favor, when he sought to embrace them, they fled far off from him.

But an objection may be here made, ``Why then did God promise that he would cause the Jews to come to him?'' To this I answer, that God performs or fulfils this promise in various ways: he might have called the Jews to himself by an outward invitation, as he did when the liberty of returning was given them: and then, indeed, a few of the Jews accepted his favor; but all the Israelites, already habituated to the pleasures and enjoyments of those countries, regarded as nothing what God had promised. Thus very few returned to their own country, and restoration was despised by them, though they had once been very anxious about it. God, however, even then made the people to draw nigh; for he stretched forth his hand as though he would gather them and cherish them under his wings. But as the greatest part

despised his invaluable favor, God here justly complains of so great an impiety, and exclaims as through wonder or astonishment, Who is he who will form his heart, that, he may come to me?

Had it been simply said, ``Who is he who comes to me?'' the meaning, through brevity, would have been obscure. But God here clearly distinguishes between the two kinds of access: the first was, when liberty was given to the people, by the decree of Cyrus, and a permission given to build the city and the temple. God, therefore, caused them then to draw nigh that they might come to him; this was the first access. But he now adds, that the Jews did not form or prepare their heart. He indeed speaks of future time, but yet he charges them with ingratitude, which afterwards was fully manifested. Hence he says, ``Who is this, that he may come to me?'' that is, ``I will contrive means that they may unite again in one body, call on me and enjoy their inheritance: this will I do that they may come to me; but many will still live in their own dregs, and prefer Chaldea and other countries to the temple and religion. Many, then, will be they who will not form their heart to come to me.''

We now understand the meaning of the Prophet. But we must at the same time bear in mind, that by saying above, ``I will cause him to draw near that he may come to me,'' God does not speak of the hidden working of his Spirit; for it is in his power, as we shall presently remark, to draw the hearts of men to himself whenever he pleases. But when he said, I will cause him to draw nigh, etc., he spoke only of an outward restoration; and now he adds a complaint, that the Jews would wickedly repudiate this favor, for no one would prepare his heart. We yet see that the whole fault is cast on the Jews, that they were to be deprived of their own country: for it was owing to nothing on God's part that they were not restored, but to themselves, because they were devoted to their own pleasure, and regarded their return and to be counted God's people as nothing. It was therefore the object of the Prophet to ascribe to the Jews the whole fault that God's favor would not come to them, or that it would not be effectual as to the greatest part of them, even because they would not prepare or form their heart, that they might come to God, in order that they might be partakers of that invaluable privilege offered to them.

Now, the Papists lay hold on this passage to prove that there is a free-will in man to come to God; but to do so is indeed very absurd. For whenever God condemns the hardness of the people, he doubtless does not argue the question, what power there is in men, whether they can turn to do what is good, whether they can guide their own hearts. To hold this would be extremely foolish. When it is said in Psalm 45:8,

``To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as your fathers in the wilderness,''

shall we say that as they hardened their hearts they were capable of turning, so that they could by the power of free-will choose either good or evil? To say this would be puerile and extremely sottish. We hence see that the Papists are unworthy of being reasoned with, when they seek to prove free-will by such arguments. They would, indeed, adduce something plausible were their exposition adopted; for they render the words thus, ``Who is this,'' etc., as though God praised the promptitude

of the faithful, who willingly offer themselves and prepare their hearts. But opposed to this view is the whole context. It hence appears that it was very far from the Prophet's design to represent God as commending the obedience of the godly; but, on the contrary, he exclaims with wonder, as Isaiah does when he says,

``Who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?'' (Isaiah 53:1)

He surely does not set forth the obedience of the faithful in receiving promptly and gladly the Gospel; but, on the contrary, (as though something monstrous terrified him) that the world would not believe the Gospel, when yet it offered to them salvation and eternal life. So also in this place, Who is he? etc. For what could have been more desirable than that God should at length, by outstretched arms, gather the Jews to himself? ''I wish you to draw nigh, ye have been for a time, as it were, banished from me, I had driven you to distant lands; but I am now ready to gather you.'' As, then, God so sweetly and kindly allured them to himself, it was doubtless a most abominable and monstrous ingratitude for them to reject the offer and to turn their backs as it were on God, who so kindly invited them. As, then, the Prophet is here only condemning such insensibility and perverse wickedness in the Jews, there is no reason why we should be in quest of a proof in favor of free-will. [243]

We may add, that David uses the same verb in Psalm 119:73, 125, when he says,

``Cause thy servant to approach thee, that he may learn thy commandments.'' [244]

Some render the words, ``Be a surety for thy servant,'' etc.; for the verb: {ערב}, which is here, is found there also. Therefore the passage might be aptly turned against the Papists, who hold that it is in the power of man to form his own heart. But David testifies that this is peculiarly the office and work of God; for by asking this from him he doubtless confesses that it was not in his own power. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 30:22

22. And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

22. Et eritis mihi in populum, et ego ero vobis in Deum (Quod postea confirmat primo versu capitis, 31, cum dicit, In tempore illo, dicit Jehova, Ero in Deum cunctis cognationibus Israel, et ipsi erunt mihi in populum)

[243] The Vulg. favors the meaning advocated by Calvin, “For who is this (iste) that will apply his heart to draw nigh to me, saith the Lord?” The Sept. is nearly the same, “For who is this ({οὗτος}) who has given his heart to tuae to me, saith the Lord?'' The Syr. is, ``For I will turn his heart to me, saith the Lord.'' The Targ. is as follows, ``For who is this who will in his heart come to my worship, saith the Lord?'' Many explanations have been given which are wholly inadmissible, having nothing in the context to support them, such as the application of these words to our Savior. They are evidently connected with the previous clause, being joined with it by ``for:'' they in a manner explain and qualify that clause, and may be deemed parenthetic, for the former clause and that which follows these words, are connected together, --- And I will bring him nigh that he may come near to me, (For who is he who pledges his heart To come near to me, saith Jehovah!) 22. And ye shall be to me a people, And I will be to you a God. By ``him'' we are to understand ``Jacob,'' the subject of the whole passage, and not the ``governor,'' who was to come from ``the midst of him,'' i.e., Jacob, a name by which the whole nation is here called. The promise is to bring Jacob, or the people, nigh; and then to shew that this is alone God's work, the words in the parenthesis are introduced, and by a question, which implies the negative in the strongest manner, as though he had said, ``This work, to bring you nigh, is mine alone, for no one among you pledges or engages his heart to come near to me.'' Both the Sept. and the Targ. render ``him'' in the first line in the plural number, ``them,'' i.e., the people. And the Syr., though the form of the expression is changed, yet gives the meaning of the words within the parenthesis, for the work of turning the heart is ascribed to the Lord. --- Ed.

[244] There is a mistake as to this reference, for the word is only found in Psalm 119:122. — Ed.

As this verse and what occurs in the first verse of the next chapter are materially the same, they shall be both explained here. God then says that the Jews would become a people to him, and that he would become a God to them. This mode of speaking is what we meet with everywhere in the Prophets; and it is very expressive, and includes the whole of true happiness. For when have we life, except when we become the people of God? We ought also to bear in mind that saying of the Psalmist,

``Blessed are the people whose God is Jehovah.''

(Psalm 144:15)

It confirms what I have just said, that a happy life is complete in all its parts, when God promises to be a God to us and takes us as his people. The Prophets, therefore, do not without reason so often inculcate this truth; for though nothing else might be wanting to us that could be expected, yet until we feel assured that God is a Father to us, and that we are his people, whatever happiness we may have, it will only end in misery.

But the Prophet expresses himself more fully, when he says, At that time, that is, when God restored his Church, will I be a God to all the families of Israel They had been so scattered, that they were not one body; but God promises the gathering of that Church, from which the ten tribes had fallen off, when they revolted from the family of David. I cannot proceed farther now.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast manifested to us in thine only-begotten Son all the paternal goodness of which the fathers formerly tasted, and hast so really and fully exhibited it, that nothing more can be desired by us, --- O grant, that we may remain fixed in our trust in thee, and so cleave by true faith and in sincerity of heart to our Redeemer, that we may expect from him all things necessary for our salvation: and may we know that whatever may happen to us, we are still blessed, provided we enjoy this singular privilege, to call on thee as our Father through the name of the same thy Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventeenth

We compared yesterday the two verses in which God promises that he would yet be a God to his people. We stated what this promise means. But the latter verse specifies the time, in order that the Israelites might wait for and expect this favor, though not as yet evident: hence it is said, At that time. He afterwards adds, I will be a God to all the families of Israel, and for this reason, because they had been so dispersed, that they did not appear as one people, and were like different nations. Here, then, a promise is made that the people would be collected together, so that they might be united, and become one body, as they were before their dispersion. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 30:23

23. Behold, the whirlwind of the LORD goeth forth with fury, a continuing whirlwind: it shall fall with pain upon the head of the wicked.

23. Ecce tempestas (sed subaudienda est nota similitudinis {כ}, sicut tempestas) Jehovae furor (vel, iracundia) egredietur, tempestas sese involvens, super caput impiorum residebit.

The Prophet seems to speak abruptly; for nothing could be more delightful than the promise that God gives, that he would be a Father to the people; but he immediately adds, that there would arise an involving whirlwind, which would abide on the head of the wicked. These things, at the first view, seem not to harmonize. But the latter sentence may be applied to the heathens, or to any of the enemies of the Church; for whenever God appears as the Savior of his people, his vengeance goes forth, and is poured on the wicked. Hence such declarations as the following often occur,

``The day of my vengeance is nigh, and the year of my visitation.'' (Isaiah 63:4)

Isaiah joins both, the favor of God and his vengeance: and this is often done by the other Prophets, in order that we may see that God's mercy cannot be clearly and distinctly perceived towards the faithful, except when his judgment on the other hand be made conspicuous as to the wicked. So this passage may be explained. But we may well thus connect the words of the Prophet, --- that he kindly endeavored to allure the people by offering them God's favor; but that having seen that it would be despised, as we stated yesterday, by the greater part of them, he now seasonably threatens them, that if they refused the favor offered them, such ingratitude could not be borne by God. And this is a mode of teaching common in Scripture. For God on his part thus manifests his kindness so as to stimulate men; but as he sees them not only slothful and tardy, but also wicked and ungrateful, he declares that they shall not be unpunished if they despise his favor. The former truth then well agrees with what the Prophet now says, --- that the wrath of God would arise like a tempestuous storm.

He afterwards adds, a whirling or involving tempest, properly, a tempest gathering itself. The verb is {גור} gur, in a reduplicate form and in Hithpael. A similar sentence is found in Jeremiah 23:19; but there the Prophet used another word as required by the subject. [245] Some render it ``falling,'' for {גור}, gur, means to fall; and this meaning is suitable, ``a falling storm,'' that is, impetuously descending, so as to abide on the head of the wicked. But the former sense has been more generally taken, and I am disposed to embrace it; for it tends to shake men with terror, when the storm is said to be like a whirlwind, for it turns and twists around, so that it cannot be avoided. The meaning then is, that God's vengeance would be fatal to all the wicked. But we may take the wicked, {רשעים} reshoim, for the despisers of God, though boasting of his name, as well as for aliens: but I am inclined to include both, even domestic and foreign enemies of God; as though the Prophet had said, that no remedy remained, except they fled to the mercy of God. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 30:24

24. The fierce anger of the LORD shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it.

[245] This verse is literally the same, word for word, with the passage referred to here, with the exception of the word that is noticed; and yet neither the early versions nor the Targum are the same: it is singular how they differ from themselves, so that we can have no confidence in their verbal accuracy. Instead of "the pregnant tempest" in Jeremiah 23:19, we have here "the violent tempest;" it is a participle from a verb which means to agitate, to excite, to stir up; and being passive, it means what is agitated or in great commotion, and hence violent or turbulent. Many copies have {ו here before ,{סער} as in the former passage, where it is omitted only in one copy. --- Ed.

24. Non revertetur (vertunt) furor irae Jehovae, donec exequatur ipsum, et donec surgere faciat (attollat, vel, stabiliat) cogitationes cordis sui: in extremo dierum intelligatis in hac re.

He confirms the last sentence, and compares the wrath or the vengeance of God to a messenger or a minister, who is sent to carry a message, or to perform what has been commanded him. Of God's word, that is, of his threatenings as well as of his promises, Isaiah speaks thus,

``My word shall not return to me void.'' (Isaiah 55:11)

The meaning is, that whatever God promises or threatens, is never without its effect. But they wrongly understand the passage who say that the word of God returns not void, because it brings forth fruit; for he speaks of the effect of the word, whether for salvation or for perdition. So now also God declares that his vengeance, when gone forth, shall not return until it fulfils what has been commanded.

He then adds, and until he shall have confirmed, etc.; for so the verb {הקימו} ekimu, properly means: until God then shall have confirmed or established the thoughts of his heart The thoughts of his heart he calls the decrees or purposes of God; but it is a mode of speaking taken from men, and therefore metaphorical; for it is not consistent with what God is, either to think or to deliberate. But, as to the subject itself, there is nothing ambiguous; for the Prophet means, that when God sends forth his vengeance, all the wicked must perish, for so has God decreed, and his purposes can never be frustrated. Then he shews that God's vengeance will be accomplished, because God has so determined. For God does not dissemble when he promises salvation to men, or denounces on them the punishment which they have deserved; but he executes the decrees or purposes of his heart. [246]

Then the Prophet here condemns the stupidity of all those who thought that they could escape, though they had often heard that their guilt was so great that they must at last be visited with judgment. Though they had often heard this, yet they were deaf to all warnings; and it was for this reason that the Prophet spoke of the thoughts of God's heart.

At last he adds, At the extremity of days ye shall understand this This may be applied to the faithful no less than to the wicked. For though the faithful embraced God's promises, and relied on them, yet, as they had to contend constantly with the heaviest trials, it was necessary to stimulate and animate them to patience. It might then be suitably said to them, ``Ye shall understand this in the last days;'' it being a kind of exhortation, as though he had said, ``Ye indeed think the wicked happy, because God does not immediately punish them, because his vengeance does not instantly break forth in thunders against them; but patiently bear your miseries, and ye shall at length find that their destruction has not been in vain predicted; and ye shall also receive a reward for your faith and patience, if ye continue resigned to the last.'' But the sentence may also be suitably applied to the wicked, because they

[246] The verse is literally as follows, — Turn not away shall the burning of Jehovah's wrath, Until his execution and until his completion Of the purposes of his heart: In the latter days ye shall understand it. A verb in the infinitive mood in Hebrew is used often as a noun, "his execution." A similar form exists in Welsh, nes gwneuthur ohono "Until he hath confirmed," or "performed," according to our version, is better rendered in the Vulg., "until he hath completed." Here is the execution and the completion. — Ed.

were wont to form their judgment according to the present aspect of things. Hence the Prophet exposes the false opinion by which they deceived themselves, and says, that too late they would understand what they were then unwilling to perceive.

If then we explain this sentence of the children of God, it is an exhortation to bear patiently their evils until God appeared as their defender: but if we apply it to the unbelieving, it is a derision of their insensibility, because they regarded as fables all threatenings; but the Prophet exclaims, ``Ye shall at last become wise, but it will be too late.'' Even experience becomes a teacher when there is no more opportunity to repent.

Jeremiah 31

CHAPTER 31

Jeremiah 31:1-2

1. At the same time, saith the LORD, will I be the God of all the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.

1. In tempore illo, dicit Jehova, ero in Deum cunctis cognationibus Israel; et ipsi mihi in populum.

2. Thus saith the LORD, The people which were left of the sword found grace in the wilderness; even Israel, when I went to cause him to rest.

2. Sic dicit Jehova, Invenit gratiam in deserto populus qui evaserant a gladio, proficiscendo donec quietem daret ipsi Israeli (vel profectus est Israel, donec se ad quietem conferret)

I omit here any remarks on the first verse; for it was explained in connection, with the 22d verse of the last chapter (Jeremiah 30:22). The verb {הלוך} eluk, in the second verse, is in the infinitive mood, but it is to be taken as a preterite, and in this interpreters agree. But some apply it to God, that he is a leader to his people, until he brings them to rest; and as the verb, {להרגיעו}, laeregiou, to rest him, so to speak, is in Hiphil, it seems that this ought to be ascribed to God. But we may take the words more simply, ``until he betakes himself to rest;'' added afterwards is the word ``Israel;'' and thus we may render the pronoun ``himself,'' and not ``him,'' --- until then he betook himself to rest [247]

[247] The early versions and the Targum vary much as to the meaning of this and the following verse. The nearest to the Original, as a whole, is the Vulg.; the Sept. go wholly astray. Of all the expositions which have been given, that of Calvin seems the best, as it corresponds more with the Hebrew. I render the second verse thus, — Thus saith Jehovah, — Find favor in the wilderness Did the people, the remnants of the sword, When proceeding to his rest was Israel. I take {{הלוך as a participle, the auxiliary verb being understood, as the case often is in Hebrew. Preceded by a preposition, and followed by a pronoun, {הרגיע} is a verb in the infinitive mood, used as a noun. Twelve MSS., says Blayney, have {הלך} a past tense in Kal: if so, then the meaning would be more striking, though somewhat elliptical, --- Proceed (or advance) to his rest did Israel. As though he had said, ``The people, who escaped the sword of Pharaoh and the slaughters which happened to them, found favor during their passage through the wilderness, and notwithstanding all opposition, Israel advanced forward to

Let us now come to the truth which the Prophet handles: he reminds the people, no doubt, of the ancient benefits of God, in order that the miserable exiles might entertain hope, and not doubt but that God would be their deliverer, though they were drowned, as it were, in Chaldea, and overwhelmed with a deluge of evils. This is the reason why he mentions the desert, and why Jeremiah also adds, that they who were then preserved had escaped from the sword For the people, though they dwelt in a pleasant and fertile country, were in a manner in a desert, when compared with their own country. As then the Israelites had been driven far away into foreign lands, all the regions where they then inhabited are compared to a desert. A similar mode of speaking is adopted by Isaiah when he says,

``A voice crying in the desert, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make straight paths in the wilderness.'' (Isaiah 40:3)

What did he understand then by desert? even the most fertile regions, Chaldea, Assyria, and other neighboring countries. But with regard to the people, he thus calls these countries, because their exile was always sorrowful and miserable. So then in this place the Prophet, in order to animate the exiles with hope, says, that though they had been sent away to unknown regions, yet distance, or anything else which might seem opposed to their liberation, could not prevent God to restore them; for he formerly liberated their fathers when they were in Egypt.; Now as the Jews might again object and say, that they were few in number, and also that they were ever exposed to the sword, as they dwelt among conquerors the most cruel, he says, that their fathers were not preserved otherwise than by a miracle; they had been snatched, as it were, from the midst of death.

We now perceive the design of the Prophet; and we may include in a few words the substance of what he says, --- That there was no reason to fear, that God would not, in due time, deliver his people; for it was well known, that when he became formerly the liberator of his people, his power was rendered illustrious in various ways, nay, that it was inconceivably great, since for forty years he nourished his people in the desert, and also that their coming out was as though the dead arose from their graves, for the Egyptians might have easily killed the whole people; so that they were taken as it were from death, when they were led into the land which had been promised to Abraham. There was therefore no doubt but that God would again, in a wonderful way, deliver them, and manifest the same power in liberating them as was formerly exhibited towards their fathers.

A profitable doctrine may hence be gathered: Whenever despair presents itself to our eyes, or whenever our miseries tempt us to despair, let the benefits of God come to our minds, not only those which we ourselves have experienced, but also those which he has in all ages conferred on his Church, according to what David also says, who had this one consolation in his grief, when pressed down with extreme evils and almost overwhelmed with despair,

``I remember the days of old.'' (Psalm 143:5)

So that he not only called to mind the benefits of God which he himself had experienced, but also what he had heard of from his fathers, and what he had read of

his promised rest.'' --- Ed.

in the books of Moses. In the same manner the Prophet here reminds us of God's benefits, when we seem to be forsaken by him; for this one thought is capable of alleviating and comforting us. This is the import of the whole. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 31:3

3. The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

3. Ab antiquo Jehova apparuit mihi; atqui dilectione perpetua dilexi re; ideo protraham (vel, protraxi, vel, extendi) ad to clementiam.

The last part is commonly rendered, ``I have therefore drawn thee in mercy;'' but the sense is frigid and unsuitable. I therefore doubt not but that he, on the contrary, means, that the mercy of God would not be evanescent, but would follow the people from year to year in all ages. At the beginning of the verse the Prophet introduces the Jews as making a clamor, as the unbelieving are wont to do, who, while they reject the favor of God, yet wish to appear to do so with some reason. Then, in the first place, is narrated the blasphemy of the people. These impious and diabolical words were no doubt everywhere heard at that time, ``He! God has appeared to us, but it was a long while ago:'' as profane men say at this day, when we bring forward examples of God's favor from the Law or from the Prophets, or from the Gospel, He! c'est du temps jadis. Thus, they facetiously deride whatever God has at any time testified in his word, as though it were obsolete, because it is ancient. It is the same when we announce any terrors according to ancient examples, ``He! it happened formerly, but a long time ago.'' They then always return to that impious common saying, Le temps jadis. And the same thing Jeremiah meant to express here, At a remote time Jehovah appeared to us; that is, ``Thou indeed speakest in high terms of the redemption by which the fathers were liberated, but what is that to us? why dost not thou rather shew us plainly what God intends to do? and why dost thou not bring forward some ground for present joy? why dost thou not really prove that God is propitious to us? but thou speakest of the ancient deliverance, while that narrative is now as it were obsolete.''

We hence see, that men have been always from the beginning ungrateful to God; for as far as they could, they buried the kind acts of God; nor by this only was their impiety discovered, but because they treated with scorn all ancient histories, which have yet been preserved for us, in order that our salvation might be promoted.

``Whatsoever is written,'' says Paul, ``has been written for our instruction, that through the patience and the consolation of the Scripture we might have hope.'' (Romans 15:4)

He there shews that we are to learn patience from the examples contained in the Scripture, and that we have there a ground for strong consolation, so that we may cherish hope until God delivers us from all miseries. But what say the profane?'' He, thou tellest us what has been written, but this is remote from us, and through length of time has vanished away: what is antiquity to us?'' But though the Jews used this sacrilegious language, let us yet learn to embrace whatever is set before us in Scripture, while God invites us to hope for mercy, and at the same time exhorts us to patience; nor let this blasphemy ever fall from our mouths; nay, let not this

thought ever creep into our hearts, ``God appeared a long while ago.'' Let us then abominate the ingratitude of those who would have God to be always present, and yet pay no regard to his ancient benefits.

Hence the Prophet answers, But, etc.: the copulative {ו} is here an adversative, as though he had said, Nay, or Yea, for it may also be taken for {גם}, gam, ``Yea, I have loved thee with perpetual love.'' Then God answers the ungodly, and shews, that he having become once the liberator of his people, did not undertake this office through a momentary impulse, but because he had so promised to Abraham, and had adopted the people. Since then God's covenant was perpetual, he thus refutes here the impious calumny, that God acted bountifully only for a moment towards his people, and had regard only once for their miseries, so as to help them. Yea, he says, I have loved thee with perpetual love God then here shews, that the redemption, by which he had exhibited a remarkable proof of his mercy, was founded on the gratuitous adoption which was not for one year, but perpetual in its duration. We thus see that he reproves the detestable blasphemy of the people, and intimates that adoption was the cause of their redemption.

And this passage ought to be carefully noticed: for these false imaginations come immediately to our minds, when we read or hear how God had in various ways and degrees been merciful towards his people, ``He! that happened formerly, but we know not whether God's purpose remains the same; he, indeed, conferred this favor on his ancient people, but we know not whether the same can or will be extended to us.'' Thus the devil, by his craft, suggests to us these false imaginations, which impede the flow of God's favor, that it may not come to us. So the grace of God is stopped in its course, when we thus separate ourselves from the fathers, and from all his servants towards whom he has been so merciful. It is, therefore, a doctrine especially useful, when the Prophet shews, that whatever blessings God has at any time conferred on his ancient people, they ought to be ascribed to his gratuitous covenant, and that that covenant is eternal: and hence there is no doubt but that God is at this day prepared to secure the salvation of all the godly; for he remains ever the same, and never changes; and he would also have his fidelity and constancy to shine forth in the covenant which he has made with his Church. Since, then, the covenant of God is inviolable and cannot fail, even were heaven and earth brought into confusion, we ought to feel assured that God will ever be a deliverer to us: how so? because his covenant remains the same; and, therefore, his power to deliver us will remain the same. This is the use we ought to make of this clause.

A confirmation afterwards follows, Therefore have I prolonged towards thee my mercy I have already said, that this clause is otherwise rendered and explained. But nothing can be more diluted when we read thus, ``I have drawn thee in mercy.'' What has this to do with the perpetuity or the continued course and progress of love? But the other meaning is very suitable, that God would prolong his mercy to Israel. There is understood only one letter, but this does not interfere with the sense; and such forms of speech are elsewhere often found, he then says, that as he had embraced Israel with perpetual love, he had, therefore, drawn out or extended his mercy; for from the time he delivered his people from the tyranny of Pharaoh, and

fed them forty years in the desert, he had bestowed on them many benefits. For with what victories favored he them? and then how often had he pitied them? God then ceased not from continuing his mercy to them from the time he had stretched forth his hand to them. And according to this view it is very appropriately said, that he had prolonged his mercy; for not only for one day or one year did he shew himself propitious to the Israelites, but he had exhibited himself the same for four hundred, five hundred, six hundred years. And thus also is best confuted that impiety and blasphemy of the people, that God had formerly appeared to them; ``Nay,'' he says, ``except thou suppressest most wickedly my benefits, thou must perceive that the benefits I conferred on thy fathers have been long extended to thee, and have been perpetual and manifold.'' [248]

We now perceive the real meaning of the Prophet. Were any to prefer turning the preterite to the future, I would not object, ``Therefore will I prolong (or extend) towards thee my mercy.'' This sense would be suitable. But when the words are taken as they are, we see why the Prophet adds, that God's mercy had been prolonged, that is, that he might condemn the ingratitude of the Jews, because they did not rightly consider the benefits which had been bestowed on them for so many ages. It follows ---

Jeremiah 31:4

4. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry.

4. Adhuc aedificabo to, et aedificaberis, puella Israel: adhuc ornaberis tympanis tuis, et exibis in choros ludentium.

Jeremiah, in this verse, proceeds with the same subject, --- that though there would be the long time of seventy years, yet God would become the liberator of his Church. Length of time might have extinguished the faith of the people, as it is too commonly the case: for when nothing appears to us but the naked word, and when God repeats the same promises from day to day, we think it of no moment; and then when some evil has been prevailing, we think that all ways have been already closed up, so that God cannot bring a remedy; we thus measure his power by our own standard: and as he comes late to help us, because he suffers men to be long afflicted with disease or other evils, so we imagine that God will never come, when he suspends and delays his favor longer than we wish.

Hence the Prophet says here, I will yet build thee, and built shalt thou be, virgin of Israel; and then, thou shalt yet be adorned with thy tabrets Joy is here set in opposition to the grief with which the people were to be oppressed in exile, and in part had been already oppressed, for many had been driven into exile. But Jeremiah

[248] I find nothing satisfactory as to this verse, except the explanation here given, and it is that of the Targum. The first clause is the people's cavilling answer to what is declared in the foregoing verse. Jacob is the person introduced, as representing the people. He says, it is indeed true, — "At a remote period Jehovah appeared to me." Then the rejoinder to this is exactly suitable, — But with perpetual love have I loved thee, Therefore have I prolonged to thee mercy. Or, "extended to thee mercy," (see Psalm 109:12,) or, "continued to thee mercy," or, according to Blayney, "lengthened out mercy to thee." Now there is a consistency in the whole passage, according to this view, and also in what follows, "I will again build thee," etc. — Ed.

expresses their joy and gladness by a figurative mode of speaking, by tabrets and dances of those who play For when the Prophets announce the vengeance of God, they are wont to say, ``cease shall all joy among you; ye shall not play any more with the harp or with musical instruments.'' So also in this place Jeremiah says, that they would return to the tabrets and dances, when God restored them to their own country. We ought not at the same time to turn this testimony of the Prophet to excuse profane lasciviousness, by which profane men pervert the benefits of God, for they preserve no moderation in their joy, but abandon themselves, and thus become wanton against God. And it is the tendency of all dances and sounds of tabrets, to besot profane men. The Prophet then did not intend to allow this sort of licentiousness to the people: for we must ever bear in mind what he said yesterday, that the voice of praise would go forth with joy. By tabrets and dances, he then means holy joy, connected with praises to God, and with the sacrifice of thanksgiving. [249] It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 31:5

5. Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria: the planters shall plant, and shall eat them as common things.

5. Adhuc plantabis rites in montibus Samariae: plantabunt plantatores (hoc est, plantabunt vinitores) et profanabunt (id est, conferent ad usum communem)

The verb {חלל}, chelal, means to profane, but it means also to apply to common use. The expression is taken from the Law; for it was not lawful to eat of the fruit of the vine until after the fourth year; for its uncircumcision as it were remained in the vine, so that its fruit was unclean. Then its first-fruits were offered to God; afterwards every one enjoyed his vintage. (Leviticus 19:23-25) But at the same time Jeremiah had respect to the curses which we read of elsewhere,

``Thou shalt plant a vineyard, and others shall eat its fruit.'' (Deuteronomy 28:30)

What did he then mean by these words? even that the country would, for a time, be so deserted, that there would be no vines on the richest and the most fertile mountains. The mountains of Samaria were rich in vines; and when vines on these were cut down, there was a dreadful desolation. When, therefore, the Prophet says, they shall yet plant a vineyard, he intimates that the land would be desolate for a time; so also when he says, I will yet build thee, he reminds the Jews, that they were to bear with resignation the judgment of God, while they could see nothing but desolation through the whole land.

This, then, is what the word yet intimates: but when he promised that there would be vines again on the mountains of Samaria, he adds, that they who planted them would enjoy the fruit. Here, then, is an additional blessing: it would have availed them nothing to plant or set vines, except this blessing of God was added; for it is a very grievous thing to be deprived of a possession which we have cultivated, and on which we have spent much labor. He then who has diligently planted vines, and he who has cultivated his land, if driven into exile, feels deeply wounded in his mind,

[249] See Exodus 15:20; Judges 11:34; 1 Samuel 18:6; Psalm 68:25. "Tabrets" or timbrels were carried in one hand, and beaten by the fingers of the other. It was a hoop with bits of brass, and over this hoop parchment was distended; they were very like what are now called tambourins. — Ed.

when he sees that his vines and his land are in the possession of strangers. Hence the Prophet here intimates that God's favor would be certain, because he would not only give leisure to the Jews, when they returned, to plant vines, but would also cause them to enjoy the fruit in peace and quietness. They shall then profane, [250] that is, apply to their own use, in the fifth year, the fruit produced by the vines, as though he had said, ``They shall dwell, without disturbance, in their own inheritance, when once they shall have returned to it.''

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast once testified that thou art to us a Father through thine only-begotten Son, we may not only taste of that promise, but be also wholly satisfied with it, and remain in it constantly, until having gone through all evils, we may at length attain to the full manifestation of it, when thou gatherest us into that blessed rest, which is the fruit of thy eternal adoption, through the same Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Eighteenth

Jeremiah 31:6

6. For there shall be a day, that the watchmen upon the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the LORD our God.

6. Quia erit dies, quo clamabunt (sed subaudiendum est relativum) custodes in monte Ephraim, Surgite et ascendamus Sion ad Jehovam Deum nostrum.

The Prophet here amplifies the kindness of God, because he would not only restore the tribe of Judah, but also the ten tribes, who had previously been led into exile. He then promises here a full and complete restoration of the Church. The Prophets do not always speak in the same manner of the liberation of the people; sometimes they confine what they say to the tribe of Judah, as though the rest were in a hopeless state, but often they extend their prophecies to the whole body of the people. So in this place Jeremiah includes, together with the tribe of Judah, the ten tribes, and the half tribe of Benjamin, for some of the tribe of Benjamin had remained and had never revolted from the family of David. But they usually call the kingdom of Israel the ten tribes, and denote the kingdom of Judah by the name of that one tribe: thus the tribe of Benjamin, divided into two parts, is not mentioned.

The meaning, then, of the Prophet is, that when God redeemed his people, not only Judah would return, but also the Israelites, of whom there was hardly a hope, because they had been in exile for a long time; and as they had rejected the pure and legitimate worship of God, they might have been thought to have been excluded from the Church, for by their own perfidy they had shut out themselves, so that they were unworthy of so honorable a distinction. So the Prophet here declares that God's favor would surpass the wickedness and perverseness of the people of Israel.

Hence he says that the day would come in which watch-men would cry on the mountain of Ephraim, etc. By Ephraim, as it is well known, are often to be understood the ten tribes, and that on account of Jeroboam, who first reigned over them. But we ought ever to remember, that under one tribe, in this case, are included all the

[250] This verb seems not to have been rightly understood by the authors of the early versions, nor by the writer of the Targum. Their imperfect knowledge of Hebrew frequently appears. — Ed.

ten tribes. When, therefore, the Prophet speaks of watchmen on Mount Ephraim, he means all the watchmen, placed on their watchtowers, through the whole kingdom of Israel. But the contrast ought to be noticed, for Jeroboam had closed up every passage by which the Israelites might ascend to Jerusalem; for he feared lest they should there hear of God's covenant which he had made with David and his posterity. He was in at ease with himself, because he had obtained the kingdom by sinister means. God had, indeed, by his Prophet commanded him to be anointed a king; but it does not hence follow, that as to himself he had obtained the kingdom justly. It is true that God intended to punish Rehoboam and also the people; but he who had been the author of the revolt was perfidious in seeking to establish a kingdom for his posterity; he forbade any one to ascend to Jerusalem, and therefore he built altars in Dan and Bethel. (1 Kings 12:29-31) On this account the Prophet Hosea complains that they besieged the ways like thieves, and that many who ascended to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices to God were slain; and some were plundered and sent home. (Hosea 6:9) The contrast then is worthy of being noticed, when the Prophet says,

``Yet cry shall watchmen on Mount Ephraim, Arise, let us ascend to Zion to our God.''

For though in appearance they forsook only the posterity of David, they yet at the same time renounced the true and pure worship of God; and the religion which they followed under Jeroboam was spurious; for they ought to have offered sacrifices to God only in one place, for it is often found in the Law,

``Thou shalt come to the place which the Lord thy God shall choose.'' (Deuteronomy 12:26)

But they having despised the place which God had appointed for himself, built altars elsewhere. Then their worship was nothing but superstition; and though they multiplied sacrifices, they did nothing but provoke God's wrath; for it is not lawful for us to devise anything beyond what is prescribed in the Law.

The Prophet therefore says, Cry shall watchmen, Arise, let us ascend into Zion; that is, there will not be such a division among the people as there was formerly. For a few only worshipped God in the Temple which had beell built by his command, and the rest gave themselves up to numberless superstitions; but now they shall again unite in one body. In short, Jeremiah here teaches us, that all the children of Abraham would return to a fraternal agreement, and that there would be a bond between them, a unity of faith, for they would together unite in offering sacrifices, and no one would invent a god for himself. [251]

[251] The verb for "cry" is either in the past tense or in the imperative mood. As there are so many imperatives in this passage, it seems that this is an imperative too. It appears that the latter part of the last verse, this verse, and that which follows, contain what would be addressed to the people after their return. In no other way can the verbs be grammatically rendered. The whole address is as follows, — "Plant, O ye planters, and eat the fruit; 6. For come is the day: Call ye, O watchmen, on mount Ephraim, 'Arise, and let us go into Sion, to Jehovah our God;' 7. For thus has Jehovah said, Shout ye, 'To Jacob there is joy,' And cry it aloud amont the chief of the nations; Publish, exultingly proclaim, and say, 'Saved hath Jehovah thy people, The remnant of Israel.'" The passage is a sort of an episode. What follows seems well connected with the former part of the 5th verse (Jeremiah 31:5). "Eat the fruit," is the meaning, and not the literal version, which can hardly be given: it is so rendered by Blayney. "Call ye," or, proclaim, or, give the invitation. The news was to be made known "among the chief of the

Now this passage is especially useful; for we may hence learn what is the right state of the Church; it is when all agree in one faith. But we must, at the same time, see what is the foundation of this faith. The Papists indeed boast of this union, but yet they pass by what ought to hold the first place, that is, that all must have regard to the only true God, according to what they are taught by his word. Hence the Prophet here mentions Mount Sion, which had been chosen by God, that he might shew that no unity pleases God, unless men obey his word from the least to the greatest, and not follow their own imaginations, but embrace what he teaches and prescribes in his Law. This is the import of this passage. The Israelites shall then call him their God, from whom they had before wickedly departed. It follows ---

Jeremiah 31:7

7. For thus saith the LORD; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations: publish ye, praise ye, and say, O LORD, save thy people, the remnant of Israel.

7. Quid sic dicit Jehova, Exultate propter Jacob in laetitia (vel cum Jacob, nam {ל} potest utroque modo accipi) et jubilate in capite gentium; promulgate, laudate, et dicite, Serva Jehova populum suum, reliquias Israel.

The Prophet confirms the contents of the verse we have explained; and it was necessary to make this addition, because what he had said was almost incredible. He therefore enlarged upon it. Thus saith Jehovah; this preface he made, as I have often reminded you, that his doctrine might have more weight. Jeremiah, indeed, adduced nothing but what he had learnt from God, and by the revelation of his Spirit; but it was needful sometimes expressly to testify this on account of his hearers.

He now bids them to exult with joy, and to shout for joy It must be observed that this prophecy was announced, when the utter destruction of the people, of the city, and temple, was not far distant; but it was the Prophet's object to comfort, so to speak, the dead in their graves, so that they might patiently wait for their promised deliverance, and that they might feel assured that it was not more difficult for God to raise the dead than to heal the sick. Therefore the prophecy had its use when the Jews were driven into exile and miserably scattered, so as to have no hope of deliverance. But that his doctrine might more effectually enter into their hearts, he exhorts them to rejoice, to shout for joy, and to sing; and not only them, but also strangers. For though it will presently appear that their joy was not in common with the unbelieving, the Prophet yet seems to address his words on purpose to aliens, that the Jews themselves might become ashamed for not embracing the promise offered to them. For what doth the Prophet say? ``Ye alien nations, shout for joy, for Jacob.'' What should Jacob himself do in the meantime? We now then see the design of the Prophet's vehemence in bidding all to rejoice for the redemption of the people, even that this prophecy might not only bring some comfort to the miserable exiles, but that they might also know, that whilst in the midst of death, they would

nations," as it is evident from the 10th verse (Jeremiah 31:10). "Saved," etc., so the Sept. and the Targum, and more consistent with the context than "save;" but both have "his," i.e., God's, instead of "thy people," i.e., Jacob's. The verb {הללו} means not only to praise, but also to boast, to exult, and here evidently to proclaim with exultation or triumph. It is rendered here ``sing ye,'' by the Vulg. and Syr. It is worthy of notice, that in this episode the particulars, mentioned in the 4th verse (Jeremiah 31:4-5), and the beginning of the 5th, are referred to in their reversed order. --- Ed.

live before God, provided they did not despair.

In short, he not only intended to mitigate their sorrow, but also to fill them with spiritual joy, that they might not cease to entertain hope and to take courage, and not only patiently, but cheerfully to bear their calamities, because God promised to be propitious to them. This is the reason why he bids them to exult with joy, and to shout for joy

He adds, among the chief of the nations This may be understood as though the Prophet had said, that the nations would be so contemptible, that the children of God would not be disposed to insult them; but I understand the words in a simpler way, --- that the Prophet bids them to exult at the head of nations, as though he had said, ``openly, so that your joy may be observed by all.'' For though the Jews entertained the hope of a return, yet they hardly dared to give any sign of their confidence, because they might have thus exasperated the minds of their enemies. They were, therefore, under the necessity of being wholly silent, and, as it were, without life. Now the Prophet sets this manifest joy in opposition to that fear which constrained the Jews to be almost wholly mute, so that they dared not by gesture nor by words, to make known what they had learned from the holy servants of God. In short, the Prophet intimates that the liberation of the Jews would be so glorious, that they would dread no danger in proclaiming openly the kindness of God. This seems to be denoted by the head of the nations

He then adds, Proclaim ye, praise and say, Save, etc. This refers properly to the faithful; for we know that God is not really invoked by the unbelieving. Faith alone opens a door of access to us, and there cannot be any right praying except what proceeds from faith. The Prophet then addresses here the children of God, when he says, ``Proclaim ye, praise and say,'' etc. And though all the ungodly were by evident experience convinced of the wonderful power of God, yet there was not among them any herald of God's grace. It is then enjoined on the faithful, as their own proper office, to celebrate the favor of God. And to this is added thanksgiving, as though the Prophet had said that God's grace cannot be rightly proclaimed unless his goodness be acknowledged, and the sacrifice of praise be offered to him. We hence learn that we are to be so animated by his promises to trust in God as not to grow torpid. For many cheer themselves up when they hear some joyful news, but this joy produces in them security. Thus it comes that faith is choked, and does not produce its proper fruits; for the chief work of faith is prayer to God. Now, they who are secure because they think of no danger, do not flee to God, and thus omit that work of religion in which they ought mainly to exercise themselves. Hence the Prophet reminds the faithful here that they are so to praise God as not to neglect prayer.

The meaning is, that when God promises that he will be propitious to us, he gives us a sufficient reason for joy. We ought then to be satisfied with the naked word of God, when he declares that he will be a Father to us, and when he promises that our salvation will be the object of his care. But yet, as I have already said, joy ought not to render us secure, so as to make faith idle, but it ought rather to stimulate us to prayer. True and spiritual joy we then have, derived from God's word, when

we are diligent in prayer; and coldness and security are no tokens of faith, but of insensibility; and the promises of God produce no real effects in us, as it must needs be, unless our minds are kindled into a desire for prayer, yea, into a fervor in prayer. This then is the reason why the Prophet, after having bidden the faithful to praise and exalt the favor of God, adds this prayer --- ``Say ye, Save thou, Jehovah, thy people.'' It then behoved them so to rejoice as to feel solicitous for the restoration of the Church. And it behoves us, also, at this time, whenever God shines on us with the testimony of his favor, so to rejoice as not to omit that primary exercise of faith, even prayer.

He further adds, the remnant of Israel, because it was necessary that what Isaiah had predicted should be fulfilled,

``Though thy people were as sand of the sea, a remnant only shall be delivered.'' (Isaiah 10:22)

Though, then, the Prophet has been speaking generally of all the posterity of Abraham, and included the ten tribes, yet here he qualifies that statement by mentioning the remnant or residue of Israel, and this in order that the faithful might not despond on seeing hardly one in ten or in fifty returning from exile; for we know that in comparison of their great number, a few only returned from exile. He has then mentioned here ``the remnant of Israel,'' that the faithful at a future time might not be shaken in their hope, though God did not immediately restore the whole Church; and it was also necessary to deprive the hypocrites of that vain confidence with which they were filled; for they were wont to seize on everything which God promised by his servants. Hence Jeremiah excluded them, that they might know that this promise did not belong to them, according to what Paul, while handling this subject, shews to us at large. (Romans 9:27; Romans 11:5,7) And he is a correct interpreter of this passage and of similar ones, when he says that God was never so bound to the people of Israel, but that he could freely do what he pleased, so that a remnant only should he saved. And he calls them the ``remnant of grace,'' because they are in no other way saved than through the free and gratuitous goodness of God.

And this doctrine may also be justly applied to our time. For we are by no means to expect that God will so restore his Church in the world, that all shall be renewed by his Spirit, and unite in true religion; but he gathers his Church on all sides, and yet in such a way, that his gratuitous mercy ever appears, because there shall be remnants only. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 31:8

8. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travaileth with child together: a great company shall return thither.

8. Ecce reducens ipsos e terra Aquilonis: et congregabo eos ex lateribus terrae; in ipsis erunt caecus et claudus, praegnans et puerpera simul, coetus magnus revertentur huc.

The Prophet again confirms the same truth, but with amplification. For this oracle is not only prefaced as having proceeded from God, but that the address might be more forcible, he introduces God himself as the speaker, Behold me restoring them

from, the land of the north; for Babylon, as it is well known, was northward from Judea. And whenever the Prophets speak of the deliverance of the people, they ever name the north; as, also, when they threaten the people, they say that an army or a calamity was to come from the north. They had before been delivered from the south, for such was the situation of Egypt. The Prophet now intimates that God was furnished with power to liberate them again from the land of the north.

Then he says, and I will collect them from the sides of the earth: by sides, he means the extremities or the corners, so to speak, of the earth; as though he had said, that their dispersion would not prevent God from collecting his people.

Nearly the same promise was announced by Moses, though in other words, ---

``Though thou wert dispersed through the four quarters of the world, I will yet from thence collect thee.''
(Deuteronomy 30:4)

God there means that distance of places would be no obstacle to him, but that as soon as the fit time arrived, he would again collect his Church from its dispersion. We hence see what the Prophet understands by the sides of the earth. And he intended to obviate a doubt which might have depressed the minds of the people on seeing the body torn and deformed: ``Eh! how can it be, that we can again come together?'' In order then to remove this doubt, the Prophet says that God would come to collect his people again, not only from one corner, but also from the extreme regions of the earth.

He then adopts another mode of speaking, in order to shew that no impediment would be so strong as to exceed God's power, when his purpose was to deliver his people: The blind, he says, and the lame, the pregnant, and the one in travail, shall come The blind cannot move a step without stumbling or falling; then the blind are by no means fit to undertake a journey, for there is no way which they can see as open for them; and the lame, when there is a way for them, cannot make any progress. But God promises that such would be their deliverance, that both the lame and the blind would participate of it. He then mentions the pregnant and women in childbed The pregnant, owing to the burden she carries, cannot undertake a long journey, and she that is recently confined, can hardly dare to leave her bed, being so debilitated by parturition; but God promises that the pregnant and the lately confined shall return with the rest; as though he had said, that there was no fear but that God would restore his Church, because his power was superior to all the impediments of the world, so that he could confirm the feeble, guide the blind, sustain the lame, and strengthen the pregnant and those lying in childbed.

Now, though the Prophet addressed this discourse to the ancient people, it yet contains a doctrine perpetually useful. We hence gather, that they act preposterously who estimate God's favor according to present appearances. But this is a mistake almost inbred in us by nature, and engrosses all our thoughts and feelings. Hence arises want of confidence in God, and hence it also happens, that all God's promises become frigid to us, or at least lose their just value. For when God promises anything, we look around us and inquire how it can be fulfilled; and if our minds cannot comprehend the way and manner, we reject what has proceeded from the

mouth of God. Let us then attend to this prophetic doctrine; and when God seems to promise what surpasses our faith, nay, what appears to us by no means possible, let this doctrine come to our minds, and let it serve as a corrective to check our false thoughts, lest we, having our minds preoccupied by a false and preposterous opinion, should do wrong to the power of God. If, then, the deliverance which God promises seems incredible, as to our perceptions, let us remember that it is in his power to make the blind to see, the lame to walk, the pregnant and those lying in childbed, to undertake a journey; for he can by his power surmount all obstacles, so that we shall find our faith victorious, provided we learn to rely on God's promises, and firmly rest on them. We now understand what use we ought to make of this prophecy. It follows afterwards ---

Jeremiah 31:9

9. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born.

9. Cum fletu venient, et in precationibus (vel, miserationibus) addiscam cos; deducam ad fluvios aquarum, in viam rectam, ubi non impingent (non impingent in ea, ad verbum, sed {בה} debet resolvi in relativum) quoniam ero Israeli in Patrem, et Ephraim primogenitus meus ipse.

The Prophet still pursues the same subject; but he adds, that though they went with weeping into exile, yet that would be no impediment, that God should not restore them again to their own country: for I take the beginning of this verse, in weeping shall they come, in an adversative sense. Some explain weeping as the effect of joy; for joy as well as grief sometimes brings tears. Some then think the meaning of the Prophet to be, that so great would be the joy on their return, that tears would flow from their eyes. But I, on the contrary, think, that the Prophet means what was afterwards repeated in one of the Psalms,

``Going forth they went forth and wept; but coming they shall come with exultation, carrying their sheaves.'' (Psalm 126:6)

For the Prophet compares the exile of the people to sowing; for except the seed cast on the earth dies, it remains dry and barren, and does not germinate: the death then of the seed is the cause of production. So also it was necessary for the people to be by exile thus cast on the ground, that their calamity might be a kind of death to them. But he says that the Jews when cast forth as a seed, that is, when driven into exile to be put to death by the chastening rod of God, ``had come with weeping;'' but that afterwards they returned with joy as in harvest, that is, when liberty to return was granted them. So also the Prophet here speaks, as I think, in an adversative sense, of the Jews; the particle though is to be understood.

It afterwards follows, With prayers, or mercies, will I lead them The word {תחנונים}, techenunim, which is found mostly in the plural number, means prayers; and I know not whether this sense is suitable here. In Zechariah, the word being connected with grace, it cannot be otherwise explained than of mercy, (Zechariah 7:9) and I am inclined to adopt this meaning here, even that the weeping of the people would be no hinderance, that God should not at last shew mercy to them, and turn their

weeping and tears into laughter and joy. But if any one prefers to render the word, prayers, the sense would not be improper; that is, that when they began suppliantly to confess their sins, and to flee to God's mercy, there would then come the time of joy. But weeping then must be applied to blind grief, for the Jews were not as yet subdued so as to submit to God, to be humbled and to repent. Hence weeping is to be taken in a bad sense, even for grief, mixed with perverseness, when they murmured against God; and the Prophet must have taken prayers as tokens of repentance, that is, when the Jews, having been truly convinced of their sins by many and continual evils, would begin to flee to God's mercy. But he seems rather to set God's mercies in opposition to the sorrow in which the Jews were involved when God hid his favor from them. [252]

He adds, I will lead them to fountains of waters, according to what is said in the book of Psalms, that they would find fountains and wells on their journey. (Psalm 84:6) For the Jews had to travel through deserts and sterile sands; so they thought that they lived in another world while they were in Chaldea: they remembered how vast was the solitude through which they had passed. Hence then was their despair, so that they refused every comfort when the Prophets exhorted them to entertain good hope. God therefore promises to be their leader on their journey, so that they should not want water in the lonely and barren desert. And we see that the Prophet, by the various figures he uses, means one and the same thing, even that whatever obstacles may meet us, to prevent us from tasting of God's goodness, and to embrace the promises of salvation, they will all vanish away, if we bear in mind the infinite power of God. I will then lead them by fountains of water

Then he says, through a straight way, in which they shall not stumble, according to what is said in Isaiah 40:3,

``A voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of Jehovah, make straight the paths of our God; let every valley be raised and mountain be made low, so that rough places may become plain, and the crooked (or tortuous) become straight ways.''

We thus see how these prophecies harmonize, and ought to be regarded as teaching the same thing, --- that God surmounts all obstacles when it is his purpose to save his Church; for how much soever all the elements may unite against the salvation of the godly, God can by one breath dissipate them all, and cast down the loftiest mountains that may be in his way, and give rivers in deserts and dry lands; and thus he can constrain to obey him whatever may seem opposed to the salvation of his

[252] The Targ. and the Versions, excepting the Vulg., give a similar meaning to these two clauses. They give the sense of "departing" to the first verb, while it commonly has the sense of "coming." It is also in the future tense, and therefore cannot refer to the departing of the Israelites, who are meant here, for they had already gone into exile. Their return is no doubt what is spoken of, which would be attended with "weeping," not for joy, but for their sins, as it is distinctly expressed in verses 18 and 19 (Jeremiah 31:18-19); and also with entreaties or supplications. And it is better with Venema to join the two words with "coming," — With weeping shall they come and with supplications; I will bring them, I will lead them, By streams of water, in a straight way; They shall not stumble in it. He promises two things, to "bring" and to "lead;" then the leading refers to the streams of water, and the bringing to the straight way; which is a kind of arrangement that is often to be met with in Scripture. Two things, especially necessary for travelers, are promised, water and a good road. "Straight" seems to apply to the surface of the road as well as to its sides; hence some render it "smooth" or even, such as would have nothing that might cause one to stumble. — Ed.

Church.

He afterwards adds, for I shall be a Father to Israel, Ephraim my first-born he, or shall be; for {הוא}, eua, as it is well known, is taken in the place of a verb. Here Jeremiah points out the cause, and as it were the fountain of the deliverance of which he has been hitherto speaking, even because God would become reconciled to his people. He intimates also the cause of the exile and of all the evils that had been and would be, because they had provoked God by their sins. God had indeed adopted them as his people in the person of Abraham; but the Prophet intimates an interruption when he says, I will be, though the covenant of God had never been annulled. He was then ever the Father of the Church, but the benefit of adoption did not appear; as to outward appearance the people seemed as rejected, as it has been said in other places: and on this subject Hosea also speaks in these words,

``I will say to her who obtained not mercy, Thou shalt obtain mercy; I will say to the not beloved, Thou art a beloved people.'' (Hosea 2:23)

For nothing could have been said of the Jews when expelled from their inheritance, but that they were wholly alienated from God. He was therefore no Father to them at that time, that is, he did not appear to be so, although he did prove himself to be a Father really and effectually. He then began to be a Father when the people returned into their own country, because God's favor then shone forth, which for a time had been as it were extinct. [253]

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast so often been pleased to receive into favor thine ancient people, though extremely provoked by their perverse wickedness, --- O grant, that mercy may also at this day be shewn to us, and that though we wholly deserve to perish eternally, thou mayest yet stretch forth thine hand to us and grant to us a testimony of thy favor, so that we may be able with a cheerful mind to call on thee as our Father, and ever to entertain hope of thy mercy, until we shall be gathered into that kingdom, where we shall perfectly render to thee the sacrifice of praise, and rejoice in the fruition of that eternal life, which has been procured for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Nineteenth

We explained yesterday how God began to be a Father to Israel when he restored him from exile. Adoption, with regard to God, remained indeed the same, as it has been stated; but as to the judgment of men, it was abolished. He then began anew so to collect his people, that they might really know him as their Father.

He afterwards adds, that Ephraim would be his first-born Ephraim is no doubt taken here for the whole people; nor does the Prophet here make any distinction between the two kingdoms, but includes even the tribe of Judah in the name Ephraim, as it is done in many other places. But yet it is proper to observe, that Ephraim

[253] What is here said is no doubt true: but the auxiliary verb is, "I was," not "I shall be;" and so it is rendered by the Sept., Vulg., and Targ.; and by the Syr., I am. Then the Versions, very incorrectly, give the next clause, in which there is no verb, in the present tense, while it ought to be in the past tense, like the foregoing. The words literally are, — For I was (or, have been) to Jacob a Father, And Ephraim, my first-born he (i.e. was he.) And to this purpose has Blayney rendered the passage. Whenever the auxiliary verb is understood, its tense must be regulated by the context. On "first-born," see Exodus 4:22, 23, and 1 Chronicles 5:1. — Ed.

is sometimes taken for all the posterity of Abraham, sometimes for the kingdom of Israel, and sometimes for that tribe itself. When the kingdom of Judah is distinguished from the kingdom of Israel, then Ephraim includes only the ten tribes; but in this place the Prophet did not intend to mark the difference between the tribe of Judah and the ten tribes, because it would have in this case been very strange to call Ephraim the first-born; for we know that Ephraim had been rejected from a regard to David, as it is said in the Psalms,

``And God refused the tribe of Joseph, and rejected the tabernacles of Ephraim; he chose the tribe of Judah whom he loved.''
(Psalm 78:67, 68)

There a comparison is made between the kingdom of Judah which God had erected, having added a promise, and the kingdom of Jeroboam, which was, as it were, spurious; for the revolt from the family of David had torn the body of the Church, so that it became as it were mutilated. For this reason it is said that Ephraim was rejected, that is, because God regarded David alone and his posterity with paternal favor; and of his whole family it was said,

``He shall call me, `My Father;' and I will say to him
`Thou art my Son.''' (Psalm 89:26)

In this place then, the Prophet speaks generally of the people, as though he had said that it was only a temporary division when the ten tribes had formed for themselves a kingdom of their own, but that they would become one people, so that Ephraim would differ in nothing any more from Judah. To the same purpose is what is said by Hosea,

``When Israel was a child I loved him,
and from Egypt have I called my Son.'' (Hosea 11:1)

There the Prophet calls the people Israel; he does not, however, denote the ten tribes only, but he placed in the first rank David and his posterity. Indeed, the Prophets, when prophesying of the restoration of the Church, direct their eyes to the first unity which God had fixed among the people, for it was then only the true state of things, when the twelve tribes preserved a fraternal union. We now then perceive why the Prophet says that Ephraim was God's first-born.

But it may be asked here, ``With respect to whom is he thus called? for it follows that there were other sons of God, if Ephraim was the first-born among them.'' But this conclusion is not well-founded; for Mary is said to have brought forth her first-born son, who was yet her only son, (Matthew 1:25) and Christ is called elsewhere the first-begotten with: reference to all the faithful,

``that he might be the first-born among many brethren.'' (Romans 8:29)

But Mary had brought forth her only son. Hence the word, ``first-born,'' does not prove that others follow, the second and the third in their order; but we may say that Ephraim was called the first-born of God with reference to the Gentiles, who at length became partakers of free adoption: for we also are the children of Abraham, because we have been planted by faith among the elect people; yet this solution seems to me more refined than solid. I then give this simple interpretation, that Ephraim was called the first-born because he was preferred to all the Gentiles; God was pleased

to choose them as his people. This then was the peculiar privilege of the seed of Abraham; for though the human race was one and the same, yet it pleased God to choose and adopt Abraham and his posterity. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 31:10

10. Hear the word of the LORD, O ye nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.

10. Audite sermonem Jehovae, gentes, et annuntiate in insulis e longinquo, et dicite, Qui dispersit Israel congregabit eum, et custodiet tanquam pastor gregem suum.

The Prophet dwells at large on the redemption which was in the opinion of all incredible, especially as so many years had already elapsed; for it was the full extent of human life when the people had been buried, as it were, in their graves for seventy years. Then the length of time alone was sufficient to cut off every hope. No wonder then that our Prophet sets forth in a lofty strain the return of the people.

Hence he exclaims, Hear, ye nations, the word of Jehovah And then, as by God's command, he sends forth heralds here and there to proclaim the favor granted: Go ye, he says, and announce it in remote islands Now, by these words he intimates that the liberation of the people would be a remarkable demonstration of God's power, which was to be made known through all nations. Had not this been said, the hope of the people must have failed through its own weakness, and been reduced, as it were, to nothing. But when they heard. Jeremiah's prophecy respecting this extraordinary favor of God, it was no common consolation to them; that is, that God would become such a deliverer to them that he would exercise his power in such a way as to become evident even to remote nations, yea, the report of which would penetrate into the farthest regions. By islands the Prophets mean countries beyond the sea; thus by the Jews, Italy, Spain, Greece, France, were called Islands. Then the Prophet here by remote islands, means all the regions of the world distant from Judea, and especially those beyond the sea.

He afterwards says, he who has dispersed Israel will gather him This sentence confirms the hope of liberation; for God could easily redeem his people, since their exile was a punishment inflicted by his own hand. Had the Chaldeans obtained the victory over them by their own prowess, they might have cast away all hope as to their deliverance. God then exhorts the people here to entertain hope, because he could heal those wounds which he himself had inflicted; as though he had said, ``I am he who drove you into exile, am I not able to bring you back? Had you been led away by the power of your enemies, you might be now without any hope of deliverance; but as nothing happened but through my righteous judgment, mercy can bring a remedy for all your evils.'' Then God shews that their liberation could be easily effected, since the Chaldeans gained nothing by their own power, but as far as he permitted them when chastising his people. He then reasons from contraries, that since he had dispersed, he could also gather them. For had the Israelites been dispersed at the will and pleasure of men, their deliverance might have seemed to be beyond the power of God; but as he had chastised them, he could, as I have just

said, heal the wounds inflicted by his own hand.

A useful doctrine may be hence deduced: the Prophet invites the people to repentance by reminding them that God had dispersed them; for had not the miserable people known this and been fully persuaded of it, they would not have fled to God's mercy, nor have regarded him, nor entertained hope of deliverance. It was, therefore, necessary that repentance should in due order precede, that the people might embrace the deliverance offered to them. This is the reason why the Prophet says, that it was God who had dispersed Israel. He indeed reasons, as I have said, from contraries; but the sentence, no doubt, contains the exhortation which I have now stated, that the people might know that they suffered a just punishment; for it was not by chance, nor by the will of men, but by God's righteous judgment, that they had been driven into exile.

It follows, and he will guard them as a shepherd his flock The Prophet here shews that God's favor would not be momentary, but that their liberation would be the beginning of a deliverance continued to the end; and to know this is most necessary; for what would it avail us to be once delivered by God? Were it so, our salvation would soon fail. But when we hear that we are delivered by God from the tyranny of our enemies for this end, that he may continue towards us his favor, that he may become our perpetual guardian and shepherd, this is a solid ground of confidence. This then is the reason why the Prophet, after having spoken of the deliverance of his people, at the same time adds, that God would be their shepherd, that he would perpetually guard and preserve his people. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 31:11

11. For the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.

11. Quia redimet Jehova Jacob et redimet e manu (est quidem aliud verbum, sed idem significat, {נאל} {פדה} redemit e manu) potentis (vel, robusti) prae ipso.

He goes on with the same subject. He had said before that it would not be a difficult or an arduous work for God to deliver his people; he now says, Jehovah will redeem his people, and will redeem them from the hand of one more powerful than themselves Jeremiah again obviates the doubt which might have dejected the minds of the godly; for this thought ever recurred to them, ``How can God redeem us? he might indeed have cheeked the Chaldeans, but now they rule over the whole East; this monarchy is like a gulf in which the whole world is swallowed up: since then God has thus exalted the Chaldean power, we are wholly without hope.'' They might then have despaired when they compared this evil with all the remedies that might occur to them. But the Prophet here confirms what he had just stated, that God would be more powerful than the Chaldeans and all other enemies; as though he had said,

``Though your enemies are strong, and ye are like sheep in the jaws of wolves, yet nothing can hinder God from redeeming you.'' [254]

[254] The difference between the two verbs seems to be this:, {{פדה is to rescue, to free, to deliver, either by force or by a ransom; but {נאל} is to recover what one has a right to, and this also either by force or by a ransom. So that the latter implies a claim or right which is not intimated by the former, --- For Jehovah will deliver Jacob, And recover him from a hand stronger than his own. Forcible deliverance is no doubt meant here; and the latter verb is very striking, as it implies that God was vindicating his own right in extricating Jacob from the grasp of a hand stronger than his own. --- Ed.

To the same purpose is what God says often by his Prophets,

``Ye have been sold for nothing, and redeemed shall
ye be without price,'' (Isaiah 52:3)

as though he had said, ``I am not bound to pay anything to the Chaldeans, for I did not sell you to them as by a contract, but I sold you on account of your sins; as to them, they have given me no price: let nothing, therefore, terrify you as though they could oppose your deliverance against my will.'' How so? ``Because they have no right to detain you; therefore, if ye only accept my favor, the strength of your enemies, which appears so formidable, shall not hinder your redemption.'' This is the reason why he says that the Chaldeans were stronger or more powerful than the Israelites.

This truth is also of no little use to us at this day; for when we consider how great is the strength of our enemies, despair must overwhelm our minds; but this promise comes to our aid --- God testifies that he will in such a way be the Deliverer of his people, that the power of men shall not prevent nor delay his work. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 31:12

12. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the LORD, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all.

12. Et venient et laudabunt in excelso Zion, et confluent ad beneficentiam Jehovae, ad triticum et ad vinum et ad oleum, et ad gregem pecudum (ad verbum, filios ovium) et armenti (vel, pecoris; distinguit oves et arietes a bobus et vaccis) et erit anima eorum quasi hortus irriguus, et non adjicient ad dolendum (vel, lugendum) amplius.

He says that they would come to sing praises on the height of Zion; by which words Jeremiah promises the restoration of the Temple, for otherwise the return of the Jews to their own country would have been of no great importance; nay, it would have been better for them to have remained in Chaldea, if they only regarded quietness, wealth, and pleasures; for we know how great was the fertility and pleasantness of Chaldea. Then as to the benefits of an earthly and fading life, dwelling there would have been more advantageous to the Jews; but their return to their own country was to be looked for chiefly that they might be separated from heathens, and might rightly worship God, and so dwell in the promised inheritance, as to be strangers in the world, having respect to their celestial rest.

What then has been hitherto said of the people's return would have been unimportant, had not this promise been added respecting the restoration of God's worship. At the same time he exhorts the Israelites to gratitude by shewing to them the end for which they were to be made free, even that they might sing praises on the height of Zion. We, indeed, know that the Temple was built on the top of that hill. But the Prophet mentions the height or high place, because gratitude was freely expressed when the Jews returned to their own country; for while they lived in exile they were like persons mute. It is hence said in the Psalms,

``How shall we sing a song to God in a foreign land?''

(Psalm 137:4)

And they might have been still fearful after their return, had not a full liberty been granted them. This then is the benefit which the Prophet refers to when he says, that they would celebrate this favor on the high place of Sion, not in an obscure corner, but so that their voice might be heard far and wide.

He adds, and they shall flow together to the goodness of Jehovah, to the wheat, vine, and oil [255] This mode of speaking, common among the Prophets, ought to be specially noticed. They describe the kingdom of Christ in a way suitable to the comprehension of a rude people, and hence they set before them external images; for when Christ's kingdom is the subject, mention is made of gold, of silver, of every kind of wealth, and also of great splendor and of great power, for we know that what is beyond and above the world cannot be immediately comprehended by the human mind. We are here inclosed, as it were, in prisons --- I speak not of our bodies; but while we sojourn on earth, we cannot raise our minds upwards so as to penetrate as far as the celestial glory of God. As, then, the kingdom of Christ is spiritual and celestial, it cannot be comprehended by buman minds, except he raises up our thoughts, as he does, by degrees. This, then, is the reason why the Prophets have set forth the kingdom of Christ by comparing it to earthly kingdoms. We also know that there was a peculiarity in the Old Testament, when God covered with shadows what was afterwards clearly revealed in the Gospel; in Christ the heavens are opened to us. Hence this form of stating the truth would now be not only superfluous to us, but even injurious, as it would draw us back from the enjoyment of heavenly things. For we ought to distinguish between our state and that of the ancient people. Paul reminds us that they were children under a schoolmaster, being under the Law; but that we are grown up, and that, therefore, the bondage under which the Fathers lived, has come to an end through the coming of Christ. (Galatians 3:23-25)

Though David was endued with a singular gift of the Spirit, yet he confined himself within his own limits; for he knew that God intended so to rule at that time his Church, as that the manner of teaching should be suitable to children. But now, after we have grown up in Christ, the figures and external images have ceased; for though godliness has promises respecting the present as well as the future life, as Paul testifies, (1 Timothy 4:8) we ought yet to rise above that doctrine which is elementary. Hence when the Prophets promise wine, and oil, and wheat to the faithful, their object is to raise up their minds by degrees and gradually to higher things, according to the condition and comprehension of childhood.

And this ought to be carefully noticed; for many profane men, when they read such sentences, think that the people were addicted only to present gratifications, and that all the Jews were slaves to their appetites, and were fed by God like swine or oxen. But such an opinion is to be altogether abhorred; for they who entertain it not only wrong the Fathers most grievously, whose hope was the same as ours, as

[255] The verb {{נהר rendered here, ``flow together,'' has another meaning, ``to be enlightened'' or illuminated, (see Psalm 34:5;) and light in Scripture means comfort, delight, or enjoyment. It is so taken by the Syriac and the Targ., and more suitably to the words which follow than in the sense here given, --- And they shall be comforted by the bounty of Jehovah, With corn, and with new wine, and with oil, Also with the young of the flock and of the herd; And their soul shall be like a watered garden, And they shall again hunger no more. Or, And they shall again feel want no more. --- Ed.

thy ever looked forward to an eternal inheritance, being strangers, as the Apostle tells us, in this world, (Hebrews 11:13) but they also disunite the body of the Church, and extinguish the grace of God, which was granted formerly through many ages, though it was only at the coming of Christ that God commenced to proclaim to men his eternal salvation. But we must bear in mind that the holy Fathers were not so brutish in their minds, that they confined their thoughts to this world; for they knew that they had been adopted by God, that they might at last enjoy a celestial life; and hence they called themselves sojourners. Jacob, who had long dwelt in the land of Canaan, says that his whole life had been a continual pilgrimage. (Genesis 47:9) And the Apostle wisely notices this, when he says that they were acknowledged by God as his children, because they were strangers in this world. (Hebrews 11:13) Then the holy fathers had the same hope as we now receive from the Gospel, as they had also the same Christ. But the difference is, that God then set forth his grace under visible figures, and it was, therefore, more obscure, but that now, figures and types had ceased, and Christ has come forth and appeared to us more clearly. I have therefore said, that this doctrine ought to be wisely applied to our use, lest we seek to be fed and crammed when God invites us to the participation of his grace. But we ought to know, that of all men, we are the most miserable, if our hope is confined to this world; and yet, at that time this way of teaching was very necessary, for the return of the people, as it has been stated, required it.

Now, then, let us know that by saying, they shall flow together to the goodness of Jehovah, to wine, oil, and wheat, something better and more excellent than food and sufficiency is promised, and that what is spiritual is conveyed under these figures, that the people might, by degrees, ascend to the spiritual kingdom of Christ, which was as yet involved in shadows and obscurity.

He afterwards adds, their soul shall be as a watered garden He intimates that their abundance would be perpetual. When a fruitful year happens, fruits then, indeed, abound, and the quantity of wine and wheat is more than the demand; but after a fertile year sterility follows, which absorbs the previous abundance; and so it often happens, because men through their ingratitude, as it were, drive away God's blessing, so that it does not flow to them in a continuous course; but God promises here that the souls of the people would be as watered gardens, because they were not to be satisfied only for a short time, but were at no time to be exposed to want, or famine, or to any deficiency.

He says further, they shall again mourn no more He confirms the same thing by using various forms of expression; but what he substantially means is, that when God's people were made free, God's blessing would be continued to them, so that the faithful would not be subject to the common miseries of men. [256] For we know what our condition is in this world, for every hour, nay, almost every moment, our joy is turned into sorrow, and our laughter into tears. But God promises here that he would be so propitious to his Church, that it would have a perpetual cause for rejoicing. Now, how this comes to pass we do not easily comprehend; for though

[256] The verb {דאג here used, does not mean to mourn or to ``sorrow,'' though this is the idea given to it by the Targ. It is rendered ``hunger,'' by the Sept. and Vulg. According to Parkhurst, its real meaning is, ``to faint or fail through weariness, hunger, or terror.'' Blayney renders, ``pine for hunger.'' See the previous note. --- Ed

God in Christ has plainly unfolded to us the treasures of celestial life, yet we always creep on the earth. Hence it comes that we do not attain what is contained in these sentences which speak of the true and real happiness of the godly. However, we ought, in the main, to regard our joy as perpetual; for whatever evils may happen to us, yet God shines on us by his grace, and thus all things turn out for our good, and are aids to our salvation, as Paul tells us in Romans 8:28. And thus we cease not to glory in distresses and afflictions, as he also teaches us in the fifth chapter; and we dare to triumph over cold and heat, over nakedness and all other evils, and even over death itself.

But we must bear in mind that Christ's kingdom only begins in us here, and in the rest of the world; it is, then, no wonder that we taste so little of the benefits which the Prophets extol in such high terms. When, therefore, a temptation of this kind creeps in, when God treats us more sharply then we desire, ``What does this mean? Wert thou one of God's children, would he not deal with thee indulgently as he has promised? Where is that abundance of wheat, wine, and oil, for thou art often in want? Thou always livest in penury, nor does there appear to be anything better for thee to-morrow, as thou art now robbed and art come to a barren country,'' --- now when such a temptation as this creeps in, such as may draw thee to despair, let this doctrine come to thy mind, ``Is the kingdom of God made perfect in thee?'' Now if not one of us has hardly entered into God's kingdom, there is no wonder that we are not partakers of all the good things which God has promised to his people; for if Christ's kingdom is weak and feeble in us, it is nothing but right that we should live, as it were, in that penury which tempts us to distrust God; the same is the way with the whole world. There is, then, no reason to wonder that God does not fulfill what he has promised under Christ's kingdom, when men are not capable of receiving so great a kindness; for it is written,

``Open thy mouth and I will fill it.'' (Psalm 81:10)

But we are straitened in ourselves; hence it is, that hardly the smallest drops of God's bounty come to us. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 31:13

13. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow.

13. Tunc laetabitur virgo (aut puella) in choro et adolescentes (vel, electi; sed significat proprie adolescentes) et senes pariter; et convertam luctum eorum in gaudium, et consolabor eos et exhilarabo a suo dolore.

This is a confirmation of the former verse; for he says that joy would be in common to young women and young men, and also to the old. He had spoken of the perpetuity of joy; but he now extends this joy to both sexes, women and men, and to all ages. Of the dance we have spoken elsewhere, --- that wantonness in which the world indulges in its hilarity, was not permitted; as to profane men, there is no moderation in their joy. The Prophets followed the common mode of speaking; and, indeed, the Israelites had their dances while celebrating the praises of God; but it was a chaste and modest joy, yea, and a sacred joy, for it was a mode of worshipping God. Yet the

Prophet speaks according to the common practices of the people, as in many other places, when he says that young women and young men would rejoice in the dance

He then adds, I will turn their mourning to joy, I will console them and exhilarate them from their grief [257] Here the Prophet averts the thoughts of the Israelites from the evils they then had, lest their grief should so darken their minds as to prevent them to taste of God's goodness promised them. That the feeling, then, of present evils might not hinder them to come to God and receive his favor, he speaks of their grief and mourning, and intimates that the change would be easily made by God's hand, when it pleased him to deliver his people and restore them to their former state, so that their complete happiness would take place under the reign of Christ.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are still in our state of pilgrimage, and as thou makest us partakers of thy goodness, according as thou knowest to be necessary for us, --- O grant, that we, being ever reminded by thy benefits, may aspire to higher things, and may, through all the temptations with which we must contend, advance towards the goal set before us, looking for that perfect felicity in heaven, of which a few sparks only now shine before our eyes, and thus carry on a warfare under the banner of thy Son, so as not to doubt but that a triumph is prepared for us in that blessed life which has been obtained by his blood. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Twentieth

Jeremiah 31:14

14. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith the LORD.

14. Et satiabo animam sacerdotum pinguedine, et populus meus beneficentia mea salvabitur, dicit Jehova.

This verse is connected with the former; for what the Prophet had said generally of the whole people, he now distinctly declares respecting the priests, for they were, as it were, the heart of the people; and by this order God gave a lively representation of his favor. This is the reason why the Scripture, in setting forth God's blessing to his chosen people, speaks especially of the priests, as it appears from many places. Then the Prophet intimates that God would be bountiful indiscriminately to all the Israelites, but that his peculiar favor would be conspicuous towards the priests, for the condition of the people would not be complete without the priesthood, for the priesthood was, as it were, the soul. They would have lived like the heathens, had not God prescribed how he was to be called upon and worshipped. And having mentioned the priests, he does not confine himself to them, but the favor of God is extended to the whole people. It is not then only of the priests that the Prophet speaks, but he declares that the people would be made blessed through God's bounty, and yet that his peculiar kindness would be manifested towards the Levitical priests, according to what we read in the Psalms: a special blessing is promised to the priests, accom-

[257] This clause may be rendered thus, — For I will turn their mourning into rejoicing, And I will comfort them and cheer them above their sorrow. That is, "I will give them comfort and joy more than the sorrow which they have had." The preposition {,{n has often the meaning of above or more than. See Deuteronomy 14:2. Their sorrow had been great, but the promise here is, to give them in proportion a comfort and a joy still greater. --- Ed.

panied with felicity to the godly; and David, when felicitating himself on having so many of God's blessings, by which he was distinguished, does indeed mention the provisions of his table and abundance of all other things, yet he immediately adds,

``I will dwell in the house of the Lord.'' (Psalm 23:6)

By this conclusion, he intimates, that he esteemed as nothing what profane men desire, except he enjoyed as the first thing the worship of God; for this is the main part of our happiness. For wherefore do we live, except we learn, while we partake of blessings from God's hand, that he is our Father, and that we are stimulated by his bounty to worship him, and except we surrender ourselves wholly to his word?

We now, then, perceive the Prophet's object in saying, that the priests would be satiated with fatness

As the word {דשן}, deshin, fatness, denotes abundance of all things; so satiate intimates the great extent of God's bounty. Some render it ``inebriate,'' but improperly; and it would be inappropriate to say, ``I will inebriate with fatness.'' But {רוה} rue, means to irrigate and also to satiate: hence the Prophet said, in what we considered yesterday, that the soul of the faithful would be like a watered garden; it is there {רוה}, rue. So also now God means, that he would be so bountiful towards his people, that nothing would be wanting to the full affluence of all good things. And he again says the same thing with regard to the whole people, My people shall be satisfied with my goodness, saith Jehovah We hence see that nothing is promised to the priests, except in connection with the whole Church. It follows ---

Jeremiah 31:15-16

15. Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.

15. Sic dicit Jehova, Vox in excelso audita est, lamentatio, fietus amaritudinum, Rachel plorans super filiis suis noluit (renuit, vel, non admisit) ad consolandum (hoc est, non admisit consolationum super filiis suis) quia non ipsi, (hoc est, quia non sunt)

16. Thus saith the LORD; Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the LORD; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy.

16. Sic dicit Jehova, Prohibe vocem tuam a fletu et oculos tuos a lachrymis, quia erit merces operi tuo, dicit Jehova, et revertentur e terra hostis.

Here, in the first place, the Prophet describes the desolation of the land, when deprived of all its inhabitants; and, in the second place, he adds a comfort, --- that God would restore the captives from exile, that the land might again be inhabited. But there is here what they call a personification, that is, an imaginary person introduced: for the Prophet raises up Rachel from the grave, and represents her as lamenting. She had been long dead, and her body had been reduced to ashes; but the discourse has more force when lamentation is ascribed to a dead woman than if the Prophet had said, that the land would present a sad and a mournful appearance, because it would be waste and desolate; for rhetoricians mention personification among the highest excellencies, and Cicero, when treating of the highest ornament

of an oration, says, that nothing touches an audience so much as when the dead are raised up from below. The Prophet, then, though not taught in the school of rhetoricians, thus adorned his discourse through the impulse ot God's Spirit, that he might more effectually penetrate into the hearts of the people.

And this personification introduces a scene, for it brings before us the Jews and the other Israelites; nor does it only represent to them the calamity that was at hand, and what had already in part happened, but it also sets before their eyes the vengeance of God which had taken place in the destruction of the kingdom of Israel, when first four tribes were driven into exile, and afterwards the whole kingdom was destroyed, and it also sets forth what the Jews little thought of and did not fear, even the extreme calamity and ruin of the kingdom of Judah, and of the holy city.

Hence he says, Thus saith Jehovah, A voice on the height is heard, even lamentation, the weeping of bitterness, he introduces God as the speaker; for the Jews, though they had seen the dreadful scattering of their brethren, were yet remaining secure; and hence another Prophet complains, that no one laid to heart the calamity of Joseph. (Amos 6:6) They saw that the whole land was almost consumed by God's vengeance, as though a fire had raged everywhere; and yet they followed their own gratifications, as Isaiah also accuses them. (Isaiah 22) This is the reason why God is made to speak here: he had to do with men altogether torpid and heedless. That the Prophet then might awaken them from their torpor, he introduces God as making the announcement, A voice then is heard, --- whose voice? of Rachel.

Interpreters think that Rachel is mentioned, because she was buried in Bethlehem: but as to Joseph, that is, his posterity, this region had come by lot, it seems to me probable that the Prophet here refers not to the grave of Rachel, but to her offspring; for that part which they who descended from her son Benjamin had obtained, was laid waste; hence he introduces Rachel as the mother of that part of the country; and it is well known that under the tribe of Ephraim is included the other ten tribes: but the reference to her burial is without meaning. Rachel, then, weeping for her children, refused consolation, because they were not; [258] that is, she could not receive consolation, for a reason was wanting, as her posterity were destroyed, and were become extinct in the land.

This passage is quoted by Matthew, (Matthew 2:18) where he gives an account of the infants under two years old, who had been slain by the command of Herod: then he says, that this prophecy was fulfilled, even that Rachel again wept for her children. But the explanation of this is attended with no difficulty; for Matthew meant no other thing than that the same thing happened at the coming of Christ as had taken place before, when the whole country was reduced to desolation; for it was the Evangelist's object to remove an offense arising from novelty, as we know that men's minds feel a dread when anything new, unexpected, and never heard of before happens. Hence, the Evangelists often direct their attention to this point, so that

[258] "To be not," according to the usage of the Scripture, means either dead or absent. See Genesis 42:36. Joseph was not, he being dead; and Simeon was not, he being absent in Egypt. To be not here refers to the absent, those driven into exile; but the passage, as quoted by Matthew, refers to such as were dead. The similarity was only in part, that is, as to the weeping. — Ed.

what happened in the time of Christ might not terrify or disturb the minds of men as a thing new and unexpected, inasmuch as the fathers formerly had experienced the same. To no purpose then do interpreters torture themselves by explaining this passage allegorically; for Matthew did not intend to lessen the authority of ancient history, for he knew in what sense this had been formerly said; but his only object was to remind the Jews that there was no cause for them to be greatly astonished at that slaughter, for that region had formerly been laid waste and bereaved of all its inhabitants, as though a mother, having had a large family, were to lose all her children. [259]

We now then see how Matthew accommodated to his own purpose this passage. He retains the proper name, ``Ramah,'' and there was a place so called; but the appellative is preferable here, ``A voice is heard on the height,'' as we had yesterday, ``on the height of Zion.'' Then a high place is what Jeremiah has mentioned here, because lamentation was to be heard through all parts of the country, for a voice sent forth from a high place sounds afar off. [260] Now, also, we perceive the meaning of this sentence, --- that the country possessed by the sons of Benjamin had been reduced to desolation, so that the mother, as one bereaved of her children, pined away in her lamentation, as nothing could afford her comfort, because her whole offspring had been cut off.

Now follows a promise which moderates the grievousness of the calamity. And the two verses ought to be read as opposite the one to the other, ``Though Rachel, weeping for her children, has no ground for consolation for a time, yet God will console her.'' And thus the Prophet, in the former verse, exhorts the Jews to repentance, but in the latter to hope: for it was necessary that the Jews should be forewarned of their dreadful calamity, that they might acknowledge God's judgment; and it was also necessary for them to have their minds inspired with hope. Now, then, the Prophet bids them to be comforted; for Rachel, having long bewailed her children without any consolation, would at length obtain God's mercy. God then would console Rachel after her long lamentation.

Refrain, he says, thy voice from weeping The word is {בכה} beke: as he had mentioned this word before in the second place, ``lamentation, the weeping of bitterness,'' so he now repeats the same here, ``Refrain thy voice from weeping,'' that is, cease to complain and to bewail the death of thy children, and thine eyes from tears The meaning is, that the lamentation of Rachel would not be perpetual. We have said that a dead woman is introduced, but that this is done for the sake of solemnity and effect, so that the Jews, having the matter set as it were before their eyes, might be more touched and moved. But if we wish to understand the meaning of the Prophet without a figure it is this, --- that the lamentation would not be perpetual, because the exiles would return, and that the land that had fallen to the lot of the children of Benjamin and of Joseph would again be inhabited.

[259] The quotation in Matthew is neither from the Hebrew nor from the Sept. It is substantially correct, but not verbally; the sense and not the words, seems to have been chiefly regarded by the Apostles. — Ed.

[260] "Ramah" is found in the Sept., the Syr., and the Targ.; but "on the height," or, on high, is the Vulg. It seems better to retain the proper name, "Ramah." — Ed.

And he says, for reward shall be to thy work He means that the sorrow of Rachel would at length happily come to an end, so as to produce some benefit. While the faithful, according to Isaiah, were complaining that they were oppressed with grief without hope, they said, ``We have been in travail, and brought forth wind:'' by these words they meant that they had experienced the heaviest troubles; and then they added, ``without fruit,'' as though a woman were in travail and suffered the greatest pain and anguish, and brought forth no living, but a dead child, which is sometimes the case. Now a woman who gives birth to a living child rejoices, as Christ says, because a man is born, (John 16:21) but when a woman after long pains brings forth a dead lump or something monstrous, it is an increase of sorrow. So the Prophet says, that the labor of Rachel, that is, of her country, would not be without fruit: there shall then be a reward to thy work The Scripture uses the same way of speaking in 2 Chronicles 15:7, where the Prophet Azariah speaks to the King Asa,

``Act manfully, and let not your hands be weakened, for there shall be a reward to your work.''

Then by work is to be understood trouble or sorrow, and by reward a joyful and prosperous issue. The meaning is, that though the whole country mourned miserably for a time, being deserted and bereaved of its inhabitants, yet the issue would be joyful, for the Lord would restore the exiles, so that the land would be like a mother having a numerous family, and delighting in her children, or in her offspring.

Now, were any one to apply this to satisfactions, he would be doing what is very absurd, as the Papists do, who say that by the punishment which we suffer we are redeemed from eternal death, and that then the vengeance of God is pacified, and satisfaction is made to his justice. But when the Prophet declares that there would be reward to the work, he does not commend the fruits of the punishment by which God chastised his people, as though they were, as they say, satisfactions; but he simply reminds them that their troubles and sorrows would not be useless, for a happier issue than the Jews hoped for would take place. But it is God's gratuitous gift that there is a reward to our work, that is, when the miseries and calamities which he inflicts on us are made aids to our salvation. For doubtless whatever evils we suffer, they are tokens of God's wrath; poverty, cold, famine, sterility, disease, and all other evils, are so many curses inflicted by God. When, therefore, there is a reward to our troubles and sorrows, that is, when they produce some benefit or fruit, it is as though God turned darkness into light; for naturally, as I have said, all these punishments are curses. But God promises that he will bless us, so that all these punishments shall turn out for our good and salvation, as Paul tells us in Romans 8:28.

Then he adds, they shall return from the land of the enemy By these words he refers to the restoration of the people, so that Rachel would again see her posterity inheriting the promised land. But there is no reason refinedly to dispute here, whether Rachel rejoiced at the return of her offspring, or whether that calamity was lamented by her; for the Prophet's object was not to shew whether or not the dead are conscious of our affairs; but he speaks figuratively in order to render what he said more striking and forcible. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 31:17

17. And there is hope in thine end, saith the LORD, that thy children shall come again to their own border.

17. Et erit spes novissimo tuo, dicit Jehova; et redibunt filii ad terminum suum (hoc est, in regionum suam)

He indeed explains in a few words, but with sufficient plainness, what he had said. We must always bear in mind the order which I have pointed out, --- that he first placed before the Jews their calamity, that they might humble themselves before God; and then he gave them the hope of return, that they might feel assured that God would be propitious to them. He now includes both in these few words, there shall be hope in thine end; for they embrace the two clauses, --- that the whole country would lament for a time, and then that their tears would be turned to laughter and their sorrow to joy: for had the happiness of the people flowed in one unbroken stream, the word, ``end,'' would not have been suitable; for it refers to what terminates. There is then to be understood a contrast between the end and the beginning. In short, Jeremiah teaches here, that the grievous time, during which God would afflict his people, was to be borne patiently. But after having bidden them to continue in a state of suspense, he sets before them a happy issue.

Now this passage contains a useful doctrine, --- that we are not to measure God's favor by present appearances, but learn to keep our minds and thoughts in suspense, while the Lord seems to be angry with us, and only disheartening terrors meet us, so that we may cherish in our hearts the hope which the Prophet exhorts us to entertain, and distinguish between our present state and the end. And on this account it is that the Apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, while exhorting the faithful to patience, says that the rod is always at the time grievous to children, but that correction appears useful, when the end is regarded. (Hebrews 12:11) So when we perceive that God is displeased with us, we cannot but feel a dread, and we desire at the same time to escape from his chastening hand; but, as I have just said, we ought to direct our thoughts to the end or the issue, according to what we are taught here: there shall then be hope in thine end [261]

But a question may be here moved, Was there no hope for the intermediate time, while God was punishing the Jews? the answer is obvious, --- the Prophet takes hope here for hope accomplished. If any one calls it actual hope or hope effected, I do not object. But he doubtless intimates that all the calamities which the Jews would have to endure would at last end in their deliverance, and would be for their good. We thus see that hope here, as we have said, is to be taken for hope accomplished. And the Prophet explains himself, they shall return to their own border Here by stating a part for the whole he mentions border for the whole country, as though he had said, ``Ye are now far off from your country, but you shall again return to that land which has been marked out by certain limits, even by Euphrates, Egypt, the sea and Arabia;'' for these were the four borders. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 31:18

18. I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised

[261] Or the words may be rendered, “There is a hope for thy posterity.” So Gataker, not without reason, renders the words. The following clause explains what this “hope” was. — Ed.

me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God.

18. Audiendo audivi Ephraim transmigrantem, (vel, cum transmigravit, vel, lamentantem, ut alii vertunt; dicemus postea de voce) Castigasti me, et castigatus sum tanquam vitulus non edotus; converte me et convertar, quia tu Jehova Deus meus.

The Prophet here speaks more distinctly of a blessed issue, and shews that the punishment by which God had already chastised the people, and by which he was prepared to chastise the tribe of Judah, was wholly necessary, which he would give them as a medicine. For as long as we have set before us the wrath of God, we necessarily, as it has been already said, try to avoid it, because we wish well to ourselves, and endeavor to remove to a distance, as much as we can, whatever is adverse to us: hence the punishment which God inflicts is never pleasant to us, our sorrow in evils and adversities is never mitigated, nor do we quietly submit to God, unless we direct our minds to the fruit which distresses and chastisements bring forth. We now then perceive the object of the Prophet: the Jews always murmured and said, ``Why does not God spare and forgive us? why does he not deal more gently with us?'' The Prophet therefore shews, that God had a regard to the wellbeing of his people in chastising them; for had he indulged them in their sins, their pride and perverseness would have increased.

The intention then of these words is this, and it is for this end the Prophet speaks, --- that the Jews might know that all their punishment, which would have been otherwise bitter and grievous, was a sort of medicine, by which their spiritual diseases were to be healed.

He therefore says, Hearing I have heard Ephraim, after having transmigrated, etc. The participle {מתנודד}, metnudad, is in Hithpael, and comes from {נוד}, nud, or from {נדד} nedad. Some render it, ``transmigrating,'' and others, ``lamenting.'' But {נוד}, nud, means to move, to wander, to migrate from one place to another; it means also to complain, to tell of adversities, though it is often applied to those whose object is to solace the miserable and the mournful. If any one prefers the rendering, ``I have heard Ephraim lamenting,'' I do not object, for there is a sufficient probability in its favor. But it may also be derived from {נוד}, nud, as well as from {נדד} nedad; the most suitable sense would then be, ``after having moved into exile,'' or literally, ``after having transmigrated,'' that is, after God had driven Ephraim, even the ten tribes, into exile. [262]

After Ephraim then had thus transmigrated, or had been driven into exile, he then began to say, Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastened, for I was an untamed bullock: Turn thou me and I shall be turned; for thou, Jehovah, art my God. [263] The

[262] The idea of "transmigrating" is alone given by the Vulg., the other versions and the Targ. have "lamenting:" and the latter is more consonant with the context, and has been adopted by almost all modern commentators. It is used in Jeremiah 15:5, in the sense of being moved or affected for another, of sympathizing or condoling. It is there in its simple form, that is, in Kal. As it is here in Hithpael, its meaning is, self-condoling, or condoling himself, — an idea which is very expressive, and is more fully explained in the next verse. — Ed.

[263] This is no doubt the right rendering, and not, "Thou art Jehovah my God." So in the first commandment, the version ought to be, "I Jehovah," or, I the Lord, "am thy God." The meaning is not, that he is Jehovah, but that he who is Jehovah is our God. — Ed.

Prophet, no doubt, as I said before, meant here to check the murmurs which prevailed among the Jews, who said, that God was too rigid and severe, he shews not only that they were worthy of the very grievous punishment they were suffering, but also that it was a testimony of God's favor, that he thus intended to cleanse them from their sins; for they would have a hundred times grown putrid in their wickedness, had not God thus reduced them to a sound mind. He at the same time sets forth Ephraim as an example, that the Jews might resignedly follow their brethren, and not discontentedly bear their exile, seeing that it had already been profitable to their brethren. When therefore they perceived that their punishment was useful to the Israelites, and brought forth good fruit, they ought to have submitted themselves willingly to God, and not to have murmured against him for punishing them for their sins, but to have borne their exile as a paternal correction.

Then he says, ``I have heard Ephraim,'' --- at what time? This circumstance ought to be especially noticed, it was after he had transmigrated. When they were quiet in the land, they were, as it follows, like untameable steers. The Prophets also use this mode of speaking, when they describe the Israelites before their dispersion; they call them fat and well fed oxen: affluence produced luxury, and luxury pride. Thus, then, they kicked, as it were, against God, according to what is said by Moses,

``My people having grown fat kicked.''

(Deuteronomy 32:15)

As they were such, it was necessary that they should be tamed. And to this refers the time that is mentioned: when Ephraim was forcibly driven from his own country, then he began to acknowledge his evils and to be touched with a penitent feeling; ``Thou hast chastised me,'' he says, ``and I was instructed.'' The verb {יסר}, iser, means to instruct as well as to chastise, and is applied to princes, counsellors, fathers, and magistrates. The word chastise is more restricted in Latin. But {יסר} iser, properly means to teach, and yet often it means to chastise, for that is one way of teaching or instructing. He then says that he was chastised, though in a different sense: in the first clause, when he says, ``Thou hast chastised me,'' he refers to the punishment by which God had humbled his people; and in the second clause he says, ``I was instructed,'' that is, ``I begin now at length to become wise;'' for it is the wisdom even of fools, not to become hardened under their calamities; for they who become hardened are altogether in a hopeless state. It is the chief part of wisdom to acknowledge what is right, and willingly to follow it; but, except we be willing to regard our own good, God will then chastise us. [264]

When our diseases are healable, we turn to God; but the perversely wicked bite and champ the bridle, and contend with God's judgment: But the Prophet here refers

[264] The Vulg. and the Targ. favor this view of a different sense of the same verb in the second clause. The Sept. retain the same meaning. There is no need of altering the sense; indeed, another sense does not so well comport with the passage. He says that God had chastised him, and that he was chastised as an untamed, or rather untrained steer or bullock, implying that he was compelled to bear the yoke, and also that he had been brought to submit to it: hence the prayer that follows, "turn," or rather, restore, etc. The verb {{יסר means to correct rather than to chastise, even to correct by the rod, or by the goad; and then to teach as the effect of correction, --- Thou hast corrected me; Yea, I was corrected like a steer, not trained: Restore thou me, and I shall be restored; For thou, Jehovah, art my God. After a confession with regard to correction, a confession that intimates that it had its proper effect, a prayer for restoration seems suitable, and that prayer is founded on the fact that Jehovah was their God. --- Ed.

to the faithful alone; for punishment has not the same effect on all indiscriminately. God, indeed, calls all men by punishment to repentance, so that even the reprobate are without excuse when they harden their hearts, and profit not under the rod. But punishment is peculiarly useful to the faithful; for God not only scourges them, but also, by his Spirit, bends their minds to docility, so that they willingly suffer themselves to be corrected by him. Hence I said that this clause properly refers to the faithful, when the Prophet says that Ephraim was instructed, after having been warned by punishment, to turn himself to God.

He compares himself to an untameable steer; for steers are wanton before they are habituated to the yoke. Such also is the wantonness of men before God subdues them by various kinds of punishment, and not only subdues them, but renders them also tractable and submissive. Next week I shall lecture instead of Beza.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are always carried away by our own vanities, and as the licentiousness and insolence of our flesh are such that we never follow thee and submit to thy will, --- O grant, that we may profit more and more under thy scourges, and never perversely harden ourselves, but learn to know that even when thou appearest rigid, thou hast a regard for our salvation, so that we, turning to thee, may strive during the rest of our life to glorify thy name through thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One hundred and Twenty-First

In the last lecture, the Prophet told us that Ephraim, until he had been chastised by God's hand, was like an untamed bullock, and that, therefore, exile was useful to him. He now adds, Turn me, and I shall be turned

This second clause seems not to be in accordance with the former; for the Israelites had before confessed that they had turned, and now they pray God to turn them. Why is this said? For it seems useless to ask for what we have already obtained. But the solution is obvious. It may first be answered, that men never so repent but that they have need of the continual aid of God; for we must be renewed from day to day, and by degrees renounce the lusts of our flesh; nor is it in one day that we put off the old man. And when the Prophet in the Psalms speaks of the deliverance of the people, he says that it was a miracle, that the people had been restored beyond all hope;

``We were,'' he says, ``like those who dream;''

he afterwards adds,

``Turn our captivity, O Lord,'' (Psalm 116:1, 4)

and this he said because God had restored but a small number. The same also happens as to spiritual turning, both with regard to the whole body and to individual members. We turn, as I have already said, by little and little to God, and by various steps; for repentance has its progress. There is, therefore, nothing improper when we say that the Prophet, in the name of the ten tribes, asks God to go on with his work. But as this explanation is rather strained, I prefer a simpler view of the words, ``Turn me, and I shall be turned.'' They mean the same thing as though the Prophet had said, ``O Lord, this is thy work.'' He does not then simply refer to a future time,

but speaks of God's favor, as though he had said, that men do not turn by their own impulse, but that God, by the hidden power of his Spirit, turns them.

The Israelites had before confessed that they had been profitably chastised by God's hand, because punishment had instructed them; but now he adds that this was the singular kindness of God. But, as we before observed, punishment is what the elect and the reprobate have in common; but the end and fruit of punishment is far different; for the reprobate become more and more hardened, the very reverse of being submissive to God; but the elect are subdued, for God not only smites them with his rods, but also tames them within, subdues their pride, and, in a word, bends their hearts to obedience by his Spirit.

We now then understand the purpose of the Prophet: for in the name of the people, he first confesses that punishment, inflicted by God, had been useful, and secondly, he adds, that it was not through the power of men that they willingly returned to a right mind, but that God had bent their hearts by his Spirit, so that they did not become hardened by punishment, nor obstinately resisted, as the case most commonly is. We hence, then, conclude that repentance is the work of the Holy Spirit. God, indeed, invites us, and even urges us by external means to repent; for what is the design of punishment, but to lead us to repentance? But we must still remember that were God only to chastise us, it would have no other effect than to render us inexcusable, for our perverseness could never in this way be corrected. It is, then, necessary to add the second favor, that is, that God should subdue us within, and restore us to obedience. This the Prophet testifieswhen he says, ``Turn me, and I shall be turned,'' as though he had said, that men indeed turn when God reminds them of their sins, but that they do this not by their own power, for it is the peculiar work of God.

He therefore adds, For thou, Jehovah, art my God By this clause he intimates that God favors only his elect with this privilege; as though he had said, that it does not happen to all indiscriminately that they repent and submit to God when he punishes them for their sins, but that it is a benefit peculiar to his chosen people. We ought then especially to notice the reason by which the Prophet confirms the previous sentence, for we hence learn the manifest difference there is between the elect and the reprobate; for some rebel and kick against the goads, and obstinately rush headlong into ruin, but others calmly and quietly submit to God: the reason is, because some are reprobate and the others are the elect. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 31:19

19. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.

19. Quia postquam convertisti me, poenituit me, et postquam cognitus sum mihi (vel, ostensum fuit mihi, vel, agnovi meipsum) percussi femur meum; pudefactus sum, atque etiam confusus, quia tuli opprobrium adolescentiae meae.

Jeremiah now proceeds with what he had before briefly touched upon, even to shew that the punishment inflicted on the Israelites had not been without its fruit. And this is a doctrine which ought especially to be known, for we always shun what-

ever is hard to the flesh; so that if it were according to our own will, the chastisements of God would never be well received by us. It is, therefore, necessary to regard the end, as the Apostle reminds us. (Hebrews 12:11) Now when we see that God has a regard for our own salvation while handling us somewhat roughly, our sorrow is mitigated and lessened, especially when experience proves that punishment is good for us; we then felicitate ourselves, and give thanks to God that he has not suffered us wholly to perish in our sins. This is the reason why the Prophet enlarges on this doctrine.

He therefore says, After thou hast turned me, I repented He confirms what he has already said, that it is the peculiar work of God when a sinner repents, and that it cannot be ascribed to human powers, as though men could of themselves turn to the right way. But how was this done? After thou hast turned me He thus repeats in other words what he had said, but for the purpose of confirming his previous declaration. The meaning is, that we are never touched by a serious feeling, so as to be displeased with our sins, until God himself turns us.

We hence learn how blind the Papists are, who, speaking of repentance, hold that man, through his own free-will, returns to God; and on this point is our greatest contest with them at this day. But the Prophet briefly determines the whole question; for, as he had said before, that men cannot turn except God turns them, he now adds, that he had found this to be really the fact, that people had never become conscious of their sins though God had grievously punished them until they were turned, not by their own free-will, but by the hidden working and influence of the ttoly Spirit; after thou hast turned me, I repented The meaning is, that men never entertain a real hatred towards sin, unless God illuminates their minds and changes their hearts; for what is the turning or conversion of which the Prophet speaks? It is the renewal of the mind and heart. For let its definition be fetched, as they say, from what is contrary to it; what is turning away? It is the alienation of the mind and heart from God. It then follows that when we turn we are converted, we are renewed in knowledge, and then in heart, or in our affections; both of which the Prophet ascribes to the grace of God, for he says that the people repented not of their sins until they were turned or converted, that is, until they were renewed both in mind and heart. Some give this version, ``After I received consolation;'' but their mistake is easily confuted by the context; for it immediately follows, I was ashamed and also confounded. There is no doubt then but that here is set forth the displeasure at sin that is felt when the sinner is terrified by God's judgment so as to renounce his vices.

After I was made known to myself, or, after it was shewn to me, or, simply, after I knew it, etc. For we may take the meaning to be, After it was given to Ephraim to know himself, or, after he knew himself. Some give this version, ``After I was known;'' and so the meaning would be the same with those words of Paul,

``After ye have known God, or rather are known by him.''
(Galatians 4:9)

But I fear that this exposition is too refined. I therefore would rather follow those who give this rendering, After I became known to myself, or, after the thing was made known to me. The Prophet, no doubt, commends here the grace of God, because

the veil had been taken away from the eyes of the people, or because they had been cured of their blindness; as though they had said, that they had long been blind, because they took delight in their vices, and their whole soul was in a torpid state; for we know that those who are forsaken by God are wholly insensible, and are as it were like the beasts. Then the people of Israel confess that they were, for a time, thus stupid, and that their minds were blinded: they therefore acknowledge here the grace of God, that he had at length opened their eyes. For they do not speak here, as we have said, of their virtue or power, but acknowledge that it proceeded wholly from God's gratuitous favor that they repented.

As then, under the word, turning or conversion, is included the renewal of the whole soul, so now it is expressly said, that they were endued with a right mind, because God had taken away the veil by which their eyes were covered, and had conferred on them new light. The meaning is, that they were not touched by the true fear of God before they were endued with a right mind; but at the same time he testifies that it had been obtained through the peculiar favor of God. We hence see that the Prophet, in the name of the ten tribes, acknowledges that nothing depended on the free-will of man, but that a sound mind and a right feeling of the heart is the work of the Holy Spirit. [265]

The smiting of the thigh means sorrow or grief, which arises from the fear of God: for as long as we disregard God's judgment, Satan must necessarily fascinate us with his allurements; but when God manifestly shews that he is our judge, and when our own baseness comes to view, then we begin to smite the thigh And he adds, what means the same thing, I was ashamed and even confounded I wonder why many interpreters have omitted the particle {גם} gam, even: they invert the order, and render thus, ``I was confounded and ashamed.'' But the particle shews that the Prophet enhances the greatness of the sorrow and shame when he says, I was ashamed and even confounded

He then adds, Because I have borne the reproach of my youth He here repeats what he had said before, even that punishment, sent from above, had done good to the Israelites. For except they had been thus made ashamed, they would have always taken delight in their vices; for we see that the wicked flatter and deceive themselves as long as God spares and shews forbearance towards them. Hence the Prophet, in the name of the people, says, that punishment had been profitable to him. But we must bear in mind what we have said, that this fruit altogether proceeds from the grace of God: for the reprobate, however dreadful the examples of vengeance

[265] What Calvin teaches here is indisputable, but whether the passage warrants the view he takes of it, is another thing, though most commentators have taken the same view. The versions, especially the Vulg., seem to have suggested this explanation by giving to the verb {שוב}, in the former verse, the meaning of turning or conversion, instead of returning or restoring, agreeably with the whole context, see verse 17th (Jeremiah 31:17). Gataker suggested this idea; and it was afterwards fully adopted by Venema: and, according to their views I render this verse as follows, --- For after I returned to myself, I repented, And after I knew myself, I smote my thigh; I was ashamed and even confounded, Because I have borne the reproach of my youth. The Vulg. renders the first words, ``After thou hast turned,'' or converted ``me (convertisti me;)'' the Sept., ``After my captivity;'' the Syr., ``After that I was converted;'' and the Targ., ``When we return to the Law.'' Literally the words are, ``After my returning,'' which, according to the Hebrew idiom may be rendered, ``After returning to myself,'' as in the following line, ``after my knowing,'' means evidently ``after knowing myself.'' The two verses contain the language of the penitent, praying for restoration to their own land: and two reasons are assigned for this prayer, --- because Jehovah was their covenanted God, --- and because they repented, for to such had restoration been promised: Hence for is used twice; it is therefore not right to render {כי} at the beginning of the 19th verse (Jeremiah 31:19), verily or surely. --- Ed

which God may exhibit, still remain unbending, nor do they bear their own reproach, that is, confess that they have sinned. To bear reproach, then, is peculiar to the elect of God, who have been regenerated by his Spirit; for they understand the cause of their evils. When we see two diseased persons, one of whom is insane, and so is insensible as to his disease, and the other feels his sorrow, and is affected by it: in this case we see some difference. But we see another difference in others who are diseased; we may therefore suppose a third case, for it often happens, that he who is affected with sorrow, does not yet examine into its cause. He then who is healable is one who understands whence has arisen his disease, and so is ready to obey, and willing to adopt the necessary remedies. There are also many who rush headlong to their own ruin; some, indeed, feel their punishment to be bitter, but consider not the cause of it, that is, that they have provoked God's wrath: but they who are prepared to seek the restoration of health, well know how they have contracted their disease. Hence the Prophet here says, that they bore their reproach, for they not only felt their sorrow, but also considered its fountain, that is, that they had, by their sins, provoked the wrath of God.

By youth he metaphorically points out the time when the Israelites indulged in excesses; for we know how much ardor belongs to that age. In the aged there is more moderation; but the young intemperately indulge themselves. It is therefore a metaphorical expression, by which the Prophet intimates, that the Israelites had, for a time, been wanton against God, their petulance being not subdued, for, as he had said, they had been like untamed bullocks. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 31:20

20 Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my bowels are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the LORD.

20. An filius pretiosus mihi Ephraim? an filius oblectationum? tamen ex quo tempore loquutus sum de eo, recordando recordabor filius ({אזכרנו}, vel, quia a termpore loquutus sum cum eo, reeordando recordabor illius; dicemus postea de sensu) propterea sonuerunt viscera mea illi (id est, super ipsum) miserando misera-bor illius, dicit Jehova.

God here complains of the Israelites, because he had produced so little an effect on them by his great goodness: for the adoption with which he had favored them was an immense benefit;but by their ingratitude they had in a manner annihilated that favor. God then here asks, what sort of people the Israelites had been. But a question makes a thing stronger; for he who asks a question shews that he speaks not of a thing uncertain, but the knowledge of which is so conspicuous that it cannot be denied. It is then the same as though he had said, that Ephraim was unworthy of any honor or esteem, and that he was no object of delight. We now then perceive what God means in the beginning of the verse, even that the people were unworthy of any mercy, because they had abolished, as far as they could, the favor of adoption: for by the word son, he refers to that special favor, the covenant which he had made with the seed of Abraham.

In the first place, he calls him a son, {בן}, ben, and then a child, {ילד}, ilad, which

refers to his birth: but by these two names, God here intimates that they were to him a peculiar people, as he everywhere calls those his sons who were the descendants of Abraham; for circumcision was to them a symbol and pledge of the covenant; and so the time is a circumstance that ought to be noticed, because God does not shew here what the Israelites were before he had chosen them to be his people. But as I have already said, he charges them with ingratitude, since the time they had been adopted by him as his children. He then calls them sons, or children, by way of concession, and with regard to their adoption, as Jerusalem was called the holy city, because it was God's habitation. There is then a concession as to the name given to them. But he afterwards adds, that this son was not precious, that is, worthy of any honor, and that he was not an object of delight; as though he had said, that he was of a perverse and wicked disposition, so that he could not take any delight in him, as by another simile he complains in Jeremiah 2:21, as we have seen, that the Jews were become bitter to him,

``My vine have I planted thee;
why then art thou turned to me into bitterness?''

So also now he says, that the Israelites were indeed his sons, but that they were evil-disposed sons, disobedient sons, sons who only vexed their father, who wounded his feelings, who filled him with sorrow.

He then adds, For from the time I spake in him, so it is literally. It is commonly agreed that these words are to be read with those which follow. ``For from what time I spake;'' and thus the relative {אשר}, asher, is to be understood; but literally it is, ``For from the time I spake in him,'' {בו}, bu, or, as some render it, ``concerning him;'' but it may suitably be rendered ``with him.'' Then they read, in connection with this, Remembering I will yet remember him

This passage, on account of its brevity, is obscure, and therefore ambiguous; but the common opinion is this, --- that though Ephraim was not a child of delight, yet God would be merciful towards him; and thus they take {כי} ki, in an adversative sense, ``notwithstanding,'' or yet: ``Is Ephraim a precious son? Is he a child of delight? yet remembering I will still remember him;'' as though he had said, that he would not be prevented by the people's wickedness, for he would still pity him according to his infinite goodness, or that his goodness would surpass their wickedness. This sense is plausible; yet it may be doubted whether this be the meaning. Some read the words, ``From the time I spake concerning him,'' that is, while I now speak of him: but I know not whether this explanation can stand. I am therefore inclined to the opinion of those who refer this to threatenings, even that from the time God had spoken against Israel, he was yet ready to be reconciled to them, according to what is said by the Prophet Habakkuk,

``In wrath wilt thou remember mercy.'' (Habakkuk 3:2)

But this ought to be rather understood of the covenant, as though God had said, ``From the time I spake with him, I will remember him;'' that is, that he might shew the reason why he dealt so mercifully with the people. For as their wickedness and corruption were so great, a doubt might arise, ``Can God still patiently endure them?'' Here then our attention is called back to the fountain of gratuitous mercy,

even that God would forgive his people, because he had once chosen them.

But still when I narrowly weigh everything, I think the meaning of the Prophet to be different. I therefore separate the two clauses, ``From the time I spake with him,'' and, ``Remembering I will yet remember him;'' for the sentence is harsh, when we say, ``From the time I spake with him,'' and then add, ``I will yet remember him.'' But the exposition, the most suitable in my opinion, is this, ``From the time I spake with him,'' (for {ב} means with) that is, I desisted not continually to exhort him to repentance, and yet I effected nothing; notwithstanding I will still remember him; that is, ``Though I have found this people very perverse, and though they have long given many proofs of their obstinacy, for I have spoken to them for a long time, nevertheless I will still remember them.'' For the people deserved eternal ruin who had been so often warned; but God declares that he would still be propitious to them, though he had spoken to them for a time, that is, a long time; for he had not ceased for a long space of time to exhort that people by his Prophets, but with no success. So then I read the words, ``From the time I spake with him,'' separately from what follows, and connect them with the former clauses, ``Is he a precious son? Is he a child of delight?'' For he complains that they had been rebellious and untameable, not only from the time he had only once addressed them and sought to do them good, but for several ages. He therefore declares that the people themselves had no hope, because they had been intractable for a long time. He yet adds, though it was so, Remembering I will still remember him [266]

And he enhances the benefit of this reconciliation, and says, Therefore sounded have my bowels for him, [267] pitying I will pity him Here God ascribes to himself human feelings; for the bowels are moved and make a noise under immoderate grief; and we sigh and groan deeply, when we are pressed down by great sorrow. So also when God expresses the feelings of a tender father, he says that his bowels made a noise, because he wished to receive his people again into favor. This, indeed, does not properly belong to God; but as he could not otherwise express the greatness of his love towards us, he thus speaks in condescension to our capacities. It follows ---

Jeremiah 31:21

21. Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities.

21. Statue tibi titulos, pone tibi acervos, adjice (vel, applica) cor tuum ad semitam, ad viam per quam ambulasti; revertere virgo Israel, revertere ad urbes tuas

[266] This verse has been variously explained. The two questions are taken by Calvin and by others as strong negatives: but this is not always the ease; both {{ה and {אם} are often taken as strong affirmatives. See Jeremiah 3:6; 1 Samuel 2:27; Ezekiel 20:30; Amos 6:2. This sense is what the context requires; for this verse is an answer to penitent Ephraim. Neither the Sept., nor the Vulg., nor the Syr., nor the Targ. retain the interrogatory form: but they retain the meaning, if the questions be taken affirmatively, not otherwise. The next words I render thus, --- For since my words are in him, Remembering I will still remember him. This is according to the Sept., and the general drift of the Targ. The Syr. gives another meaning, --- For at the time when I speak against him, Remembering I still remember him. There are no other versions which come so near to the original. --- Ed.

[267] The word for "sounded," means to tumultuate, to be agitated, to be greatly moved or disturbed. It is rendered by the Vulg., "are troubled — conturbata;" by the Syr. and Targ., "are moved." It may be rendered "trouble" here. See Isaiah 16:1 l, where the action of the bowels is compared to the harp, not surely to its sound, but to the vibration of its cords. See also Isaiah 63:15, and Cant. v. 4. — Ed.

istas.

He describes what mercy would do, even that God would at length restore the captives and bring them back from exile to their own country. There was however mention made previously of his favor, that we may know that the people were restored for no other reason but because God had mercy on them. The Prophet then having pointed out the fountain of redemption, passes on now to the external effect, by which God proved that he was reconciled to his people. Hence he says, set up for thee titles

We must first understand why the Prophet speaks thus. When the Jews were led away into Chaldea, they thought that a return was closed up against them. Having then given up every concern for their country, they dwelt among foreign nations, as though they were dead to the land of Canaan. They knew that they had forfeited that land; but they did not understand what had been so often said to them by the Prophets, that their punishment was to be temporary. As they had before disregarded all threatenings, so when God began to fulminate against them, despair overwhelmed their minds, so that they did not wish to hear anything about a return. As then they thought that they were never to return to their own country, they had forgotten the way. As when one moves to another place where he intends to dwell all his life, he only seeks to know the way thither, but does not observe the accommodations on the road, in order to use them again, nor does he take notice which way he goes, whether he turns here to the right and there to the left; it is enough for him to reach the place to which he is going; so also it was with the Jews; they had made up their minds to remain in perpetual exile, they were not therefore solicitous about the road, so as to remember their journey. Therefore the Prophet says now, Set up for thee titles, or inscriptions; for those who travel anywhere, if they mean to return, know that such an inn was commodious, and also that there was so much distance between this town or city and that village, and in like manner, that the road was straight or turned more to one side than another. When therefore they think of a return, they attend to such things as these.

It is for this purpose that the Prophet says, Set up for thee titles, that is, that thou mayest assist thy memory, as travelers are wont to do, who intend to return by the same way. Set up then for thee titles, and raise up for thee heaps, or stones, which we call in our language monioyes; as though he had said, ``Thou indeed hast hitherto thought that the way has been closed up against thee, so that thou art to return no more: but God will stretch forth his hand and restore thee to thy former state.'' We hence see that the similitude is taken from the common practice of men, but employed for this end, that the Jews might not despair of their restoration as they had previously don. [268]

He then says, Apply thy heart --- he now explains himself --- apply thy heart to the

[268] Raise up for thyself heaps, Fix for thyself pillars. Instead of {{ציונים many copies read {ציונים} see 2 Kings 23:17; Ezekiel 39:15. That {תמרורים} cannot mean ``bitternesses,'' as rendered by the Vulg. and the Targ., is evident from the verb that precedes it, which means to place, to set, to fix. {תמר} is the palm-tree; the word then means palm-tree pillars, or pillars straight and high as the palm-tree. The remainder of the verse is as follows, --- Set thy heart on the highway, The way thou didst go; Return, O virgin of Israel, return, To thy cities ascend. The word for ``highway'' means a raised road, a road prepared for travelling. The ``virgin'' here signifies one that is of an age to be married. When Israel repented, they were in a fit state to be united to God, as their husband. The last line is rendered according to the proposed emendation of Houbigant and approved by Horsley, {עלה} instead of, {אלה} which seems to have no meaning. --- Ed

footpath, to the way through which thou hast passed We thus see that the Prophet becomes the interpreter of his own words, even that the people would return along the same road, though they expected no such thing. And he again confirms the same declaration in other words, Return, thou daughter of Israel, return to thine own cities; as though he had said, *``Though* the land has beea deserted for a time, and reduced to solitude, yet the cities remain, which shall again receive their inhabitants; and through the wonderful favor of God the land still waits for its people.'' Though it cast them out for a time, yet the exile was not to be perpetual, for the cities which remained were still by right the property of the people, not because they were worthy of them, but because God had prefixed, as it has elsewhere appeared, a set time for their exile and punishment.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as pertinacity is inbred in us, so that we always struggle against thee, and are never tractable until we are renewed by thy Spirit, --- O grant, that thy chastisements by which thou wouldest restore us to a sound mind, may not prove ruinous to us, but so influence us by thy Spirit within, that we, being really humbled, may acknowledge thee as our Judge and Father --- our Judge, in order that we may be displeased with ourselves, and being touched by thy judgment, we may condemn ourselves, --- and our Father, in order that we may, notwithstanding, flee to that mercy which is daily offered to us in the Gospel, through Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SECOND

Jeremiah 31:22

22. How long wilt thou go about, O thou backsliding daughter? for the LORD hath created a new thing in the earth, A woman shall compass a man.

22. Quousque vagaberis (aut, cir cuibis) filia rebellis (immorigera)? quia creavit Jehova rem novam in terra, Foemina circundabit virum.

As the Prophet had promised a return to the people, he now reproves especially the Israelites, who looked here and there, and never could acquiesce in the word of God alone: for it is a common thing with almost all the unbelieving, that they torment themselves, and, as it were, designedly contrive for themselves many inquietudes. Since then the Israelites were looking forward to what might happen, and could not entertain any hope as to their return, except when some appearance of hope was presented to them, the Prophet now on this account reproves them.

He first calls the people disobedient or rebellions, for they had often been terrified by threatenings, and God had also offered them the hope of pardon. As they had been perverse whenever God spared them, and as they had also rejected all his promises, the Prophet does not without reason call them disobedient or rebellious. And by circuits or wanderings, he means those vain speculations with which the unbelieving are wont to weary themselves; for the word means properly to go around. We may indeed take it in the sense of wandering, and it is the same thing: but as I have said, the Prophet most fitly gives the name of circuits to those crooked and tortuous speculations in which the unbelieving indulged. And there seems to be understood a contrast between the straight way set before theIn by God, and those

circuitous courses in which miserable men entangle themselves, when they do not follow God, but are led astray by their own vain devices. Isaiah also makes use of the same similitude, for he says, that the people were carried away by their own inventions, so that they fruitlessly wearied themselves, because they did not proceed in the straight way. (Isaiah 57:10) [269]

We may hence deduce a useful doctrine, --- that we are always within the boundary of safety, when we obey God and walk in the way set before us in his word; but that as soon as we turn aside from the right way, we are only drawn here and there through windings and strayings, so that our labor is at last useless and even ruinous.

We now then understand the meaning of the Prophet: as the unbelief of the people was, as it were, a sealed door, so that they did not receive God's promises as to their liberation and return, his purpose here was to correct this evil, and to reprove the Israelites for wandering and being disobedient.

He afterwards adds, For behold Jehovah will create --- literally, has created; but the past tense is here to be taken for the future; and it serves to shew the certainty of a thing when he uses the past tense, as though he was speaking of a thing already done: Jehovah then has created a new thing He intimates that the Israelites acted foolishly in estimating the promise of deliverance according to their own judgment of things, and the state of things as it appeared to them; for he says that the favor promised them would be wonderful, for this is what he means by a new thing, as though he had said, ``Ye indeed judge, according to your usual manner, of what God promises to you, as to your return, but it will be a miracle; act not then perversely, by regarding the favor of God as the common order of nature, for God will surpass everything that is usual among men.''

It ought also to be observed, that what Jeremiah said of the redemption of the people is to be extended to the eternal salvation of the Church; for God in a wonderful manner raises the dead, defends and preserves his Church, and succors her in her troubles. Whenever then the Scripture speaks of the state of the Church, we ought to ascend above the world, and above our own conceptions, and to realize the miracle which is hid from us.

Now follows the miracle, A woman shall surround a 'man Christians, almost with one consent, explain this of the virgin Mary; and the ``new thing,'' leads them to this opinion, and probably, also, they were anxious to lay hold on whatever might seem to refer to the mystery of our salvation. They, therefore, say that the new thing of which the Prophet speaks is the virgin carrying the infant Christ in her womb, and that he is called man, because he was full of divine power, though he increased according to the flesh in stature, wisdom, and strength. All this is deservedly laughed at by the Jews; yet they themselves, as I think, do not rightly understand the mean-

[269] The verb, rendered "going about," only occurs here in Hithpael, and once in Kal, Cant. v. 6; where it means to "withdraw," or recede, or turn aside. And this sense of withdrawing is what is given to it here both by the Sept., the Targ., and the Syr.; but it is the withdrawing from accepting the return offered. We may give this version, — How long wilt thou decline, (i.e., to return,) O daughter of the restoration? She had been before exhorted to return in the previous verse: she is now blamed for her unwillingness, which seems to have arisen from fear, and a sense of weakness. Then comes in most appropriately what follows, if interpreted according to the explanation of Calvin. The verb {,שב the root of, ,{השובבה} means more frequently to turn to, to return, than to turn away, to apostatize. --- Ed

ing of the Prophet. They apply it to the people of Israel, because they were like a woman divorced from her husband. They then say, ``A woman shall embrace a man after having been alienated from him, and prostituted herself to many adulterers.'' The Jews seem to think that they give the meaning of the Prophet; but I think otherwise, for there is here a comparison made between a woman and a man, which they do not consider. For the Prophet does not speak here simply of a man, but of a strong man; for the word {גבר} geber, means a man who is brave or courageous. When, therefore, he compares a woman to a man, I doubt not but the Prophet means that the Israelites, who were like women, without strength, were destitute of any means of help; but then he says, that they would be superior in strength to their enemies, whose power filled the whole world with terror. We, indeed, know what sort of monarchy Babylon was when the Jews were led into exile. If then we consider what the Jews at that time were, we must say that they were like weak women, while their enemies were strong and warlike: A woman then shall surround a man [270]

The word {סבב}, sebab, means not to embrace, but oftentimes to besiege; and it is taken in many places of Scripture in a bad sense, ``Enemies have surrounded me.'' When, therefore, a siege is mentioned, the Scripture uses this word. It is then the same as though the Prophet had said, ``Women shall bring men into such straits that they shall hold them captive.'' [271] But he uses the singular number, as though he had said, ``One woman shall be superior to many men, or each Jew shall exceed in valor a Chaldean; so the Jews shall gain the upper hand, though the strength of their enemies be great and terrible.'' This is what I regard as the meaning of the Prophet; and justly does he set forth this as a wonderful thing, for it, was a sort of revolution in the world when God thus raised up his servants, so that they who had enslaved them should become far unequal to them. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 31:23

23. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As yet they shall use this speech in the land of Judah and in the cities thereof, when I shall bring again their captivity; The LORD bless thee, O habitation of justice, and mountain of holiness.

23. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Adhuc dicent hoc verbum (hoc est, pronunciabunt hunc sermonum) in terra Jehudah et urbibus ejus, ubi convertero captivitatem ipsorum, Benedicet tibi Jellova, habitaculum justitiae, mons sanctitatis.

He confirms in other words what he has said before; nor is the repetition, as we have said elsewhere, superfluous; for it was difficult to convince the Jews that what they had already regarded as impossible could be effected; for by their perverseness they had closed, as it were, the door against the word of God. As then despair had

[270] Whatever may be the meaning of this clause, it cannot certainly be applied to the miraculous conception of our Saviour, and for this plain reason, as Blayney observes, that the only thing the passage announces, if viewed in this light, is this, — that a woman shall conceive a male child, which is nothing new, but a common event; for the word here for "woman," is not what signifies a virgin, but what designates only the sex; it means properly a female as distinguished from a male. Henry, as well as Blayney and Adam Clarke, agree materially with Calvin, as to the meaning of this sentence. — Ed.

[271] The principal objection to this interpretation has been, that it was not by overcoming their enemies by force of arms that the Jews returned. The answer to this is, that this is a sort of proverbial expression, intimating that the weakest would prevail over the strongest. Besides, though the Jews returned by virtue of the edict of the king of Persia, yet they had many and strong enemies to oppose them. — Ed.

thus laid hold on them, and fast bound their minds, it was necessary to dwell at large on the subject, so that they might at length embrace the promise of deliverance. This is the reason why the Prophet employed many words on the same subject.

Now he makes this preface, that he had his message from God; and he speaks in his name, so that the incredible thing might be believed both by the Israelites and the Jews. They shall yet, he says, say in the land of Judah and in its cities, when I shall restore their captivity, etc. By these words the Prophet brings forward the Israelites and the Jews, as it were, into the middle, that they might see placed before their eyes what they deemed impossible. When I shall restore, therefore, their captivity, they shall again say, Bless thee may God, O dwelling-place of justice, O mountain of holiness

It was not without reason that the Prophet employed this mode of speaking; for Jerusalem, we know, was entirely overthrown, and the Temple pulled down, and even burnt with fire. As then this was a spectacle awful and dreadful to all, there is here described a wonderful revolution, even that Sion would again be the moment of holiness, and Jerusalem the habitation of justice, though then a solitude and desolation. And this passage deserves a special notice, so that we may know that God restores his Church as though he drew it up even from hell itself. When, therefore, there is no form of a Church appearing, let us allow that the power of God can raise it up. Whence?, even, as it has been said, from hell. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 31:24

24. And there shall dwell in Judah itself, and in all the cities thereof together, husbandmen, and they that go forth with flocks.

24. Et sedebunt (vel, habitabunt) in ea (nempe terra) Jehudah, et omnes urbes ejus (id est, incolae ejus) simul agricolae, et proficiscentur cum grege.

He proceeds with the same subject, but sets forth the effect of that favor of which he had spoken, for dwell, he says, shall the Jews again in the land; that is, they shall rest there and have a quiet habitation. He adds cities, only to amplify the favor of God as to the number and multiplicity of men; as though he had said, that not a few would return, but a vast number of men, sufficient to fill their cities. Now this was to exceed the hope of all; for when they saw the cities deserted, and the land almost empty, who would have thought that they would again be filled with people? But this the Prophet confirms by saying, Dwell there shall Judah and all his cities; and he adds, husbandmen He extends God's favor to the country and the villages, as though he had said, that the land would be filled with inhabitants, not only as to the fortified towns, but as to the fields.

It often happens that cities are inhabited when there is any fear or danger from enemies; for they who dwell in cities have walls for their defense, and mounds and other means of safety. Had then the Prophet spoken only of cities, he would not have sufficiently set forth the favor of God. Hence he adds husbandmen, as though he had said, that dwelling in the land would be safe, though there were no gates, no walls, no defences, for husbandmen would rest secure in their cottages as though inclosed within walls. We now then understand what the Prophet means.

Some read thus, ``Husbandmen, and they who go forth with the flock,'' as though

the Prophet made a distinction between husbandmen and keepers of sheep; but this seems to me unsuitable; for I doubt not but that he means that husbandmen with their flocks and herds would be secure, having no fear of the inroads of enemies, but living in the land under the care and protection of God, without apprehending anything adverse or hostile to them. The meaning is, that the restoration of the Church would be such, that its state would not be worse than in former ages, and that it would be in a peaceable and quiet condition, so that the inhabitants of the villages and country places would not be less secure than those in cities. [272]

Now, were any one to ask, when was this fulfilled? We must bear in mind what has been said elsewhere, --- that the Prophets, when speaking of the restoration of the Church, included the whole kingdom of Christ from the beginning to the end. And in this our divines go astray, so that by confining these promises to some particular time, they are compelled to fly to allegories; and thus they wrest, and even pervert all the prophecies. But the Prophets, as it has been said, include the whole progress of Christ's kingdom when they speak of the future redemption of the people. The people began to do well when they returned to their own country; but soon after distresses came as Daniel had predicted. It was, therefore, necessary for them to look for the coming of Christ. We now taste of these benefits of God as long as we are in the world. We hence see that these prophecies are not accomplished in one day, or in one year, no, not even in one age, but ought to be understood as referring to the beginning and the end of Christ's kingdom. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 31:25

25. For I have satiated the weary soul, and I have replenished every sorrowful soul.

25. Quia irrigabo (vel, inebriabo) animam sitientem, et Omnem animam quae deficit implebo.

By this verse he removes every doubt, lest any one should reject what he had promised as to the restoration of the people, because the Jews and the Israelites were at the time as dead men. He therefore says, I will water the thirsty soul; some render it ``the weary soul;'' but {עיפה} {נפש}, nupesh oiphe, is often taken metaphorically for a thirsty soul. So in Psalm 143:6, it is said,

``I am as a dry land;''

weariness cannot be suitably applied to land; and in Isaiah 29:8, we have these words,

``As one dreaming he thinks that he eats; afterwards, when awake, his soul is empty: and as one who thinks that he drinks,''

etc. The Prophet employs there the same word, because there is hardly ever weariness without thirst; we contract thirst by weariness. Then the soul is said to be {עיפה}, oiphe, by a metaphor, not weary, but on the contrary thirsty; and the

[272] Blaney renders the verse, thus, — And Judah shall dwell in it and all his cities, Husbandmen together, and they shall go about with flocks. Like Calvin he takes "cities" for citizens; but still there is an inappropriateness in the words. I regard the word "land" as understood before "Judah," — And dwell in it, the land of Judah, And in all his cities together, Shall husbandmen; and they shall remove with their flocks. See Jeremiah 33:12,13, where the meaning of what is here said is made more evident "Remove," that is, from place to place, as the word means, for the purpose of feeding their flocks. This betokened a state of liberty and of security. — Ed.

verb corresponds, which means to inebriate, to irrigate, or to water, and often to satiate. I will then irrigate, or water to satiety, thy dry soul, and every soul which faints, etc., but as {דאב}, dab, means to be deficient, and sometimes to be wearied, here it denotes a defect, for it follows, I will fill It is then to be taken for a famished soul. [273]

The meaning is, that though the Israelites should hunger and thirst, and be for a time without food and drink, yet their want would not prevent God from affording them relief, for he had the power and the will to satisfy the hungry, and to give drink to the thirsty, or to those who were fainting on account of thirst. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 31:26

26. Upon this I awaked, and beheld; and my sleep was sweet unto me.

26 Propterea expergefaetus sum et vidi, et somnus meus dulcis fuit mihi, (vel utilis)

Here the Prophet comes forth, and by his own example encourages the faithful to be confident, even to recumb on God's promise, as though they really enjoyed already what was as yet hid from them, nay, as it has been said, incredible. He then says, that he awoke and saw. This metaphor ought to be applied to a feeling contrary to that by which the Prophet had been, as it were, astonished. For though the Jews were not yet led into exile, yet the ten tribes were in that miserable bondage, --- their kingdom had fallen and perished, and final ruin was nigh the kingdom of Judah. While then the Prophet was considering these dreadful vengeances of God, he was, as it were, overwhelmed with sleep. He now says that he awoke. As in darkness men lose the rigor of their minds, and sleep also prevails, so that they cannot distinguish between black and white; so also the Prophet confesses that he was for a time, as it were, lifeless; he then says, that he awoke, that is, when God's favor shone forth, not by its own effect, but in this prophecy.

We then see that he knew as through a mirror what was yet far distant; for the term of seventy years had not as yet commenced: but faith, as it is well known, is the seeing of things hid, and the substance of things absent; for except the word of God obtains in our hearts this assurance, we betray our unbelief. The Prophet gave a proof of his faith, for he fully acknowledged that all that had been by God predicted, though far distant, would yet be accomplished in due time. We now understand why he says, that he awoke.

And he adds, And my sleep was pleasant to me After having said that he saw the work of God, which yet could not be seen by the human eye, he now adds that his sleep had been pleasant to him, while yet he had been sorrowful and full of fear; for the best alleviator of all sorrow is hope.

But we have said that the sorrow by which the mind of the Prophet had been for

[273] Both the Sept. and Syr. render the first word “thirsty,” and the second, “hungry,” agreeably with the verbs which precede them. The “weary” and “sorrowful” of our version are no doubt wrong; the first, adopted from the Vulg.; and the second from the Targ. For I will water the thirsty soul, And every hungry soul will I fill. “Soul” here means the person, the individual, — “I will water him that is thirsty,” etc. — Ed.

a time overwhelmed, is compared to a sleep. [274] He now adds, ---

Jeremiah 31:27

27. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the seed of man, and with the seed of beast.

27. Ecce dies veniunt, dicit Jehova, et seminabo domum Israel et domum Jehudah semine hominis et semine animalis.

We see that the Prophet brings forward nothing new, but only animates the Jews with confidence as to their deliverance and their return. He yet employs another similitude, even that God would again sow Judah in the land, that he might produce an increase of men, and also of cattle, and of all kinds of animals. We have said that the land was to be for a time dreary and forsaken. As God then thus condemned as it were the land, that all might regard it as given up to desolation and solitude, the Prophet says that God would cause it to be inhabited again by both men and beasts.

But the similitude sets forth still more fully the favor of God. There is to be understood a contrast between a cultivated and a deserted land. It is as though one should say, ``They shall sow and reap on mountains, where corn has never been, where a plough has never been seen.'' Were any one then to promise a sowing and a harvest in a desert land, it would be a new thing, and could hardly be believed. Even so does the Prophet now say, I will sow, etc., as though he said, ``The land indeed shall for a time be accursed, so that it will not sustain either men or beasts; but it shall be sown again.'' I will sow it, he says, with the seed both of, men and of animals: and thus he meets a question, which might have been asked, ``How can it be that the land will be again inhabited, since it is now deserted by its inhabitants?'' even because God will sow it. In this way then, the Prophet answers the question. But at the same time he exalts the favor of God, as though he had said, that there would be no other remedy for the barrenness of the land, until God should cultivate it himself, and scatter seed on it: which is the same as to say, that the restoration of the land would not be the work of human industry or power, but of the wonderful power of God. [275] It follows, ---

Jeremiah 31:28

28. And it shall come to pass, that like as I have watched over them, to pluck up, and to break down, and to throw down, and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch over them, to build, and to plant, saith the LORD.

28. Et erit, sicuti vigilavi super eos ad evellendum et conterendum, et ad confringendum et ad perdendum, et ad affligendum, sic vigilabo super eos ad aedificandum et ad plantandum, dicit Jehova.

By these words the Prophet confirms what he had said; for the Israelites and the Jews might have ever made this objection, ``Why should God promise to be the

[274] It is difficult to see exactly the purport of this verse: what does "beheld," or saw mean? May not the verb be considered as in Hophal, "I was made to see," or, had a vision? The verb is often used in this sense: see Zechariah 3:1. Then we may give this version, — Hereupon I awoke and had a vision; And my sleep had been pleasant to me. Visions were of two kinds, given in sleep, and given to persons awake: the previous vision was given to the Prophet while he was asleep. — Ed.

[275] I am disposed to render the latter part of this verse according to the Syriac, — That I will sow, as to the house of Israel and the house of Judah, The seed of man and the seed of beast. I take {{נא as a preposition, which it often is. --- Ed.

liberator of his people, whom he had suffered to be oppressed with so great evils, for it would have been easier to prevent them?'' The Jews then might have raised this clamor, ``Thou givest us here the hope of a return, but why does God suffer us to be driven into exile? why then does he not apply the remedy in time; for now too late he declares that he will be a help to us after our ruin.'' As then the Jews thought that a restoration was promised to them unseasonably, the Prophet says that it was God who chastised them and punished them for their sins, and that he could also relieve them whenever it pleased him. For had the Chaldeans, according to their own pleasure, ruled over the Jews, and had obtained the victory over them, who could have ever hoped that the miserable men, thus reduced, could have been delivered by God's hand? But now the Prophet shews that there was no reason for the Jews to despair, as though it were difficult for God to free them from the tyranny of their enemies; for nothing had happened to them by chance, or through the power of their enemies, but through the righteous judgment of God.

We now then perceive the design of the Holy Spirit in what the Prophet says, As I have watched over them to pluck up and to break down and to break in pieces and to destroy, and to afflict; so will I watch, etc. [276] God then sets himself forth as the judge who had punished them for their sins, in order that he might convince them that he would also become their Physician, as though he had said, ``I who have inflicted the wound can therefore heal it,'' according to what is said elsewhere,

``God is he who kills and brings to life, who leads down to the grave and brings up.''*

*(1 Samuel 2:6)

But he employs many words, for the great mass of so many evils might have plunged the Jews into the abyss of despair. Hence the Prophet anticipates them, and shews, that though they had been reduced to extremities, yet so many and so severe calamities could not prevent God from restoring them, when it seemed good to him. He yet reminds them, that it was not without cause that they suffered such grievous things; for God takes no delight in the miseries of his people. The people then ought to have learnt that they had been guilty of great sins from the fact, that they had been chastised with so much rigor and severity. He now adds, So will I watch over you to build and to plant

As for the verb destroy, if we read {הרם} erem, it ought to be rendered, and to take away The verb {רם} rem, as it is well known, means to elevate; but metaphorically, to take away. But the received reading, as I have said, is {הרס} eres. He says, that he would watch to build and to plant them, as he had watched to destroy them; as though he had said, that they had already been taught by experience, how great was the power of God's hand to save as well as to destroy. They had disregarded threatenings as long as God had spared them, and they thought that they could sin with impunity; and we see how insolently they rejected all the Prophets. But God had at length shewed by severe proofs how his judgments oughf; to have been dreaded.

[276] The words here used are the very same with those in Jeremiah 1:10, except the addition, "to afflict;" and yet neither the Targ., nor the Versions, except the Syriac, render them alike, giving in some instances the meaning of one verb to another, — a proof that they are very loose versions. — Ed.

He now then inspires them with hope, for his watching would no less avail for their preservation. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 31:29-30

29. In those days they shall say no more, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth are set on edge.

29. In diebus illis non dicent amplius, Patres comederunt omphacium (uvam acerbam) et dentes filiorum obstupuerunt:

30. But every one shall die for his own iniquity: every man that eateth the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.

30. Quin potius vir (hoc est; quisque) in sun iniquitate morietur; omnis homo comedens (hoc est, quisquis comederit) uvam acerbam obstupescent dentes ejus (aut, omnis viri qui comederit, dentes obstupescent)

Ezekiel shews that it was a complaint commonly prevailing among the people, that they suffered for the sins of their fathers, as Horace also says, a heathen and a despiser of God, ``O Roman, thou dost undeservedly suffer for the faults of thy fathers.'' [277] Such, then, was the arrogance of the Jews, as to strive with God, as though he punished them, while they were innocent; and they expressed this by using a proverb, ``If our fathers have eaten sour grapes, what is the reason that our teeth are set on edge?'' We know that teeth are set on edge when unripe fruits are eaten; but the word properly means sour grapes, which the Greeks call omphakes. Then the Prophet says, that this proverb would be no longer used, for after having been tamed by evils, they would at length know that God had not dealt so severely with them without a just cause.

We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet. And he says, In those days, that is, after God had punished the people, and also embraced them through his mercy; for both these things were necessary, that is, that their perverseness and pride should be subdued, and that they should cease to expostulate with God, and also that the gratuitous favor of God should be manifested to them. At that time then, he says, they shall not use this impious proverb, The fathers have eaten a sour grape, and the children's teeth have been blunted: [278] but on the contrary, he adds, every one shall die in his own iniquity; and whosoever eateth a sour grape, his teeth shall be blunted; that is, at that time the just judgment of God shall be exalted, so that there will be no place for these insolent and blasphemous clamors; the mercy of God will also be made manifest, for men, worthy of death, will be delivered, but not otherwise than through the gratuitous goodness of God.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou warnest us daily by so many evidences of thy wrath, that we may in due time repent, --- O grant, that we may not be slow to consider thy work, and also the doctrine which thou addest, but anticipate thy extreme vengeance, and thus be made capable of receiving thy mercy, that as thou freely offerest it to us, we may anxiously embrace it, and also so retain it in our

[277] Carm., Lib. 3, Od. 6.

[278] The Targum thus interprets this proverb, "The fathers have sinned, and the children have been smitten." "Blunted," or deprived of feeling, obstupuerunt, is both the Vulg. and the Syr. — Ed.

hearts by true faith, that thou mayest continue its course towards us, until we shall at length reach that blessed rest, which has been prepared for us in heaven by Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Twenty-Third

Jeremiah 31:31-32

31. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah:

31. Ecce dies veniunt, dicit Jehova, et percutiam cum domo Israel et cum domo Jehudah foedus novum:

32. Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD:

32. Non secundum foedus quod percussi cum patribus eorum die quo apprehendi manum eorum, ut educerem eos e terra Egypti, quod irritum fecerunt foedus, inquam, et ego dominabor illis, dicit Jehova.

Jeremiah proceeds with the same subject, but shews more clearly how much more abundant and richer the favor of God would be towards his people than formerly, he then does not simply promise the restoration of that dignity and greatness which they had lost, but something better and more excellent. We hence see that this passage necessarily refers to the kingdom of Christ, for without Christ nothing could or ought to have been hoped for by the people, superior to the Law; for the Law was a rule of the most perfect doctrine. If then Christ be taken away, it is certain that we must abide in the Law.

We hence then conclude, that the Prophet predicts of the kingdom of Christ; and this passage is also quoted by the Apostles, as being remarkable and worthy of notice. (Romans 11:27; Hebrews 8:8-12; Hebrews 10:16)

But we must observe the order and manner of teaching here pursued. The Prophet confirms what I have before said, that what we have been considering was incredible to the Jews. Having then already spoken of the benefits of God, which could have been hardly recognised by the senses of men, in order to obviate the want of fifith, he adds, that the Lord would manifest his mercy towards them in a new and unusual manner. We hence see why the Prophet added this passage to his former doctrine. For had he not spoken of a new covenant, those miserable men, whom he sought to inspire with the hope of salvation, would have ever vacillated; nay, as the greater part were already overwhelmed with despair, he would have effected nothing. Here then he sees before them a new covenant, as though he had said, that they ought not to look farther or higher, nor to measure the benefit of God, of which he had spoken, by the appearance of the state of things at that time, for God would make a new covenant.

There is yet no doubt but that he commends the favor of God, which was afterwards to be manifested in the fullness of time. Besides, we must ever bear in mind, that from the time the people returned to their own country, the faith of those who had embraced the favor of deliverance was assailed by the most grievous trials, for it would have been better for them to continue in perpetual exile than to be cruelly

harassed by all their neighbors, and to be exposed to so many troubles. If, then, the people had been only restored from their exile in Babylon, it was a matter of small moment; but it behoved the godly to direct their minds to Christ. And hence we see that the Prophets, who performed the office of teaching after the restoration, dwelt on this point, --- that they were to hope for something better than what then appeared, and that they were not to despond, because they saw that they did not enjoy rest, and were drawn into weary and grievous contests rather than freed from tyranny. We indeed know what Hagggai says of the future temple, and what Zechariah says, and also Malachi. And the same was the object of our Prophet in speaking of the new covenant, even that the faithful, after having enjoyed again their own country, might not clamor against God, because he did not bestow on them that happiness which he had promised. This was the second reason why the Prophet spoke of the new covenant.

As before, he now repeats the words, that the days would come, in which God would make a covenant with Israel as well as with Judah. For the ten tribes, as it is well known, had been driven into exile while the kingdom of Judah was still standing. Besides, when they revolted from the family of David, they became as it were another nation. God indeed did not cease to acknowledge them as his people; but they had alienated themselves as far as they could from the Church. God then promises that there would be again one body, for he would gather them that they might unite together, and not be like two houses.

Now, as to the new covenant, it is not so called, because it is contrary to the first covenant; for God is never inconsistent with himself, nor is he unlike himself, he then who once made a covenant with his chosen people, had not changed his purpose, as though he had forgotten his faithfulness. It then follows, that the first covenant was inviolable; besides, he had already made his covenant with Abraham, and the Law was a confirmation of that covenant. As then the Law depended on that covenant which God made with his servant Abraham, it follows that God could never have made a new, that is, a contrary or a different covenant. For whence do we derive our hope of salvation, except from that blessed seed promised to Abraham? Further, why are we called the children of Abraham, except on account of the common bond of faith? Why are the faithful said to be gathered into the bosom of Abraham? Why does Christ say, that some will come from the east and the west, and sit down in the kingdom of heaven with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? (Luke 16:22; Matthew 8:11) These things no doubt sufficiently shew that God has never made any other covenant than that which he made formerly with Abraham, and at length confirmed by the hand of Moses. This subject might be more fully handled; but it is enough briefly to shew, that the covenant which God made at first is perpetual.

Let us now see why he promises to the people a new covenant. It being new, no doubt refers to what they call the form; and the form, or manner, regards not words only, but first Christ, then the grace of the Holy Spirit, and the whole external way of teaching. But the substance remains the same. By substance I understand the doctrine; for God in the Gospel brings forward nothing but what the Law contains. We hence see that God has so spoken from the beginning, that he has not changed,

no not a syllable, with regard to the substance of the doctrine. For he has included in the Law the rule of a perfect life, and has also shewn what is the way of salvation, and by types and figures led the people to Christ, so that the remission of sin is there clearly made manifest, and whatever is necessary to be known.

As then God has added nothing to the Law as to the substance of the doctrine, we must come, as I have already said, to the form, as Christ was not as yet manifested: God made a new covenant, when he accomplished through his Son whatever had been shadowed forth under the Law. For the sacrifices could not of themselves pacify God, as it is well known, and whatever the Law taught respecting expiation was of itself useless and of no importance. The new covenant then was made when Christ appeared with water and blood, and really fulfilled what God had exhibited under types, so that the faithful might have some taste of salvation. But the coming of Christ would not have been sufficient, had not regeneration by the Holy Spirit been added. It was, then, in some respects, a new thing, that God regenerated the faithful by his Spirit, so that it became not only a doctrine as to the letter, but also efficacious, which not only strikes the ear, but penetrates into the heart, and really forms us for the service of God. The outward mode of teaching was also new, as it is evident to all; for when we compare the Law with the Gospel, we find that God speaks to us now openly, as it were face to face, and not under a veil, as Paul teaches us, when speaking of Moses, who put on a veil when he went forth to address the people in God's name. (2 Corinthians 3:13) It is not so, says Paul, under the Gospel, but the veil is removed, and God in the face of Christ presents himself to be seen by us. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet calls it a new covenant, as it will be shown more at large: for I touch only on things which cannot be treated apart, that the whole context of the Prophet may be better understood. Let us then proceed now with the words.

He says that the covenant which he will make will not be such as he had made with their fathers Here he clearly distinguishes the new covenant from the Law. The contrast ought to be borne in mind; for no one of the Jews thought it possible that God would add anything better to the Law. For though they regarded the Law almost as nothing, yet we know that hypocrites pretended with great ardor of zeal that they were so devoted to the Law, that they thought that heaven and earth could sooner be blended together, than that any change should be made in the Law; and at the same time they held most tenaciously what God had only for a time instituted. It was therefore necessary that the Law should be here contrasted with the new covenant, that the Jews might know that the favor in reserve for them would be far more excellent than what had been formerly manifested to the fathers. This, then, is the reason why he says, not according to the covenant, etc.

He afterwards adds, which I made with their fathers when I laid hold of their hand, etc. Here he shows that they could never have a firm hope of salvation, unless God made a new covenant. Such was their pride, that they hardly would have received the favor of God, had they not been convinced of this truth: for this would have been always in their mouth, ``Did not God shew himself a Father to his people when he redeemed them? was it not a testimony of his paternal favor? has he not elevated

the condition of the Church, which he designs to be perpetual?'' They would have therefore rejected the favor of God, had not the Prophet openly declared that the Law had been and would be still useless to them, and that there was therefore a necessity for a new covenant, otherwise they must have perished.

We now perceive the design of the Prophet; and this ought to be carefully observed; for it would not be enough to know what the Prophet says, except we also know why he says this or that. The meaning then is, that it ought not to appear strange that God makes a new covenant, because the first had been useless and was of no avail. Then he confirms this, because God made the first covenant when he stretched out his hand to his ancient people, and became their liberator; and yet they made void that covenant. The circumstance as to the time ought to be noticed, for the memory of a recent benefit ought to be a most powerful motive to obedience. For how base an ingratitude it was for those, who had been delivered by the wonderful power of God, to reject his covenant at a time when they had been anticipated by divine mercy? As then they had made void even at that time the covenant of God, it may with certainty be concluded, that there had been no time in which they had not manifested their impiety, and had not been covenant-breakers.

He adds, I however ruled over them, or was Lord over them. Though some confine the verb {בעלתי} bolti, to the rule exercised by a husband, and this would not be unsuitable, as God not only ruled then over his people, but was also their husband, a similitude which is often used; yet I know not whether this view can be satisfactorily sustained we ought therefore to be satisfied with the general truth, that God had the people under his own authority, as though he had said, that he only used his own right in ruling over them and prescribing to them the way in which they were to live. At the same time the word covenant, was more honorable to the people. For when a king enjoins anything on his people, it is called an edict; but God deals with his own people more kindly, for he descends and appears in the midst of them, that he may bind himself to his people, as he binds the people to himself. We hence see, in short, why God says that he ruled over the people, even because he had purchased them for himself, and yet he had not enjoyed his own right on account of the untameable and perverse disposition of the people. [279]

It ought at the same time to be observed, that the fault is here cast on the people, that the Law was weak and not sufficiently valid, as we see that Paul teaches us in Romans 7:12. For as soon as the weakness of the Law is spoken of, the greater part lay hold of something they deem wrong in the Law, and thus the Law is rendered contemptible: hence the Prophet says here that they had made God's covenant void, as though he had said, that the fault was not to be sought in the Law that there was need of a new covenant, for the Law was abundantly sufficient, but that the fault was in the levity and the unfaithfulness of the people. We now then see that nothing is detracted from the Law when it is said to be weak and ineffectual; for it is an

[279] This clause, as quoted in Hebrews 8:9, is, "And I regarded them not," according to the Sept. and the Syr., though the Vulg. is the same with our version. Houbigant says, "Read {געלתי} I have rejected, I have repudiated.'' The only difference is in one letter; and this word is used by Jeremiah in Jeremiah 14:19. There would thus be a perfect correspondence, ``and I rejected them, saith Jehovah.'' ``Which my covenant,'' in the previous clause, is the Vulg.; but according to the Sept., the Syr., and the Targ., it is, ``because they have broken my covenant,'' etc. {אשר} is not used, as given in our version, in connection with a noun that follows, though it is so used with pronouns. --- Ed

accidental fault derived from men who do not observe nor keep their pledged faith. There are still more things to be said; but I now, as I have said, touch but briefly on the words of the Prophet. It then follows, ---

Jeremiah 31:33

33. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

33. Quia hoc foedus quod percutiam cum domo Israel post dies illos, dicit Jehova, ponam legem meam in medio ipsorum (id est, in visceribus) et in cordibus ipsorum scribam eam; et ego ero illis in Deum, et ipsi erunt mihi in populum.

He now shews a difference between the Law and the Gospel, for the Gospel brings with it the grace of regeneration: its doctrine, therefore, is not that of the letter, but penetrates into the heart and reforms all the inward faculties, so that obedience is rendered to the righteousness of God.

A question may however be here moved, Was the grace of regeneration wanting to the Fathers under the Law? But this is quite preposterous. What, then, is meant when God denies here that the Law was written on the heart before the coming of Christ? To this I answer, that the Fathers, who were formerly regenerated, obtained this favor through Christ, so that we may say, that it was as it were transferred to them from another source. The power then to penetrate into the heart was not inherent in the Law, but it was a benefit transferred to the Law from the Gospel. This is one thing. Then we know that this grace of God was rare and little known under the Law; but that under the Gospel the gifts of the Spirit have been more abundantly poured forth, and that God has dealt more bountifully with his Church. But still the main thing is, to consider what the Law of itself is, and what is peculiar to the Gospel, especially when a comparison is made between the Law and the Gospel. For when this comparison ceases, this cannot be properly applied to the Law; but with regard to the Gospel it is said, that the Law is that of the letter, as it is called elsewhere, (Romans 7:6) and this also is the reason why Paul calls it the letter in 2 Corinthians 3:6,

``the letter killeth,''

etc. By ``letter'' he means not what Origen foolishly explained, for he perverted that passage as he did almost the whole Scripture: Paul does not mean there the simple and plain sense of the Law; for he calls it the letter for another reason, because it only sets before the eyes of men what is right, and sounds it also in their ears. And the word letter refers to what is written, as though he had said, The Law was written on stones, and was therefore a letter. But the Gospel --- what is it? It is spirit, that is, God not only addresses his word to the ears of men and sets it before their eyes, but he also inwardly teaches their hearts and minds. This is then the solution of the question: the Prophet speaks of the Law in itself, as apart from the Gospel, for the Law then is dead and destitute of the Spirit of regeneration.

He afterwards says, I will put my Law in their inward parts By these words he confirms what we have said, that the newness, which he before mentioned, was not so as to the substance, but as to the form only: for God does not say here, ``I will

give you another Law,'' but I will write my Law, that is, the same Law, which had formerly been delivered to the Fathers. He then does not promise anything different as to the essence of the doctrine, but he makes the difference to be in the form only. But he states the same thing in two ways, and says, that he would put his law in their inward parts, and that he would write it in their hearts [280] We indeed know how difficult it is that man should be so formed to obedience that his whole life may be in unison with the Law of God, for all the lusts of the flesh are so many enemies, as Paul says, who fight against God. (Romans 8:7) As then all our affections and lusts thus carry on war with God, it is in a manner a renovation of the world when men suffer themselves to be ruled by God. And we know what Scripture says, that we cannot be the disciples of Christ, except we renounce ourselves and the world, and deny our own selves. (Matthew 6:24; Luke 14:26, 27) This is the reason why the Prophet was not satisfied with one statement, but said, I will put my Law in their inward parts, I will write it in their hearts.

We may further learn from this passage, how foolish the Papists are in their conceit about free-will. They indeed allow that without the help of God's grace we are not capable of fulfilling the Law, and thus they concede something to the aid of grace and of the Spirit: but still they not only imagine a co-operation as to free-will, but ascribe to it the main work. Now the Prophet here testifies that it is the peculiar work of God to write his Law in our hearts. Since God then declares that this favor is justly his, and claims to himself the glory of it, how great must be the arrogance of men to appropriate this to themselves? To write the Law in the heart imports nothing less than so to form it, that the Law should rule there, and that there should be no feeling of the heart, not conformable and not consenting to its doctrine. It is hence then sufficiently clear, that no one can be turned so as to obey the Law, until he be regenerated by the Spirit of God; nay, that there is no inclination in man to act rightly, except God prepares his heart by his grace; in a word, that the doctrine of the letter is always dead, until God vivifies it by his Spirit.

He adds, And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people Here God comprehends generally the substance of his covenant; for what is the design of the Law, except that the people should call upon him, and that he should also exercise a care over his people? For whenever God declares that he will be our God, he offers to us his paternal layout, and declares that our salvation is become the object of his care; he gives to us a free access to himself, bids us to recumb on his grace, and, in short, this promise contains in itself everything needful for our salvation. The case is now also at this day the same under the Gospel; for as we are aliens from the kingdom of heaven, he reconciles us by it to himself, and testifies that he will be our God. On this depends what follows, And they shall be my people; for the one cannot be separated from the other. By these words then the Prophet briefly intimates, that

[280] All the nouns in Hebrew are of the singular number, — "law, inward part, heart," and also "iniquity and sin;" and so are they in the Vulg., except the second, which is rendered "bowels;" but in the other versions and the Targ., they are mostly pluralized. The words as quoted in Hebrews are not exactly according to any of the versions, but for the most part according to that of the Sept. There is in many copies a {{ו before ,{נתתי} ``I have put,'' by which it is turned into a future, ``I will even put.'' This seems to be the true reading, --- I will even put my law in their inmost part, And on their heart will I write it. It is the same as if it was said, ``I will put my law in the inmost part of each of them:'' the persons are individualized, in order to shew that the act extends to every one alike. --- Ed.

the main object of God's covenant is, that he should become our Father, from whom we are to seek and expect salvation, and that we should also become his people. Of these things there is more to be said again; but I have explained the reason why I now so quickly pass over things worthy of a longer explanation. He adds, ---

Jeremiah 31:34

34. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

34. Et non docebit amplius vir (id est, quisque) proximum suum, et quisque fratrum suum, dicendo, cognoscite Jehovam; quia omnes cognoscent me a parvo ipsorum, et (sed abundat copula) ad magnum ipsorum, dicit Jehova; quia ignoscam pecattis ipsorum, et iniquitatum ipsorum non recordabor amplius.

But I cannot now proceed farther, for the clock strikes.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast favored us with so singular a benefit as to make through thy Son a covenant which has been ratified for our salvation, --- O grant, that we may become partakers of it, and know that thou so speakest with us, that thou not only shewest by thy Word what is right, but speakest also to us inwardly by thy Spirit, and thus renderest us teachable and obedient, that there may be an evidence of our adoption, and a proof that thou wilt govern and rule us, until we shall at length be really and fully united to thee through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Twenty-Fourth

And no more shall every one teach his neighbor, and every one his brother, saying, Know ye Jehovah; for all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith Jehovah: for I will forgive their sins, and their iniquities will I remember no more Here is mentioned another difference between the old and the new covenant, even that God, who had obscurely manifested himself under the Law, would send forth a fuller light, so that the knowledge of him would be commonly enjoyed. But he hyperbolically extols this favor, when he says that no one would have need of a teacher or instructor, as every one would have himself sufficient knowledge. We therefore consider that the object of the Prophet is mainly to shew, that so great would be the light of the Gospel, that it would be clearly evident, that God under it deals more bountifully with his people, because its truth shines forth as the sun at noon-day. The same thing Isaiah promises, when he says that all would become the disciples of God. (Isaiah 54:13) This was indeed the case also under the Law, though God gave then but a small taste of heavenly doctrine: but at the coming of Christ he unfolded the treasures of wisdom and knowledge, so that under the Gospel there is the perfection of what had been begun; for we know that the ancient people were like children, and hence God kept them in the rudiments of knowledge: now, as we are grown up, he favors us with a fuller doctrine, and he comes, as it were, nearer to us.

Hence, he says, No more shall every one teach his neighbor, and a man his brother

[281] I have said that the Prophet here amplifies the favor of God. But we find that some fanatics have ignorantly and foolishly abused this passage, seeking to put down teaching of every kind, as the Anabaptists in our day, who reject all teaching; and flattering themselves in their ignorance, they proudly boast that they are endued with the Spirit, and say, that dishonor is done to Christ, if we are still disciples, because it is written as one of the praises and encomiums given to the new covenant, that no one shall teach his neighbor any more And hence it has also happened, that they are inebriated with strange and horrible doctrines: for the devil, when they become swollen with so much pride, can fascinate and delude them as he pleases; and their own pride also so leads them astray, that they invent dreams; and many unprincipled men have drawn aside this passage to serve their own purposes. For when they boast themselves to be prophets, and persuade the simple that they are so, they hold many attached to themselves, and derive gain by this sort of boasting.

But the Prophet here does not mean inspiration, nor does he exclude the practice of teaching, as I have already said; he only shews to us the superior brightness of the gospel light, as God, under the Law, did not so perfectly teach his people as he does us at this day. And hence is that saying of Christ,

``Blessed are the eyes which see the things which ye see, and the ears which hear the things which ye hear; for many kings and prophets,'' etc. (Luke 10:23)

Christ, then, is the best interpreter of this passage, even that God would cause the truth to shine forth more fully under the Gospel; and hence Christ is called by Malachi

``the Sun of Righteousness,'' (Malachi 4:2)

for the Prophet there intimates that the Fathers had indeed some light, but not such as we have. In short, we ought to bear in mind the comparison, of which mention was made yesterday, even that God held his people in suspense with the hope of a better state.

And that we may no farther seek an explanation, let us carefully weigh the words; for it is not simply and without exception said, ``No one shall teach his neighbor,'' but it it is added, *``Saying,* Know ye Jehovah.'' We hence see that the Prophet promises knowledge, so that they might be no longer alphabetarians; for these words, ``Know ye Jehovah,'' point out the first elements of faith, or of celestial doctrine. And, doubtless, if we consider how great was the ignorance of the ancient people, they were then only in the elements. He who is at this day the least among the faithful, has so far advanced, that he knows much more clearly what pertains chiefly to salvation than those who were then the most learned. The meaning then is, that all God's chosen people would be so endued with the gift of knowledge, that they would no longer continue in the first elements.

Now, were any one pertinaciously to urge this one clause, it would be right to set before him a passage in Isaiah, for he certainly speaks of the kingdom of Christ, when he says,

``Lay hold shall each on the hand of his neighbor, and say, Come, let us ascend

[281] Literally the words are, — And they shall teach no more, a man his neighbor, And a man his brother, by saying, "Know ye Jehovah;" For all of them shall know me, From the least of them to the greatest of them, Saith Jehovah.

into the mountain of the Lord, and he will teach us his ways,'' etc. (Isaiah 2:3)

Now, let us reconcile these two prophecies. The design of both is to set forth the favor of God, manifested by Christ at his coming. The one passage says, ``No one will teach his neighbor;'' and the other, ``Lay hold will each on the hand of his neighbor, and say, Let us come and ascend into the mountain, that Jehovah may teach us.'' Now the way of reconciling them is this, --- that Jeremiah says, that the people would not be so ignorant under the new covenant as to stand in need of the first principles of truth; but that Isaiah says, that each would lay hold on the hand of his neighbor, that they might mutually help one another, so as to attain the knowledge of God's law. The question is thus solved; and we, at the same time, see how remarkable is the benefit with which God favors his people, as he thus makes himself familiarly known to them.

He says, All shall know me, from the least to the greatest He does not mean that knowledge would be in all in an equal measure. Experience indeed proves this to be false; and further we know, that God has testified from the beginning, as Paul also reminds us, (Romans 12:2, 3) that the measure of his gifts is according to his good pleasure. But the Prophet means, that those who are the least or the lowest among God's people shall be endued with so much light of knowledge that they will be almost like teachers. To the same purpose is the prophecy of Joel,

``Prophesy shall your sons, your daughters shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.'' (Joel 2:28)

He promises that there would be everywhere prophets and teachers, because the grace of God would be at that day more abundant; and these things ought ever to be understood comparatively. Though, then, many are now ignorant among the children of God, and among those who are really of the number of the faithful, yet if we consider how great was the obscurity of the Law, those who are at this day the least among the disciples, are not otherwise than prophets and teachers. And for this reason Christ says,

``He who is least in the kingdom of heaven,
is greater than John the Baptist,''

who yet was superior to all the Prophets. (Matthew 11:11) John the Baptist was, in his office, exalted above all the Prophets, and he excelled them in knowledge; and yet the least of those who professed the Gospel and bore testimony to it, was greater, says Christ, than John the Baptist. And this is not to be applied only to them individually, nor be confined to them, but rather to the clear and plain doctrine which the Gospel conveys, according to the passage we quoted yesterday, where Paul says that there is now no veil intervening, but that we are allowed to see God, as it were, face to face in the person of Christ. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

It follows, For I well forgive their sins, and their iniquities will I remember no more The Prophet, no doubt, shews here the foundation of God's kindness, even that he would receive the people into favor by not imputing to them their sins. If we then seek for the origin of the new covenant, it is the free remission of sins, because God reconciles himself to his people. And we hence conclude, that there is no other cause that we can imagine, why God appeared in his only-begotten Son, and manifested so

great a bounty: for the Prophet here reduces to nothing all the glory of the flesh, and lays prostrate all merits, when he says, that God would be so bountiful to his people as to become propitious to them, freely to remit their sins, and not to remember their iniquities. This passage, then, cannot properly be taken as referring to the perpetual remission of sins, though this he included in the general doctrine; but we must bear in mind the design of the Prophet, which was to shew, that God from the beginning, with regard to his Church, was moved by no other cause than a desire to abolish sins.

The Apostle, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, gives rather a refined interpretation of this passage, for he dwells on the word more, {עד}, od. He says, that under the New Testament God forgives iniquities, because expiation has been made, so that there is no more need of sacrifices. For he assumes the opposite idea, that God remembered iniquities until he made the new covenant. If he remembered sins, he says, until he made a new covenant, it is no wonder that he then required daily sacrifice to propitiate him: but now under the New Testament he remembers them no more. Then sacrifices cease, because there is now no need of satisfaction when sins are forgiven. He hence concludes, that we have been so expiated by the blood of Christ, and so reconciled to God, that confidence as to our salvation ought to give us an entire rest. But we ought to bear in mind what I have said, that the Prophet here expressly, and in the first place, speaks of the beginning of the mercy and grace which God promises; he therefore declares that God would be so kind and so gracious as not to remember iniquities

What, then, does the particle more intimate? Even that God had for a time been angry with his people, and visited their sins with judgment. For God is said to call our sins to remembrance, he is said to be angry with us, he is said to be the avenger of our iniquities, when he punishes us, when he gives evidences of his severity and of his vengeance. Whenever then God severely handled his people, he seemed to remember their iniquities; but when he made the new covenant, all iniquities were then buried, and cast, as another Prophet says, into the depths of the sea. (Micah 7:19) Then the Apostle misapplied the testimony of the Prophet: by no means; for he wisely accommodated it to the subject he was discussing: what God promises, that he would not any more remember iniquities, after having made the new covenant, was accomplished through the coming of Christ. Then Christ alone has effected this --- that our iniquities should no more be remembered before God. Hence also we easily learn what the Apostle intended to prove, even that sacrifices cease when sins are expiated. These things indeed harmonize well together, and there is nothing forced or too refined.

Moreover, the Prophet does not here discuss the whole question respecting the difference between the Old and New Testament, but only takes this as granted, that the grace of God would be more abundant than formerly, in order that the faithful, supported by hope, might patiently endure their evils and most grievous trials with which they had to contend, and not despond until Christ was manifested, as we said yesterday. Here, then, he speaks of the grace of regeneration, of the gift of knowledge, and at the same time promises that God would be propitious to his people

in a different and more perfect way than he had been in former times. But the Apostle in that Epistle seems to apply this to ceremonies, because these things are connected together; that is, the abrogation of ceremonies and the regeneration of the Spirit which is promised here. Then the Apostle does not wrest the words of the Prophet; but as he commends the new covenant, which was to be more excellent than the Law, he hence concludes, that it is no wonder that ceremonies were not to continue but for a time. For he assumes this principle, that a new covenant was to succeed the old: then some change was necessarily to be. He assumes also that the new covenant was opposed to the old, and that the old was subject to destruction. The Jews could not endure any change in the types, for they would have them to remain the same. But the Apostle says that it is nothing strange that a thing should decay; for God, he says, does not certainly without reason call that covenant old which he made by Moses; then it will not always continue valid. (Hebrews 8:13) Since it is so, it cannot be inconsistent with the truth and faithfulness of God, that the ceremonies should cease as to their use, while the Law itself remained unchanged. We now then see that the Apostle faithfully interpreted the design of the Prophet by accommodating his testimony to the abrogation of ceremonies.

But as I have to explain only the words of the Prophet, there is no need to speak further of the difference between the Old and New Testament, that is, in what particulars they differ; for the Old and New Testament differ also in other things. But the Prophet, as I have said, thought it sufficient to touch on this point, --- that something better was to be hoped at the coming of Christ than what the Fathers in all ages had found. And thus, as I have said, he sought to alleviate the sorrow of the faithful, whom God exercised with hard trials before Christ was manifested in the flesh.

Moreover, the Law and the Gospel form a contrast like Moses and Christ. Then the New Testament is more excellent than the Law, as Christ excels Moses. But we must come to a passage in John, that we may more fully understand why the Prophet says that the grace of the new covenant would be different from that, of the old. John says,

``The Law was given by Moses, but grace
and truth came by Jesus Christ.'' (John 1:17)

John seems there to leave nothing to the Law but an evanescent shadow. For if Christ only brought truth to us, then there was no truth in the Law, and there was no grace in the Law; but this seems to east a reproach on the Law. Now this question was in part answered yesterday. But as I wish to finish this passage, let it be briefly observed, that whenever the Law is thus extenuated, it is only that the benefit of Christ may be set forth, so that we may know how invaluable is God's mercy which appears in his only-begotten Son.

Were now any one to object and say, ``But why had he previously published the Law? and why did he command it to be reverently received, if it was without grace and truth?'' To this I answer, according to what I said yesterday, that the Law was not destitute of those benefits which we at this day receive under the Gospel, but that these benefits were then, as it were, adventitious, and that they do not properly belong to the Law; for if the Law were separated from the Gospel, it would be the

same as if one was to separate Moses from Christ. If Moses be regarded, not as opposed to Christ, he was the herald and witness of God's paternal kindness towards his people; his doctrine also contained promises of a free salvation, and opened to the faithful the door of access to God. But if Moses be set in opposition to Christ, he becomes the minister of death, and his doctrine leads to destruction; for the letter, as Paul in 2 Corinthians 3:6, calls it, killeth, --- how so? Because whosoever is attached to Moses departs from Christ; and Christ alone possesses in himself the fullness of all blessings. It then follows, that nothing remains in Moses when considered in himself. But God promised salvation to his ancient people, and also regenerated his chosen, and illuminated them by his Spirit. This he did not do so freely and extensively as now. As then God's grace is at this day more abundant, it is justly extolled in high terms by all the Prophets; and then, as I have already said, whatever God at that time conferred, was, as it were, adventitious, for all these benefits were dependant on Christ and the promulgation of the Gospel. Let us now proceed, ---

Jeremiah 31:35-36

35. Thus saith the LORD, which giveth the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which divideth the sea when the waves thereof roar; the LORD of hosts is his name:

35. Sic dicit Jehova, Qui ponit solera (vel, posuit) in lucem diei, et leges (vel, statuta, decreta) lunae et stellarum in lucem noctis; scindens mare, et resonant (tumultuautur) fluctus ejus; Jehova exercituum nomen ejus:

36. If those ordinances depart from before me, saith the LORD, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me for ever.

36. Si remota fuerint decreta haec a conspectu meo, dicit Jehova, etiam semen Israel cessabit (vel, deficiet) ne sit gens coram facie mea cunctis diebus.

He confirms the promises which we have been considering; for it was difficult to believe that the people would not only recover what they had lost, but also be made much more happy; for the Church was then wholly in a desponding state. It was not then an easy matter to raise, as it were, from the lowest depths a miserable people, and to comfort them so that they might overcome their dreadful trial; for the disorder of the Church was such, that had it been raised a hundred times from the dead, it might again be a hundred times crushed into death, for there still remained for it most grievous evils in future. This is then the reason why the Prophet dwells at large on proving the same thing.

He says in the person of God, ``I am he who created the sun, the moon, and the stars; the regular order of things in creation still continues, for the sun performs its course, and so does the moon.'' He speaks, indeed, of their diurnal course, for we know that the Prophets spoke popularly, and according to the common notions. Had they philosophized, as astrologers do, and spoken of the monthly course of the moon, and of the annual course of the sun, they could not have been understood by the common people. They were, therefore, satisfied to state things which even children could comprehend, even that the sun made its circuit daily round the world, that the moon did the same, and that the stars in their turns followed; so that the moon holds the first place in the night among the stars, and that the sun rules during

the day. ``I am the Lord,'' he says, ``who have fixed this order of things which still remains:'' I cut or divide the sea, he says, that is, I stir it up with tempests, and make a noise, or roar, do its waves.''

He mentions things which are contrary, but not inconsistent, though different. For the course of the sun, moon, and stars is regular and fixed, and so he calls their courses {חקת} cheket, and {החקים} echekim, that is, decrees, which are not changeable. [282] Then in the heavens we find an order so arranged and regulated, that nothing deviates from its appointed course. But in storms and tempests God seems as though he would shake the world and overturn what appears otherwise immovable; for even the very rocks, as it were, tremble when the sea is violently stirred up; and yet God calms the very sea, and thus puts an end to storms and tempests, so that there ever appears to be a stability and a perpetuity in nature. He then adds, If removed shall these laws be from my presence, the seed of Israel shall also fail; that is, ``As certain as is the stability of the order of nature, seen in the course of the sun and the moon, and in the turbulent sea, so certain will be the deliverance of ray Church, nor can it ever be destroyed.'' The tempest on the sea seems to shake the world, and yet the world remains fixed. The sun and moon, when they rise, might overwhelm the whole earth; for we know that the sun is much larger than the earth. While so large a body, and almost immeasurable, hangs over our heads, and rolls on so swiftly, who ought not to be afraid? Yet the sun proceeds in its course, and the earth remains firm, because it so pleases God. There is, therefore, no reason to fear that the safety of the Church should ever fail, for the laws or decrees of nature shall never cease; that is, God, who has from the beginning governed the world, will not disregard the welfare of his Church, for whose sake the world has been created.

Nor, indeed, is it a matter of wonder, that the safety of the Church is here shewn to be so secure, for it may justly be preferred even to the fixed course of the sun and of the moon, and to other institutions of nature. But God deemed it enough in this place to use this comparison, according to what is said in the Psalms, where the sun and the moon are called his faithful witnesses in heaven. (Psalm 89:36, 37) But there also the covenant is spoken of, which God was about to make with his people through his only-begotten Son. He mentions the moon as his witness in heaven; but as I have already said elsewhere, he raises us far above the world and above all the elements, yea, above the sun and the moon, when he treats of the certainty of our salvation; and, doubtless, the condition of the Church does not depend on the state of the world; for it is said in another place,

``They shall grow old, but thou wilt remain for ever.''
(Psalm 102:26-28)

[282] "Ordinance," and "ordinances," would perhaps be the best words. The word means a fixed order of things, sometimes rendered in our version "statute," and sometimes "ordinance," — Thus saith Jehovah, — He who hath appointed the sun for light by day, The ordinance of the moon and stars for light by night, Who calms the sea when roar do its waves, — Jehovah of hosts is his name, Two opposite meanings are given by many Lexicons to {{רגע --- to divide, to break, to cleave, and also to give rest, to calm. Parkhurst holds that it has only the last. However, that it means here to make quiet, or to calm, is most probable, as God's restraining power as to the sea is mentioned before in Jeremiah 5:22 as a proof of his greatness. The word for ``ordinance'' before ``moon'' is left out in the Sept., and in one MS.; and the passage would read better without it --- Ed.

And the Prophet there compares the heavens to garments, which wear out by use, and at length become useless; but the condition of the Church, he says, is far different. He does not, indeed, express these words; but after having said, ``Thou, O God, art the same from eternity,'' he comes to the eternity of the Church, ``Thy children's children shall endure.'' We now see that the Church has the preference over the whole world. But God had a regard in this place to the weakness of his people, when he said that his grace to his people would be as sure and certain as the institutions of nature. Some refer the last clause in verse 35 (Jeremiah 31:35) to the Red Sea; because God divided the Red Sea; but this is wholly foreign to the meaning of the Prophet, nor does it require any confutation; but I have pointed it out that no one may be led astray.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we enjoy the light of the sun by day, and of the moon by night, we may learn to raise higher our eyes, and not be like the unbelieving, who have this benefit in common with us, but look forward in hope of our eternal salvation, nor doubt but that as thou settest before our eyes a proof of thy immovable constancy in these created things, so also secure and certain shall be our salvation, which is founded on thy most certain truth, which renders sure all things, until at length we come into that blessed kingdom, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Twenty-Fifth

Jeremiah 31:37

37. Thus saith the LORD; If heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also cast off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, saith the LORD.

37. Sic dicit Jehova, Si mensurentur coeli sursum, et investigentur fundamenta terrae deorsum, etiam ego rejiciam (vel, spernam) totum semen Israel, propter omnia quae fecerunt, dicit Johova.

He confirms the same thing by another comparison, even that it would be impossible for God wholly to forget his covenant, but that he would again gather his people. Exile might indeed appear as a permanent death; and thus the truth of God might have been brought to nothing; and the covenant could not have been made void without giving the people a sort of right to complain, that they had been deceived. For we know, that though a condition was added to the covenant, yet it was not founded on the integrity of men; and hence it is said, that God is not a liar, though all the Jews were perfidious. (Romans 3:3, 4) Then the Prophet teaches us here, that though God had severely punished the sins of the people, and had resolved to punish them in future, even so as to destroy their city, there would yet be a place for mercy after the people had been chastised.

He had said before that God's covenant with Abraham's children could no more fail than the laws of nature: he now says, that if any could measure the heaven, and investigate the foundations of the earth, that is, penetrate into the very center of the earth, then, he says, I will reject the seed of Israel But God brings before us these strange and impossible things, that we may know that he will at length be

reconciled to his people after having justly punished them. And this promise could not have afforded any consolation to hypocrites, because God does not include the whole seed of Abraham, but says, that he would not allow the whole seed of Abraham to perish, for some remnant would continue, according to what is said by Isaiah,

``Though thy people were as the sand of the sea,
a remnant shall be saved.'' (Isaiah 10:22)

God then does not here affirm that he would be merciful to all, but that there would be still some remaining, so that the name of the people would continue immortal: in short, he promises that the Church would be saved, but that the number would be small.

We now perceive the design of the Prophet: he doubtless had regard to the faithful, who might have been overwhelmed with despair, on seeing themselves driven far away from their own country, and having no hope of a return. Then he testifies that God had such a care for the safety of the faithful, that he would gather the scattered seed.

But we must bear in mind what we have said, that this promise is to be confined to the elect alone, for they were alone capable of receiving this favor. As to the unbelieving, who were perverse in their wickedness, God might have wholly cut them off, and yet save the remnants of grace.

Now there is no need here to enter into a subtle discussion, whether the center of the earth can be found out. The philosophers do indeed bring some probable reasons as to the extent of the heavens, and the dimension of the earth is also conjectured by them. But the Prophet's purpose was to declare, according to the common and popular mode of speaking, that God's mercy would be perpetual and immeasurable towards the children of Abraham, like the immensity of the earth and the heavens, which exceeds the comprehension of the human mind.

He adds, On account of all the things which they have done; that is, though they have deserved to die eternally a hundred times, I will yet have a regard to my covenant and my mercy. The Prophet then designedly sets before us here the sins of the people, that we may know that God's mercy would be very great, as that the whole mass of so many evils would not hinder God to forgive them. This is the reason why he says, on account of all the things which they have done. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 31:38-40

38. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city shall be built to the LORD, from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner.

38. Ecce dies (addunt alii {באים}, veniunt) dicit Jehova, et edificabitur urbs Jehovae e turri Chananeel usque ad portam anguli:

39. And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about to Goath.

39. Et exibit adhuc funiculus mensurae coram ipso (vel, coram ipsa porta) et usque ad collem Gazeb, et circumdabit Goathath,

40. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse-gate toward the east, shall be

holy unto the LORD; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever.

40. Et omnem vallem (alii legunt in nominativeocasu, et omnis vailis) cadaverum et cineris, et omnes regiones (vel, agri) ad torrentem Kedron usque ad angulum portae equorum versus orientem, sanctitas Jehovae; non evelletur, et non destructur amplius in perpetuum.

Here the Prophet speaks of the rebuilding of the city. I doubt not but that his object was to shew them that the largeness and splendor of the city after the return of the people would not be less than it had been under David in its most flourishing condition. We must, however, first speak of the words before we proceed to the subject.

Behold, the days are coming, saith Jehovah, and built shall be the city It was not as yet destroyed; but the Prophet intimated that its utter ruin was nigh at hand; he therefore makes now their hope to depend on God's mercy alone, as to the deliverance of the people from exile: Built then shall be the city to Jehovah from the tower of Hananeel, etc. This tower was, no doubt, placed in the wall of the city. Almost the same prediction is found in Zechariah 14:10, though there is some diversity in the words; but both the Prophets refer to the same thing. Zechariah's object was to animate the people under this circumstance, because the beauty, greatness, and extent of the city did not at first correspond with what it had formerly been. He then promises that its glory would at length be the same as it had been; and he names there the tower of Hananeel Jeremiah adds, to the gate of the corner The corner, {הפנה} ephene, is in the singular number; but in Zechariah it is {הפנים} ephenim, in the plural; and it is thought that corners or corner is thus called metaphorically, because a corner shews two faces while it stands out, and thus two parts appear; but whether it be the gate of the corner or of the corners, it makes but little difference.

He afterwards adds, Yet go forth shall the line of measure before him Some apply this to the gate, because from the gate the line was to be extended to the hill Gareb, and go round to Goath Of these names of places I cannot say much, for we do not know the ancient situation of the city; and the Jews themselves, when they make conjectures about these uncertain things, shew only their own ignorance. However, the greater part of interpreters understand this, --- that the city was to be large, as though God promised that he would extend it beyond the walls; and this they illicit from the verb {יצא} itsa, go forth shall the line, or cord, of measure But when the Prophet says yet, he compares the ancient greatness of the city with that which he perceives it to be hereafter. Then Zechariah seems to promise that it would be such a city as would contain the same measure; for he says,

``Inhabited shall the city be under itself,''

or in its own place. (Zechariah 12:6) As then Zechariah promises that the city would occupy the same place as formerly, I do not conclude anything else from the words of our Prophet, especially as the particle yet intimates the same thing. When it is said before him, I apply this to God and not to the gate; for mention is previously made of God, Built shall be the city to Jehovah; and then he adds, before him I have no doubt but that the Prophet here bids the Israelites to raise up their eyes to God, that they might expect from him what was incredible according to the comprehension

of men and of the flesh: then before him, that is, when God restores the city, then Go forth shall the line, that is, he will extend the line to the hill Gareb, and surround Goath

He then adds, And the whole valley Some read, ``the whole valley shall be holiness to Jehovah:'' and it may be suitably taken, that all the places near to the city were to be holy to God; but this verse may be connected with the preceding, as though he said, extended shall be the line to the whole valley of the carcases and of the ashes The word {דשן}, dashin, means ashes and fatness; but here it is to be taken for ashes; and it is thought that the place was so called, where they were wont to throw the ashes gathered from the altar, after the sacrifices were burnt: as then there was there a great heap of ashes, the place had this name given to it. Another place was also called the place of carcases, because there a host of enemies had been slain by an angel, in the reign of Hezekiah. As then a great and a memorable slaughter had taken place there, it is thought that it received this name, in order that God's favor might remain known to posterity. If then this name became the monument of God's favor, Hezekiah, I have no doubt, was the cause of it.

It is then added, and all the regions to the brook Kidron It is probable enough that the places here named were outside of the city, for we know that the brook Kidron was not within the city. Then he adds, to the corner of the gate of the horses It is thought that through this gate went forth the chariots of the king when he wished to exercise his horses. It might have been the market-place for horses. Conjectures only have place here; for no one knows of a certainty whether the king had a place of exercise for his horses. But this gate looked towards the east. He says that all the places would be holiness to Jehovah; and then he promises them a quiet and a perpetual condition, It shall not be cut off nor destroyed any more for ever; for which it is said by Zechariah, ``there shall be no more {חרם} cherim, destruction.'' [283]

We now see the design of the Prophet: after having spoken of the return of the people, he adds that the city would again become splendid and large, as it had been; for the land continued in a state of disorder until the restoration of the city, as God had there chosen a habitation for himself. And as the Temple had been built there, it behoved the Israelites, wherever they dwelt, ever to direct their eyes to the Temple and the sanctuary of God, that they might live under his protection. Except, then, the

[283] The whole of this passage is differently rendered in the early versions and the Targum; some of them evidently wrong and some doubtful. Blayney gives the most literal and most consistent version. I give the following, — 38. Behold the days are coming, saith Jehovah, That built shall the city be for (or to) Jehovah, From the tower of Hananeel to the gate of the corner: 39. Yea, go forth again shall the measuring line From over against it, over the hill of Oareb, And shall surround Goath 40. And all the valley of the carcases and ashes, And all the fields to the river Kidron, To the corner of the gate of the horses eastward: Holy to Jehovah, it shall not be rooted up, Nor demolished any more for ever. The 38th verse (Jeremiah 31:38) contains a general description; this is particularized in the following verses. The beginning of measuring was to be at "the tower of Hananeel;" hence "from over against it," or before it: the "gate" being feminine cannot be meant; it is then "the tower." As to the word for "fields," the reading of the Keri and of several MSS., countenanced by the Vulg., ought no doubt to be adopted. "Eastward," — thus the line came round to the same point where it began; for the tower of Hananeel was eastward. But what is referred to in the two last lines? The verbs are in the masculine gender, and "city" is feminine; and there is nothing in the passage with which they can agree except the tower of Hananeel. Then this tower seems to stand here for the rebuilt city; and then rooting up, i.e., undermining the foundations, and demolishing, are suitably applied to a tower. — Ed.

city had been built again, the goodness of God could not have been really enjoyed; for a sort of desolation would have otherwise ever presented itself to the eyes of the people, as the city was as it were the banner under which God protected them. This then is the reason why the Prophet expressly announced this prophecy respecting the future restoration of the city.

Now, when he says that the city would be built to Jehovah, he intimates what was especially expected by the Jews, that that city would again be holy; for if it only flourished in wealth and power like other cities, it would have been but a small comfort to the Israelites. But he points out here a difference between Jerusalem and all heathen cities; for God was, as it were, the architect of that city, as it is said in the Psalms,

``He himself founded it,'' (Psalm 87:5)

and further,

``His foundations are on the holy mountains,''

and this ought to be understood of himself. (Psalm 87:1) The meaning is, that God would again care for that city, as the Temple would become as it were his royal throne and earthly sanctuary. At the same time when the Prophet affirms that the extent of the city would not be less than it had been, we see that this prophecy must necessarily be referred to the kingdom of Christ: for though Jerusalem before Christ's coming was eminent and surrounded by a triple wall, and though it was celebrated through all the East, as even heathen writers say that it excelled every other city, yet it was never accomplished, that the city flourished as under David and Solomon. [284] We must then necessarily come to the spiritual state of the city, and explain the promise as the grace which came through Christ.

But we must especially notice what is said, that it would be holiness to Jehovah, and also that no ruin or destruction would be dreaded any more. Had the condition of the elect people been the same as that of other nations, the promise of restoration would have been small and of no great moment; for it would have been better for them to dwell in exile where they inhabited a pleasant and fertile country. But the Prophet here commends a privilege with which God had favored the children of Abraham above all other nations, when he adopted them as his peculiar people. There is however to be understood an implied contrast between the profanation which then prevailed, and the sanctification which is here promised. The Jews had so polluted the land that it differed nothing from other countries; and God, as Ezekiel says, had thence migrated, (Ezekiel 8:6) and we know that the Temple was called by the prophets the den of robbers, (Jeremiah 7:11) and that the city was also compared to Sodom and Gomorrah. (Isaiah 1:10) Hence the Prophet here promises that the city, with its whole vicinity, would be holy to God, because God would cleanse it from all the defilements by which it had been polluted: and he also claims this as his own work, for to sanctify is a work peculiar to himself.

[284] Some think, such as Gataker and Blayney, that according to the description here given, the dimensions of the city are much larger than what they had ever been before. The “line” was to inclose a part at least of the hill of Gareb, the whole of Goath, supposed to be Golgotha, the valley of the carcases, and the fields of Kidron, all which were formerly without the walls of the city. — Ed.

The promise of perpetual favor is added, as it is also done by Zechariah; for it would not be sufficient to have God's mercy promised to us for a short time, except its perpetuity were secured. The Prophet then promises now that the course of God's benefits would be permanent;. The city indeed was again destroyed by Titus, and at length wholly demolished by Adrian; but this fact does not militate against this promise; for as we have said, God gave some taste of his favor in the external aspect of the city until Christ came; but after Christ was manifested, the heavenly Jerusalem became the object to be sought, for all the types and shadows then ceased. The perpetuity then of which the Prophet speaks, is that which corresponds with the character of Christ's kingdom, and is therefore spiritual. Moreover, this passage teaches us that the Church will be perpetual, and that though God may permit it to be terribly shaken and tossed here and there, there will yet be ever some seed remaining, as long as the sun and the moon shall shine in the heavens, and the order of nature shall continue; so that all the elements, everything we see with our eyes, bear evidence to the perpetuity of the Church, even that it will ever continue: for though Satan and all the world daily threaten its ruin, yet the Lord will in a wonderful manner preserve it to the end, so that it will never perish. This is the import of the passage. Another prophecy follows.

Jeremiah 32

CHAPTER 32

Jeremiah 32:1-3

1. The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD in the tenth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, which was the eighteenth year of Nebuehadrezzar.

1. Sermo qui datus fait Jeremiae a Jehova anno decimo Zedechiae regis Jehudah; hic annus est decimus octavus Nabuchadnezer:

2. For then the king of Babylon's army besieged Jerusalem: and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house.

2. Et tunc exercitus regis Babylonii obsidebat Jerosolymam, et Jeremias propheta erat indusus in atrio custodiae qum est in palatio regis Jehudah;

3. For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it;

3. Quia incluserat ipsum Zedechias rex Jehudab, dicendo, Quare tu prophetizas dicendo, sic dicit Jehova, Ecce ego trado urbem hanc in manum regis Babylonii, et capiet eam.

The Prophet here declares, that though he was shut up in prison, the Word of God was not bound, and that he himself was not less loose and free in his confinement than if he rambled through the whole city and visited all the lanes and the streets. He then did not desist from his office as a Prophet, though he was cast into prison. And thus we see that the course of heavenly truth cannot be impeded, how much soever the world may rage against all its ministers, and bind them in order to make them mute: and then also we see here that the constancy of the Prophet was invincible, because he was not cast down with fear, though he was a captive and not beyond the reach of danger; for we find that even then he proceeded in the discharge of his office.

He points out then the circumstances of that time, and not without reason, when he says, that he was then shut up in prison, and also mentions the year, even the tenth of Zedekiah and the eighteenth of king Nebuchadnezar. [285] It was about the end of the ninth year that the army of Nebuchadnezar came up to Jerusalem; the city was besieged for two months in that year. The tenth year followed, in which this vision was given to the Prophet. The siege continued for a year and a half; but there was some interruption; for the Egyptians came to its aid. Thus for a short time, while the Chaldeans went to meet them, it had some liberty. But the Egyptians, as we shall hereafter see, were forced to retire in disgrace, and afterwards suffered punishment for their audacity and rashness. It was then about the middle of the siege that God, as we shall see, foretold to the Prophet the future return of the people. But though God shewed a regard for the miserable exiles, he yet at the same time confirmed what he had previously said of his future vengeance; for the people could not be restored before they had been driven into exile. It was indeed a dreadful instance of hardness and obduracy, that having been so often scourged they received no benefit. They had experienced the heavy judgment of God under Jehoiakim, and also under Jeconiah; but the memory of these calamities had soon vanished, and they lived as securely as though they had never heard a word from the mouth of Jeremiah: and he was not the only one who had threatened them, but there were before him Isaiah and others, and at the same time with him was Ezekiel, who had been exiled into Chaldea. Then from the number of years we conclude how great must have been the obstinacy of the people.

At the same time we must observe how seasonable was this prophecy for alleviating the minds of the godly, as they were not far from extreme calamity; for it was in the eleventh year of Zedekiah and in the fourth month that the city was taken and demolished, the people driven into exile, and the Temple burnt. Then there were not more than six or seven months, perhaps, to the time of their utter ruin; there is indeed no mention made here of the month in which the Prophet received the vision, but the tenth year is only mentioned. Now, the city was taken at the beginning of the eleventh year, as we have stated. Hence then comes more fully to light the extreme perverseness of the people; for while the enemy surrounded the city, they held Jeremiah captive. He had already foretold many years past what experience then taught them to be true. For forty years he had not ceased to cry out and to strive by warning, exhorting, and threatening them to lead them to repentance. As then nothing new happened to them, and as they found by the evils which came on them that Jeremiah had been a true and faithful servant of God, what was their object in shutting him up in prison? was not this to carry on war with God? for what had they to do with Jeremiah? He had not evidently acted a private part, nor had he only dreamt of what he had so often foretold them. Then they did not fight with a mortal man, but like the giants they dared to raise up their horns against God himself.

[285] The 2d, 3d, 4th, and 5th verses (Jeremiah 32:1-5) ought to be put as parenthetical, as they only relate the circumstances connected with Jeremiah when he received the vision which he proceeds to relate in the 6th verse. Instead of "For then" in the 2d verse, "And then" would be more proper; and "Where" would be better than "For" at the beginning of the 3d verse, "Where Zedekiah had shut him up," etc. It is "In which" in the Sept. — Ed.

For the same reason also, he calls himself a Prophet This indeed he often did, but there is no doubt but that the indignity offered to him is pointed out, that even at the time when the Chaldeans surrounded the city with their army, Jeremiah the Prophet was shut up in the court of the prison. He might have only said, that Jeremiah was shut up, but for honor's sake he assumed the title of a Prophet, that hence might appear more evidently the baseness of the people's contumacy, that though they perceived that God was angry with them, they yet ceased not from their presumption; for they then held the Prophet in prison as though they were fighting with God himself. We know that fools, according to the old proverb, being chastised, become wise. If then the Jews had a particle or a spark of wisdom, they might have been so subdued by evils and calamities as to cast aside their haughtiness and obstinacy. But we see that they were untameable, and through a mad fury persisted in their wickedness; for though besieged by their enemies, they yet attempted to hold God as it were captive in the person of his servant.

As to the court of the prison, I doubt not but it was a milder sort of imprisonment, for we shall hereafter see that the Prophet prayed that he might not be thence thrown into the dark prison where he had been. He sought it as no common favor to remain in some prison; and he was as yet exposed to the mockeries of all. However this may have been, we see that the people had then become nothing better, though they had already been chastised and scourged by God.

We ought at the same timeto bear in mind what I have already said, that though the ungodly sought in all ways wholly to extinguish the word of God, they yet did not attain what they wished; for God broke through all hinderances, and continued the course of his word notwithstanding all their attempts. And this ought to be carefully noticed, for we see at this day all sorts of contrivances made by the wicked to impede the course of celestial truth. Let then this history be remembered, that though Jeremiah was a captive, yet his word was free and his tongue at liberty, as Paul also boasts, that though he was bound with chains, yet God's word was not bound. (2 Timothy 2:9)

Then the reason is added why he was shut up in prison, --- he had dared to prophesy against the city and the king himself. It was no wonder that the king's mind was exasperated when Jeremiah boldly said that he would come into the hands of his enemies, for he had not only spoken of the ruin of the city, but also of the fall of the king; he had said that he would be brought before king Nebuchadnezar, and be led to Babylon, and be there until God visited him. We know how delicate are the ears of kings; it was then no wonder Zedekiah became incensed against Jeremiah; but yet he ought to have been softened and humbled when he found that this oracle had come from God. That he then still kept Jeremiah a prisoner, proves his madness and stupidity, for he had no regard for God. I shall proceed with the subject to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since we cease not daily to provoke thy wrath against us, we may be warned by thy word and repent, and so humble ourselves before thee that we may anticipate the rigor of thy judgment, and that being also chastised by thy hand, we may not become hardened, but be submissive to thee and teachable, and

so profit under thy discipline, that being at length wholly devoted to thee, we may have no other object than to glorify thy holy name, until we shall become partakers of that glory which thine only-begotten Son has obtained for us. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Twenty-Sixth

We began yesterday to speak of the presumption, and also of the madness of King Zedekiah in keeping the Prophet in prison, while he was yet besieged by his enemies, as it had been foretold. He saw that Jeremiah had spoken as from the mouth of God, for the accomplishment of the prophecy proved that he had brought forward nothing rashly, but what had been committed to him from above; and yet he did not throw aside his own perverseness. The words themselves shew sufficiently that he was wholly blinded, for he said, Wherefore dost thou prophesy to us, The Chaldeans will come and take this city? It was not indeed the design of this foolish and insane king to close the mouth of the Prophet, and, at the same time, to confess that he had a command from God; but thus it is commonly with the wicked, they assail as it were blindly the servants of God, without any judgment or discrimination. Were any one to ask them, whether they mean openly and professedly to resist God as their judge, they would deny it; but yet they cannot bear to be warned and reproved. Here then, as in a mirror, we see how madly all the wicked resist God, and try as much as they can to extinguish his Spirit. In short, they may, indeed, concede some authority to God, provided they be allowed to live without having anything said against their lusts by his prophets. There is yet no doubt but that the king was especially exasperated by the following words of the Prophet, ---

Jeremiah 32:4

4. And Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes;

4. Et Zedechia rex Jehudah not effugiet e manu Chaldeorum, quia tradendo tradam in manum regis Babel, et loquetur os ejus cum ore illius, et oculi ejus octrios ejus videbunt.

When, therefore, the king saw that he would not be exempt from the common judgment, he was especially displeased with Jeremiah; for kings seek to be exempt from all laws, and when they allow the people to be reproved, they yet wish themselves to be deemed sacred. As then Jeremiah classed the king Zedekiah with all the common people, it was a thing not to be endured by a proud king. Hence his indignation was such, that he shut up Jeremiah in prison; and he became implacable, even when God's hand pressed hard on him. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 32:5

5. And he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith the LORD: though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper.

5. Et Babylonem abducet Zedechiam, et illic erit usque dum visitavero ipsum, dicit Jehova; quando proeliati fueritis adversus Chaldeos, no, prospere vobis cedet?

He follows the same subject, Lead, he says, will King Nebuchadnezar Zedekiah captive; and he will remain in exile until I shall visit him. Some understand this time of visiting of his death, for it is certain that he died in Babylon; and as his condition

was not improved like that of Jeconiah who was taken from the filth of a prison to the table of the king, this exposition at the first view seems probable, that is, that he was worn down to death by poverty and disgrace. It, however, seems that some alleviation was promised, if indeed a certain kind of death may be deemed a favor; for he was not slain with the sword; and though he was not restored to his own country, there is yet nothing improper in this way of speaking, that he would be in exile until he was visited, for nothing particular could be hence concluded; and we shall hereafter see that when dead he was buried honorably and with mourning. It is then no wonder that God points out here a time of favor, though Zedekiah was never restored to his own Country, and we know that his eyes were plucked out by King Nebuchadnezar, after having been tried and condemned. But this favor of God, however, is not here without reason mentioned, for Nebuchadnezar at length treated him more kindly, at least as far as his burial was concerned: Lead him, then he says, shall Nebuchadnezar into Babylon, and he shall be there until I shall visit him; that is, he shall remain an exile in a filthy prison, and there he shall pine away and be destitute of all help; he shall be then as one of the lowest, and shall, in short, drag on life ignominiously until the time of my visitation.

He lastly adds, When ye fight against the Chaldeans, ye shall not succeed Here the Prophet meets those foolish notions which still filled the minds of the Jews, so that they did not submit to God nor humble themselves under his mighty hand; for there was yet a large number of men, and the city had strong fortifications. As then they saw that they were furnished with men and forces, they were still confident; and then they became hardened on account of the length of the time they had sustained the siege. When enemies make the first attack, fear fills the minds of all; but when the event disappoints them, then they who before trembled gather courage. So it was with the Jews; for when the city was first encompassed by the Chaldean army, the miserable inhabitants no doubt were greatly terrified; but when they saw their enemies stopped, and effecting nothing by their attacks, they then hardened their hearts more and more. For we must notice what I said yesterday, that they had been besieged probably six or eight months when this vision was given to Jeremiah. Hence it was that their confidence was greater. But the Prophet repels this folly by saying,

``Ye fight against the Chaldeans, but the issue will be unsuccessful; for God will lay you prostrate before your enemies, for with him ye carry on war.''

The sum of this introduction is, that Jeremiah was then shut up in prison, and that the king continued in his contumacy, though God's hand pressed hard on him; and then the cause of this is set forth, even because he boldly threatened the king and the city, and deelard that God's vengeance was nigh them, so that the king would be led into exile and the city taken and plundered by their enemies. It now follows,

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Jeremiah 32:6-15

6. And Jeremiah said, The word of the LORD came unto me, saying,

6. Et dixit Jeremias, Fuit sermo Jehovae ad me dicendo,

7. Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum, thine uncle, shall come unto thee, say-

ing, Buy thee my field that is in Anathoth: for the right of redemption is thine to buy it

7. Ecce Chanameel filius Sellum patrui tui yenit ad to (aut, venturus est ad to) qui dicet, Eme tibi agrum meum qui est in Anathoth; quia tibi jus affinitatis (vertunt, jus redemptionis, sed redemptio illa refertur ad affinitatem, vel cognationem, jus ignitur cognationis) ad emendum.

8. So Hanameel mine uncle's son came to me in the court of the prison according to the word of the LORD, and said unto me, Buy my field, I pray thee, that is in Anathoth, which is in the country of Benjamin: for the right of inheritance is thine, and the redemption is thine; buy it for thyself. Then I knew that this was the word of the LORD.

8. Et venit ad me Chanameel filius patrui mei, sicut loquutus fuerat Jehova, ad atrium custodiae, et dixit mihi, Eme agedum agrum meum qui est in Anathoth, quod oppidum est in terra Benjamin, quia tibi jus haereditatis (vel, possessionis; {ירש} significat proprie haereditario jure possidere) et tibi redemptio; eme tibi: tunc cognovi quod hic esset sermo Jehovae.

9. And I bought the field of Hanameel, my uncle's son, that was in Anathoth, and weighed him the money, even seventeen shekels of silver.

9. Et emi agrum ab Chanameel filio patrui mei qui erat in Anathoth, et appendi ei pecuniam, septem siclos et decem nunmxos argentcos.

10. And I subscribed the evidence, and sealed it, and took witnesses, and weighed him the money in the balances.

10. Et scripsi in libro et obsignavi, et contestatus sum testes, et appendi pecuniam in statem (vel, in lancibus; est in auribus, sed metaphorice trutinam in duali numero vocant aures)

11. So I took the evidence of the purchase, both that which was sealed according to the law and custom, and that which was open:

11. Et sumpsi librum emptionis obsignatum ex praescripto et ritu (vel, more, vel, statuto) et apertum.

12. And I gave the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel, mine uncle's son, and in the presence of the witnesses that subscribed the book of the purchase, before all the Jews that sat in the court of the prison.

12. EL dedi librum emptionis Baruch filio Neriae filii Maassiae coram oculis Chanameel patruelis mei, et coram oculis testium qui scripti erant in libro emptionis, coram oculis omnium Judaeorum qui sedebant in atrio custodiae;

13. And I charged Baruch before them, saying,

13. Et praecepi Baruch coram oculis ipsorum, dicendo,

14. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open; and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days.

14. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Sume FIbros istos, librum emptionis hunc et obsignatum et librum apertum (hoc est, tam obsignatum quam apertum hunt librum) et pone cos in vase testacco, ut perstent ad multos dies, (nunc sequitur

applicatio visionis:)

15. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Houses and fields and vineyards shall be possessed again in this land.

15. Quia sic elicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Adhuc ement domos et agros et vineas in terra hac.

The whole of this passage ought to be read together, for the Prophet at large explains how and by what symbol this prophecy had been confirmed. Now the purpose of the whole is to shew that after a long time the Jews would return to their own country, for God would restore them, and their captivity would have an end. God's design, then, was to give them a hope of deliverance, but yet they were admonished to wait patiently for the end of their exile.

Let us now come to the external symbol. The Prophet was commanded to buy a field of his uncle's son. Now this appeared strange, for the enemies had taken possession of that part of the country, and none of the Jews could then venture to go out to their own fields. As then they were deprived of the very sight of their own fields, the Prophet must have appeared to have been beside himself when he bought a field in the possession of enemies. But in this way God intended to shew, that after the Jews had for a time been deprived of the possession of the land, they would again return to it, so that every one would recover his own right, and thus everything would become completely their own, that is, after God had shewed them mercy.

But in the first place, let us see whether this was, as they say, a naked vision, or a real transaction. Some think that it was exhibited to Jeremiah by the prophetic Spirit; but it may be easily gathered from the context that the field was actually bought. It is first said, that the word came to Jeremiah; but shortly after it is added, that after his uncle's son came, Jeremiah was informed that the whole business was directed by God. God then foretold the Prophet what was to be, Behold, Hanameel the son of Shallum, thine uncle, shall come to thee, and shall offer to sell his field to thee. This is what God said to the Prophet; and thus far we may say, that Jeremiah was informed of what was to be either by a dream or a vision; but when he afterwards adds, that Hanameel himself came, and that Jeremiah testifies that he now knew that it was from the Lord, there is no doubt but that it is a real narrative. God then inducedHanameel to come to Jeremiah and to offer him the field on sale, and to ask him to buy it, because he was the next heir, and therefore had the right of redemption. We then perceive that it was a communication from above, but then the reality was connected with it, for Hanameel came and sold the field before witnesses; and all this was necessary, not so much on account of Jeremiah as of the whole people, and especially of the faithful, for whom this prophecy was particularly designed; for God did not intend this to be a common treasure, but laid it up for his chosen people, as we may gather from the conclusion.

Before Hanameel then came, the Prophet was instructed that nothing was done unadvisedly, but that God had arranged and ordered the whole. He was then commanded to buy the field, and as it were to cast away his money; for who would not have said that it was the same thing as to throw it away? And then we are to notice

a circumstance as to the time; for the Prophet was then in danger of his life, to what purpose then was the field to him? We have also said that he could not have a free access to it, had he not been shut up in prison; for he could not have ventured to go out of the city. It was then a most strange and ridiculous purchase according to the judgment of the flesh; for Jeremiah squandered away his money, and the possession of the field was only imaginary. But yet as God would have him to buy it, he spared not his money, but purchased the field from his uncle's son.

He then says, that Hanameel his uncle's son came, as Jehovah had spoken, that he came into the court of the prison, and that he spoke to him as God had foretold. As to the end of the verse, it may seem strange that the Prophet says, that he now knew that the word came from God: for if he before doubted, where would be the certainty as to the prophetic spirit? He had already received a vision; he ought to have embraced what he knew had been foretold to him from above, even without any hesitation: but it appears that he was in suspense and perplexity. It then seems an evidence of unbelief, that he did not put a full and all entire trust in God's testimony, and was not fully persuaded as to the heavenly oracle, until he saw the whole thing really accomplished. But it is right to distinguish between the knowledge received from the revelation of the Spirit and experimental knowledge, as they say. The Prophet therefore did not then for the first time learn that God had spoken, but as he was confirmed in the certainty of his faith, and in the thing itself, there is no inconsistency; for nothing is taken away from the credit and authority of God's word, when the reality and experience confirm us; and thus God often has a regard to the weakness of his people. Jeremiah then relied on God's oracle, and was fully persuaded that he was directed from above to buy the field; but afterwards, when Hanameel came to him, the event was as it were the sealing of the vision: then the truth of God was more and more confirmed in the heart of the Prophet. This, as I have said, was experimental knowledge, which detracts nothing from the credibility of the word, but is rather a help and a comfort to human infirmity. In this sense it was that he said, that he now knew it; and thus he intended also to make others to believe the prophecy. For when the faithful compare a vision with its accomplishment, this consent and harmony, so to speak, avails not a little to confirm their faith, that as when in one part they hear that God had spoken, and when in another they see that what the Prophet had been taught was really fulfilled. [286]

He afterwards adds, that he bought the field of Hanameel his uncle's son, which was in Anathoth, in the land of Benjamin There is nothing superfluous in these words, for though the Prophet speaks of places well known, yet he had a regard to the time of the purchase, for the land of Benjamin was then in the power of enemies: the Jews had been reduced to such straits that they were not safe at Jerusalem. Anathoth was a village, as it was well known, exposed to the ravages of enemies, and was seized on as a prey at their first coming. And he adds, in the land of Benjamin, for it was

[286] Gataker and Venema give another view of this clause. The Lord, as we find from verse 7 (Jeremiah 32:7), did not tell him to buy the field, but only informed him of the coming and offer of Hanameel. When Hanameel came, he knew that it was God's will that he should buy the field, and he instantly acted accordingly. He knew from the very circumstances that it was God's message, sent to him to buy the field. — Ed.

nigh the borders of Judah, but it had been forsaken by its inhabitants, and all had fled to Jerusalem. As then the land of Benjamin had no inhabitant, it was by no means reasonable for the Prophet to pay even the smallest sum for a field there.

It may now be asked, how could Hanameel, who was of the Levitical order, sell a field, for we know that fields did not belong to the Levites, and that they had tithes for their inheritance. (Numbers 18:21) But this is to be taken for a suburban field, for they had the suburbs, and each had a meadow: they neither ploughed nor reaped, nor was it indeed lawful for them, according to the law, to labor in agriculture, but they fed cattle and sheep: and this is proved by the smallness of the sum given; for what was the field sold for? for seven shekels and ten pieces of silver. [287] We hence see that it was not a large field, but only a meadow like a garden; for the price would have been larger, had it been some acres of land. Then the difficulty here is easily removed, for Hanameel sold to Jeremiah a small meadow, as every Levite had in the suburbs a meadow to feed his sheep or his cattle; at the same time none of them had large herds, but each had a cow or two. This, then, is what we are to understand by the field.

The Prophet adds, that he wrote a book, that is, the writing of the purchase; for {ספר} sepher, means in Hebrew, not only a volume, but what we call a document, and the Latins tablets, (tabulas) Then he says that the writing of the purchase was made, and then it was sealed, not as we do by appending a seal to it, but it was closed up, as the custom then was. He also adds, according to the law and custom; and at last he says that another writing was made which remained open; and it is thought that the open writing means what we call a copy; and so the sealed writing was deposited in a chest, and the open copy could be referred to at any time. [288] Though the Prophet alludes to a common custom, yet I doubt not but that he wrote this prophecy on rolls, one sealed and the other open, in order that those who were then living might receive some benefit from his doctrine, and also that the authentic copy, or the original itself, might remain for posterity, as we shall hereafter see. And doubtless God not only intended to strengthen the hope of the faithful after the completed time of exile, as this prophecy would he dormant for seventy years; but he designed also that it should be then of use, so as to be a support to them in their sufferings. There was also another benefit to be derived from this prophecy, even that the Jews while in exile might begin to entertain hope, and remembering this vision, might feel assured that God would be their Deliverer, according to what he had promised.

This then was the reason why two writings of the purchase were made, the sealed

[287] We may render the words literally thus, “And I weighed for him the money, seven shekels and ten, the money.” The word is “silver,” but it is often taken for money. The seventeen shekels, according to Lowth, were about two pounds of our money. — Ed.

[288] There were no doubt two rolls or writings, as it appears clear from Jeremiah 32:14, where the two are distinctly mentioned, “Take these rolls, this roll of the purchase, even the sealed, and this open roll,” etc. The word {{ספר ought to be rendered throughout either a roll, or a book, or writing, when preceded by an article, and not ``evidence,'' as in our version. There seems to be an incongruity in verse the 10th (Jeremiah 32:10), as rendered by most; the roll is represented as ``sealed,'' before the ``witnesses'' are mentioned, and before the money was weighed. The rendering, I conceive, ought to be as follows, ``So I wrote in a roll; and I sealed it, when I had made witnesses to witness it, and weighed the money in balances.'' The {ו} may often be rendered ``when,'' and also ``so,'' as it is done in the next verse in our version, though there ``and'' would be more suitable. The ``witnesses'' are expressly said in ver. 12 (Jeremiah 32:12) to have subscribed, or written in, the book or roll of purchase, which was sealed. --- Ed

and the open. [289] The open had a present benefit, as it would make the faithful to go more willingly into exile, and calmly to submit to the chastisement allotted to them by God; and for this reason the Prophecy was to be open to all. It was also sealed, in order that after the lapse of seventy years it might animate the godly, and inspire them with the hope of their promised deliverance. This, therefore, is the reason, as I think, why the Prophet relates that he made a writing and sealed it, and then that he made another writing which remained open.

He afterwards adds, that he gave both to his scribe Baruch, the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, in the presence of Hanameel, and in the presence of the witnesses who had subscribed the writings, and in the presence of all who stood there, that is, in the court of the prison. Hence we may again plainly conclude, that he is narrating a real history, and not a vision exhibited to him: the seller, Hanameel, was present together with witnesses and other Jews; and he says that he gave up the writing with certain orders, for otherwise it would have been merely the delivering up of a book. If he had only deposited it with Baruch, the people would have learnt nothing; but the orders are added, I charged Baruch, saying, etc. We hence may also conclude, that this oracle was given to the Prophet, not only that it might continue for posterity, even after the time of exile was completed, but that it might also be then published and made known to all the Jews. He then says, Thus saith Jehovah He had not yet shewn the design of the prophecy; but when he said that the affair was carried on by the command of God, he rendered them all attentive. Take, he says, these writings, and put them in an earthen or a potter's vessel It seems strange that he did not bid him to put them in another kind of vessel, for that vessel might become decayed, and so the writings might have perished. But we know that even the most precious treasures are deposited in earthen vessels. It is then no wonder that God commanded the prophecy to be put in an earthen vessel. Were any one disposed to understand something more refined, it might be said, that the promise, which apparently was not very firm, was an earthen vessel; for what is more frail than a voice which is dissipated into air? The Jews were driven into exile; they had heard from the mouth of Jeremiah, that the prefixed period was seventy years: but they might, in the meantime have despaired, since only the sound of the voice had reached their ears. However this may be, since the oracle, which was a pledge of deliverance, had been laid up in an earthen vessel, it remained safe and undecayed, because the treasure had been deposited there by God's command.

[289] The 11th verse (Jeremiah 32:11), where the two rolls are first mentioned, is difficult to be rendered. I offer the following literal version of the 11th, 12th, 13th and 14th, — 11. And I took the writing of the purchase, — it the sealed, the commandment and the conditions, — and it the open; and I gave the writing of the purchase to Baruch the son of Neriah, 12. The son of Maaseiah, in the sight of Hanameel my uncle's son, and in the sight of the witnesses who wrote in the roll of the purchase, and in sight of all the Jews who 13. sat in the court of the prison; and I commanded Baruch in their sight, 14. saying, "Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, 'Take these rolls, — this roll of the purchase, even it the sealed, and this open roll; and put them in au earthen vessel, that they may continue many days.'" The two rolls are called "the writing of the purchase" in ver. 11, but distinguished, one being "sealed," and the other "open," or unsealed. The sealed contained "the commandment," that is, to purchase, and "the conditions," literally "ordinances;" which Blayney renders, "the assignment and the limitations," and the Vulg., "the stipulations and ratifications." But {{מצוה never means anything but a precept or a commandment, and {חקים} are things defined, settled, or appointed, and may be rendered ``stipulations.'' Thus the contents of the sealed roll are specified, but those of the open roll are not expressly mentioned. --- Ed.

He says, That they may continue for many days By these words he intimates that the prophecy would not only be profitable to the Jews, who were to be driven soon after into captivity, but also to their posterity, who were not yet born, and that they might know that this prophecy would stand valid after their death, for we ought not to measure the faithfulness of God by the extent of our life. This, then, was the reason why this clause was added: the prophecy was to be preserved in earthen vessels, that it might remain safe and secure for many days, that is, until God delivered his people.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since we have at this day the evidence of eternal salvation sealed in earthen vessels, and thou invitest us to the hope of that blessed inheritance by the voice of men, --- O grant, that we may not judge of the permanence of thy faithfulness by the appearance of those whom thou hast made our ministers, but relying on thy perpetuity, may we never doubt but that that life will be kept safe for us, which now every moment seems to vanish away, until at last we shall come to the full fruition of it in Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Twenty-Seventh

Though we sufficiently perceive the meaning of the preceding prophecy, it may, however, be proper to touch briefly on the last part, which is the application of the vision, Houses, and fields, and vineyards shall yet be bought in this land God's design then was, that his servant should lay out his money without any regard to his own interest, in order that he might, by this expense, cherish the hope of the faithful to the time of restoration. What is here said was deemed incredible, for no one thought that such a change would happen, as that a permission would be given to the Jews to return to their own country; for the power of the Chaldean monarchy was deemed invincible, and it was necessary for it to be wholly overthrown, in order that God's people might be set free. For this reason then the vision was given, even that the Jews might know that their calamity would not be perpetual, for God had resolved to restore the people and the land. But by the word field, all possessions were designated, for he names not only fields, but also houses and vineyards. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 32:16-18

16. Now when I had delivered the evidence of the purchase unto Baruch the son of Neriah, I prayed unto the LORD, saying,

16. Et prcatus sum Jehovam postquam dedi librum emptionis Baruch filio Neriae, dicendo,

17. Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee:

17. Heu Domine Jehova! Ecce tu fecisti coelos et terram in potentia tua magna et brachio tuo extento; non est ulla res abscondita a to, (vel, mirabilis)

18. Thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: The Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name,

18. Faciens (vel, tu facis) clementiam erga mille et rependis iniquitatem patrum

in sinum filiorum eorum post ipsos; Deus fortis, potens, Jehova exercituum nomen ejus, (et quoe sequuntur)

Though the Prophet was discharging his own office, yet he confesses that he was himself perplexed at the vision. It hence appears that God's counsel was not always made known in everything to the Prophets, but as far as it was expedient. However, the Prophets were not seized with ecstasies like heathen soothsayers, who pretended they were carried away beyond all their senses. There was not then this fanaticism in the Prophets, so that they spoke like sounding brass, or like the ass of Balaam; but the Lord discovered to them what they taught. They were then disciples, so that they delivered faithfully to the people, as if it were from hand to hand, what was committed to them. But the knowledge with which they were endued was not inconsistent with ignorance as to some things; as when the Prophet said, Houses, and fields, and vineyards shall yet be bought, he knew that God promised the restitution of the land and of the people, nor was the vision itself an obscure enigma; but yet the reason was hid from him, and hence the perplexity of which he now speaks; for being astonished at so wonderful a thing, he had recourse to prayer, and confessed that his mind was perplexed. The wonder then of the Prophet proceeded from his ignorance; but that ignorance was not incompatible with prophetic knowledge. For as far as it was necessary, and the office of a teacher required, he no doubt understood the counsel of God; but such was the height or the depth of this mystery, that he was constrained to confess that it was a work of God which surpassed all his thoughts.

We now then perceive how these two things are consistent, --- the prophetic knowledge with which Jeremiah was endued, and the ignorance which compelled him to make this exclamation. He knew with certainty what had been shewn to him in the vision, but what was the design and how the work could be done by God, seemed incomprehensible, and hence his astonishment. He therefore says that he prayed: and by this we are taught, that whenever thoughts creep into our minds, which toss us here and there, we ought to flee to prayer. For many increase their anxieties by fomenting them, while they turn themselves to all quarters, and indulge their own thoughts, and weary themselves without any benefit. Whenever, therefore, any anxiety stealthily lays hold on our minds, let us know that the remedy ought to be in due time applied, that is, to pray to God; so that he may relieve us, and not suffer us to sink into the deep, as it usually happens to all who are curious, and give loose reins to their own imaginations.

We now see that the Prophet was greatly astonished, and yet in such a way as not to look for more than what was profitable; but he immediately prayed, that God would make him to understand what grieved his mind. His prayer follows, which, however, does not immediately discover the mind of the Prophet, for he does not shew the purpose of his prayer until he comes to the 25th verse (Jeremiah 32:25). But he seems here to refer to many things unconnected with his subject. His design must be ascertained from the conclusion of his prayer, ``O Lord,'' he says, ``why hast thou bidden me to buy the field which is now in the hand of enemies? the Chaldeans possess it; and thou hast bidden me to throw away my money.'' This was substantially his prayer.

But Jeremiah seems to wander and take long circuits when he says, ``Thou hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power and stretched-out arm; nothing is wonderful to thee; thou shewest mercy to thousand generations; thou repayest the iniquity of fathers to their children; thy name is Jehovah of hosts; thou art great in council and excellent in work; thine eyes are open,'' etc. These things seem not to belong in any degree to the present subject. But the Prophet's object, no doubt, was to restrain himself, as it were, by putting on a bridle, so that he might acquiesce in the counsel of God, though it was hid and incomprehensible to him: for if he had immediately rushed into prayer, he might, at the first burst of his feelings, have contended with God; for such is the disposition and character of man, when he suddenly addresses God, that he boils over beyond all moderation. The Prophet then, who well understood that there is no such moderation in men as to judge rightly and calmly of God's works, set up against himself these fences, and placed, as it were, barriers around him, that he might not take more liberty than what was right. Let. us then know that these high terms in which the Prophet spoke were designed for this end, --- that he might produce moderation and humility in himself, so that he might check all those roving thoughts by which men are wont to divert themselves. Let us come now to the words:

Ah, Lord Jehovah! he says; behold, thou hast made heaven and earth. Were any one not to attend to the circumstances of the passage, he might think that the Prophet is here rambling, and does not connect his sentences, so that his prayer seems incoherent. But as I have already said, that as the Prophet knew that men take too much liberty when they speak of God's works, he bridled himself in due time, before he came to his subject. He then made this sort of introduction, ``O Lord, it does not behove me to contend with thee, nor is it right in me to require thee to give me a reason for thy doings, for thou hast made heaven and earth by thy great power and extended arm.'' There is here then an implied contrast between God and mortal man; ``For who am I to dare to summon thee to a contest! for thy power is justly to be dreaded by us; when we raise up our eyes to heaven, when we look on the earth, there is nothing which ought not to fill us with admiration of thy power, for its immensity appears above and below.'' We hence see that the Prophet extols in high terms the power of God, in order that he might keep himself in a meek and humble state of mind, and not dare to clamor against God, nor presumptuously rush forward to pronounce a judgment on his works. Behold, he says; he sets before his eyes the wonderful workmanship of the world, in which the immeasurable power of God shines forth most conspicuously.

He then adds, Nor is there any thing hid from thee This clause admits of two meanings; for {פלא}, pala, means wonderful, and also hidden. Now the greater part of interpreters give this explanation, --- that nothing is hid from God, because all things are before his eyes, for his knowledge penetrates to the deepest depths. It may then be a commendation of God's knowledge, as an eulogy on his power has previously been given; and this meaning is not unsuitable.

I do not, however, reject the other meaning, given by Jerome, that there is nothing difficult to God, or wonderful, because all things are subject to his will. Thus the

Prophet might say, continuing the same thought, that the power of God, which shines forth to our view in the heavens and in the earth, may at the same time be observed in the permanent government of the world; for he who has created the heavens and the earth can do all things, so that nothing is wonderful to him, that is, nothing is difficult for his power as soon as he has decreed this or that. The main object of the Prophet is, however, still the same. [290]

He now adds, Thou shewest mercy to thousands, and repayest the iniquity of the fathers to the bosom of their children Here the Prophet acknowledges God's judgments to be right, though the reason for them escapes human minds. Both these things were necessary, that is, that Jeremiah should set before himself the awful power of God, and that he should also regard God's judgments as right, though men often think otherwise. For God has hidden reasons for his judgments; and so it happens, that various thoughts disturb us, and every one is disposed to set himself up against God. Hence the Prophet, after having spoken of the immeasurable power of God, now declares also that he is a just judge of the world; and he again restrains himself by another bridle, lest he should pronounce a judgment on God's works according to his own perceptions.

Thou, he says, shewest mercy to thousands This is taken from the Law of Moses, (Exodus 20:6) for the Prophets often borrowed their chief sentences from Moses, of whom they were the interpreters. Since God then under the Law declared that he is merciful to thousand generations, though it appears unnaccountable to us, yet nothing remains for us to do, but to learn reverently to receive what we cannot comprehend. The Prophet then here confesses that the method which God adopts as to his mercy is hid from the human mind. But the latter clause seems, however, less reasonable, --- that God should repay the iniquity of fathers to their children Shortly before we saw that this was set forth as an impious blasphemy, (Jeremiah 31:29) when they said that their fathers had eaten sour grapes, and that their children's teeth were set on edge; for it is always true that the soul that sinneth, it shall die. (Ezekiel 18:2, 20; Deuteronomy 24:16) But if God repays the iniquity of fathers to their children, he punishes the innocent, and transfers to children what he ought to have rendered to their fathers. But the Prophet, regarding it a wicked thing to contradict what God had spoken by Moses, adores here this mystery, and thus brings himself to humility and meekness, so that he might not break forth into extremes when speaking of the hidden works of God.

We must at the same time briefly observe, that the innocent are not punished when God includes children with their fathers, and casts the iniquity of fathers into the bosom of their children, for he does not refer to the innocent and the righteous, but to the wicked. Some, when they saw that this truth militated against the common feelings of mankind, have laid hold of an evasion, that is, that God by a temporal

[290] The Targ. and the versions, except the Vulg., give the first sense; but the latter is no doubt the true meaning, as the word never means properly to be hidden. The phrase here literally is, "Not harder (or more marvellous) than thou shall anything be," that is, not harder than what thou canst do. Exactly the same phrase occurs in Genesis 18:14. The word, in a similar clause, in Deuteronomy 30:11, is rendered "hidden;" but the clause literally is, "It is not harder than thou," that is, than what thou canst attain, or do, as the context proves, see Jeremiah 32:14. — Ed.

punishment renders to children what their fathers had deserved. But God speaks without exception, that he repays to the bosom of children the reward due to their fathers. But how ought this to be understood? It is a part of this punishment, that God withholds from them his Spirit. When, therefore, his purpose is to punish the vices of fathers in their posterity, he withholds from their posterity the light and grace of his Spirit. It cannot then be but that they will ever accumulate evils on evils, and thus they are entangled in the guilt of their fathers. God then proceeds by degrees in the work of punishing sins; for when it is his purpose to forgive the son the punishment which he together with his father has deserved, he draws him to himself by his Spirit, so that he is freed from punishment; but if his purpose is to execute vengeance on sons and grandsons, he withholds from them, as I have already said, the gift of the Spirit, so that they do nothing but provoke his wrath more and more, and thus they become involved in the same guilt with their fathers; hence fathers and children receive in common the same punishment.

This indeed seems not at the first view to be just and right; but let us remember that God's judgments are hid from us, and for this reason, --- that we may cultivate meekness and humility and learn to be soberly wise, and so confess God to be a just judge as to know that our minds cannot penetrate into this deep abyss. But still the solution given seems plain enough, that is, that God never punishes the innocent. For when he visits the sins of fathers on their children, a part of that punishment is, as I have already stated, that he withholds from the children the light of his Spirit; being blind, they ever run headlong to their own ruin, and thus by the continual commission of new sins they provoke God's vengeance against themselves. When therefore God renders to them the reward due to their fathers, he punishes them at the same time for what they themselves have deserved; nor have they any reason to complain, because they have been guilty in common with their fathers: there is, therefore, nothing strange that they share with them in their punishment. But it, however, depends on the hidden mercy of God, that. he favors some with pardon, and thus delivers them from ruin, while he forsakes others; and as they are wicked, they deserve all the punishment he inflicts on them: Thou, then, repayest into the bosom of their sons after them, that is, after their death.

He afterwards exclaims, God, strong and mighty! Jehovah of hosts is his name He again declares the greatness of God's power, that he might restrain himself, and not rashly undertake any new inquiry, as the ease is with curious men, who indulge themselves in speculations, and thus summon God as it were to an account, as though there could be appointed a tribunal before which he might be found guilty. As then the insolence and arrogance of human nature are so great, the Prophet here sets barriers around himself, so that he might keep within the bounds of humility and soberness.

He afterwards changes the person, which is a proof of vehemence and ardor; for it is, as we have seen, a prayer. He does not now address God directly, but says, Jehovah of hosts is his name, speaking in the third person. [291] Had he continued

[291] The change of person seems to begin at the 18th verse (Jeremiah 32:18), and includes the first clause in the 19th, — 18. He who sheweth mercy to thousands, And who returns the iniquity of fathers To the bosom of their children after them, Is God, the great, the powerful;

in the same strain, he would have said, ``Thou art God, strong and mighty,'' etc., but he says, ``Jehovah of hosts is his name.'' We then see that the Prophet as it were turns aside; and this change of person, as I have stated, proceeded from the vehemence and ardor of his mind. And it often happens to the faithful, that they break off their direct address when they pray, while they contemplate God's works, as displaying, now his power, then his goodness, or his wisdom. The faithful then do not always pray in a continued strain; but as feeling guides them, they now address God, then they turn aside and blend apostrophes. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 32:19

19. Great in counsel, and mighty in work: (for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings:)

19. Magnus consilio, excellens opere; cujus oculi (quandoquidem oculi) tui aperti sunt super vias filiorum hominum ad reddendum cuique secundum vias ejus, et secundum fructum operum ejus.

He goes on with the same subject, for he expresses his wonder and admiration as to God's judgments. he first declares that God is great in counsel and great in work By counsel, he understands the wisdom of God, which not only surpasses all our thoughts, but also absorbs them. And then he mentions the execution of his counsel, which affords evidences of that wisdom which appears to us. By the works of God we learn how great and how unequalled is his wisdom: for that in itself cannot be comprehended, nay, men could not have the least knowledge of it, except it were rendered conspicuous by works. The works of God then through their excellency are evidences of his immeasurable wisdom. For this reason and in this sense the Prophet calls God great in counsel and great in work

He adds, that his eyes are open on all the ways of men By these words he intimates that he is the judge of the whole world, and that whatever men may consult, speak, or do, must come to a reckoning. The meaning is, that the providence of God so extends to all parts of the world, that the works of men cannot possibly be hid from him, and that no one can escape his hand; for after having spoken of God's eyes, he adds, that he may render to every one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings

The Prophet then does not speak here of any idle speculation such as ungodly men entertain; for they confess that all things are seen by God, but imagine that he is satisfied with having only this bare knowledge; and thus they deprive him of the dignity and office of a judge. But the Prophet here shews what the end of God's providence is, why God has his eyes open, even that he may at last produce at his tribunal all the sayings and doings of men, yea, their thoughts also. We are further taught by these words that our life cannot be rightly formed, unless we bear in mind

Jehovah is his name, — 19. Great in counsel and mighty in his doings: Who — thine eyes are open On the ways of the sons of men, To give to each according to his ways, And according to the fruit of his doings; 20. Who, etc., etc. “God, the great,” etc., is connected with shewing mercy and requiting iniquity. His greatness is in counsel or wisdom, and his power or might is manifested in his doings. The {{ן after doings is the Chaldee for {ו} Then his omniscience is referred to, as necessary for carrying to effect his purposes and directing his doings. Here he returns to the second person, and the ``who'' is idiomatic, and the Welsh is exactly the same, Yr hwn y mae dy lygaid, etc.; and the ``Who'' is continued in the Jeremiah 32:20. In saying that each is to have ``according to his ways,'' he intimates what Calvin says, that the children like the fathers are guilty. --- Ed

the presence of God, so as to know that his eyes are on us, and that there is nothing hid from him: for whence is there so much liberty in sinning, except that men grow wanton like fugitives? as when a rebellious son withdraws himself from the eyes of his father, he can then abandon himself wholly to sin, for he is freed from all fear and shame. So our thoughtlessness is like a flight, for we think that we are far removed from God. This then, as I have said, ought always to be remembered, that the eyes of God are open on all our ways, and for this end, --- that he may render to every one according to his ways, and that every one may gather the fruit of his own doings.

Though, then, God for a time may connive at what we do, and may not manifestly shew that he is the judge of men, there is no reason that indifference should creep over us, as though we could escape from his hand; but let us know that all our doings and sayings are now noticed by him, that he may hereafter shew that he is not an idle observer, as some ungodly men dream, but that he is an eye-witness of all things, that he may at last appear as our judge.

This passage is turned by Papists for the support of merits by works; but it is a frivolous attempt; for when Scripture declares that it shall be rendered to every one according to his works, it does not exclude the gratuitous mercy of God; and when God renders a reward to the faithful, it depends on gratuitous pardon, because he forgives them whatever would otherwise vitiate their good works: and to speak more exactly, God does not render to the faithful according to their works, except as he gratuitously pardons them and forgives whatever they have done amiss. Reward then depends on the free mercy of God only. As to the wicked, it is no wonder that a just reward is said to be rendered to them;for we know that they are worthy of eternal perdition, and that God is a righteous judge when he punishes their sins. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 32:20

20. Which hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, even unto this day, and in Israel, and among other men; and hast made thee a name, as at this day.

20. Qui edisti signa et portenta in terra Egypti usque ad diem hunc, et in Israel et in hominibus; et fecisti (hoc est, comparasti) tibi nomen secundum diem hunc.

The Prophet here especially commemorates the singular kindness of God, by which he had testified his paternal favor towards his Church. He then says, that signs and wonders had been done by him in the land of Egypt, that: is, for the sake of his people. For why were so many miracles done, except to prove the care he had for his chosen people, and thus to confirm his covenant? We hence see that God's favor towards the children of Abraham is here set forth, that is, when he refers to the signs and wonders

which had been done in the land of Egypt. And he adds, and in Israel He extols not only God's power in miracles, but especially the mercy with which he favored his chosen people. He says also, to this day Not that God performed miracles in every age, but he means that they were worthy of being perpetually remembered, and throughout all ages. Then this refers to the remembrance and celebration of God's power, when the Prophet says, to this day God, indeed, performed miracles at a certain time, but he performed them that they might be remembered in all ages,

and that posterity might acknowledge how wonderfully God had dwelt with their fathers. [292]

As then the power which he manifested in Egypt was worthy of being remembered, miracles are said to have been done to this day; and they are said to have been done in Israel, because it was God's purpose to prove the certainty of his faithfulness when he redeemed his people as he had promised.

He afterwards adds, and among men The Prophet goes on still further. After he had spoken of the redemption of the people, he intimates that wherever he turned himself, he observed and admired the evidences of God's power, as though he had said, ``O Lord, thou hast indeed given peculiar testimonies as to thy wonderful power and goodness; the redemption of thy people was a singular work, and ought to be commemorated through all ages; but wherever we turn ourselves, there is no corner in the whole world where some miracles do not appear, which ought to lead us to celebrate thy praises.'' We hence see that the Prophet proceeds from what is particular to what is general: after having considered God's power and goodness in the redemption of his people, he extended his thoughts to all parts of the world, and contemplated God's miracles everywhere. And this is what often occurs in Scripture; after having been reminded of some particular instance of divine power or grace, we are carried away so that we make a transition to what is general. And he adds, and thou hast made thee, or acquired to thyself, a name according to this day; that is, thou hast made thy name to be perpetual, as its glory still at this day shines forth before our eyes. Then the Prophet means that God had so wonderfully manifested his power, that the knowledge of it would be perpetual, and could never be buried by the ingratitude of men.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as our whole wisdom is this, to submit ourselves to thee, to admire, and receive, and reverently to adore thy judgments, --- O grant, that we may not indulge the perverse thoughts of our flesh, but so learn to check and restrain ourselves as ever to render to thee the praise due to thy wisdom, and justice, and power, and thus walk in sobriety of mind while we sojourn in this world, until we shall at length contemplate thy glory thee to face, being made partakers of it in Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Twenty-Eighth

Jeremiah 32:21

21. And hast brought forth thy people Israel out of the land of Egypt with signs, and with wonders, and with a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with great terror;

21. Et eduxisti populum tuum Israel a terra Egypti in signis et portentis, et in manu robusta, et in brachio extento, et in terrore magno;

Jeremiah comes now nearer to the point in hand; for, after having spoken of the

[292] This is commonly the meaning given to this verse. It may be rendered as follows, — 20. Who hast set signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, To before signs and wonders to this day Both to Israel and to mankind; And hast made to thyself a name, Such as it is at this day. They were “signs” or evidences of God’s power, and in their character “wonders,” that is, supernatural. — Ed.

unequalled power of God, he now extols his righteous judgment in inflicting punishment on an ungodly and wicked people. For this end he refers to the favor of redemption, and he then adds that the land had been given to Israel which had been promised to their fathers. He afterwards states that this favor had been conferred on the ungrateful, for they immediately shook off the yoke and despised God their redeemer, together with his Law.

He then says, that the people had been brought up from the land of Egypt with signs and wonders This is an amplification, for God had in an unusual manner made it sufficiently evident that without his favor the people could not have been delivered from Egypt. For had it not been for the manifest display of God's power in miracles and wonders, the Israelites might have appropriated to themselves the favor of God, or to some worldly instrumentality; but God's favor appeared so resplendent in signs and wonders, that the liberation of the people could not have been ascribed either to fortune, or to the efforts of men, or to any other means. And for the same purpose he mentions the strong hand and the extended arm. He intimates by these words, that the people had been so delivered, that the hand of God, yea, his extended arm, openly appeared, that is, his power, as we have explained elsewhere, was manifested far and wide.

He refers at last to great terror: such was the haughtiness of their enemies, that they would have never suffered the people to depart, had they not been filled with great terror. As then the Egyptians had been by terror subdued, Jeremiah amplifies by this circumstance the favor of redemption, as though he had said, that God's favor was not obscure, because the Israelites might have known by these extraordinary evidences that they were delivered by a divine power. For so great was the power, the valor, and cruelty of their enemies, that no hope of a free departure could have been entertained, had not God put forth his hand from heaven. It afterwards follows,

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Jeremiah 32:22

22. And hast given them this land, which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey;

22. Et dedisti illis terram hanc quam juraveras patribus eorum ad dandum ipsis (hoc est, to daturum ipsis) terram fluentem lacte et melle;

Here the fruitfulness of the land is commended, so that the ingratitude of the people for their redemption might appear less excusable. God had already bound them, as it were, more than enough to himself, but when the wealth and fruitfulness of the land were added, the bounty of God was doubled, which, by a stronger and more sacred chain, bound the people to obedience. But when they buried, as it were, both their benefits, their impiety was extreme, and so much baser was their ingratitude. We hence see why the Prophet said that the land was given to the people.

He at the same time mentions the reason, even because it had been promised to their fathers. It is not, however, right to suppose that the fathers had any merits, as Jerome says, who ignorantly perverts this passage; for he says, that nothing was due to the people on the ground of merit; but that the fathers were yet worthy

on account of their great virtues. But we know that God's covenant was from the beginning gratuitous. The Prophet then means here, that the land was not given as a reward rendered to the people for their works, but that it was given them because it had been gratuitously promised. And he mentions the oath, because God, regarding the infirmity of Abraham and the fathers, confirmed by an oath his own promise. But as I have spoken elsewhere more at large on this subject, I touch on it but slightly now. However, whenever there is mention made of an oath, let us know that reproof is indirectly given to the inconstancy of men, who always vacillate, and can never recumb on God's promise, except they are helped by this confirmation.

However this may be, the Prophet here reminds us that God confirmed the pledge which he had given to the fathers when the people entered into the land, because they could not have obtained it by their valor, or by any other means. In short, Jeremiah calls the attention of the people to God's gratuitous covenant, that they might understand that they became possessors of the land by no other right than this, --- that God of his own free will had promised to Abraham and his seed that he would give them that land. He speaks, as I have just said, of the fruitfulness of the land, because it was God's design to allure the people in every way, that they might continue in his service. And when the people, thus bountifully dealt with, did not acknowledge God's favor, their extreme and base stupidity was fully proved. What the Prophet then means is, that the land was most fruitful, in which the people had all abundance, and that yet they despised God the giver of so much bounty, according to what immediately follows ---

Jeremiah 32:23

23. And they came in, and possessed it; but they obeyed not thy voice, neither walked in thy law; they have done nothing of all that thou commandest them to do: therefore thou hast caused all this evil to come upon them:

23. Et ingressi sunt, et haereditate adepti sunt cam; et non audierunt vocem tuam (ad verbum, in voce tua) et in lege tua non ambulaverunt (hoc est, secundum legera tuam) quaecunque illis praecepisti ut facerent, non fecerunt; ideo occurrere fecisti illis malum hoc.

The Prophet in this verse confesses that. God's vengeance was just, when the people were cast out of the land and driven into exile, because they, after having entered into the land, did not obey the voice of God. The very sight of the land ought to have made the people obedient to God; for they could not have eaten a crumb of bread, without being always reminded whence their food came, even because God had expelled the Gentiles from that land. When, therefore, they were filled with all kinds of good things, and at the same time despised God, no excuse could have been pretended; for if they made ignorance their pretense, the very land itself was before their eyes, which recalled them to the fear of God. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet joins those two things together, that the Israelites entered into the land, and that they disobeyed the voice of God

Now, by this clause he intimates that they had not fallen through ignorance, because God had sufficiently made known his will. God had indeed spoken, but it was to the deaf. The Prophet then here shews that there was no other cause for the sin

of the people, but that they obstinately refused to attend to the voice of God.

Then he adds for the same purpose, that they had not walked in his Law The Law is often compared to a way; for except God prescribes to us what his will is, and regulates all the actions of our life according to a certain rule, we should be perpetually going astray. God's Law, then, is justly said to be like a way, according to what Moses also speaks,

``This is the way, walk ye in it.''

(Deuteronomy 5:33; see also Isaiah 30:21)

Then Jeremiah, after having shewn that the people had been taught, mentions this, --- that the way had been made known to them, so that they went astray knowingly and wilfully; for they could not have turned aside either to the right hand or to the left without being called back by the doctrine of the Law.

He says, in the third place, What thou hast commanded them to do they did not He explains here the same thing more clearly and without any figurative expression, even that they had been unwilling to obey God, while yet they sufficiently understood what was right; for the Law suffered them not to go astray, and God had included in it everything necessary to be known. The Prophet then shews that they had not turned aside except through perverseness, because they knew what God required. As a certain Lacedaemonian said, that the Athenians knew what was right, but were unwilling to do it; so the Prophet in this place distinguishes the open impiety and contempt of the people from ignorance and inadvertence, and does not mean that the people did not satisfy all the precepts of the Law.

And this passage also Jerome explains very absurdly; for he says that the Israelites did not stand to their promises, because they had said that they would do whatever God commanded. But the Prophet here does not condemn them as to one thing only, as though he had said that there had been some defect, but he says that they had been wholly disobedient, for they had not despised only one precept of the Law, but had as it were designedly cast aside the whole Law, and obeyed none of God's commandments. Then this negative sets forth the defection of the people as to the whole law, and as to every precept of it.

And this passage is worthy of special notice, because the Prophet advisedly repeats the same thing, --- that the people had not walked in the Law, --- that they had not obeyed the voice of God, --- that they had done nothing of what had been commanded; [293] for a heavier condemnation and vengeance await those who have been faithfully taught what pleases God and what is right, and yet follow their own will, and are carried away by the passions and lusts of the flesh. In a word, Jeremiah points out the highest pitch of impiety, that is, when people clearly and familiarly know what the will of God is, and yet disregard it and shake off the yoke, and thus shew manifestly a contempt for the whole Law.

It follows, Therefore thou hast made to come on them all this evil The Prophet here

[293] There is this difference between these three things: the "voice" was that of God by his prophets, — the "law" was the ten commandments, — and "all which" had been "commanded" were the statutes and ordinances, the civil and ceremonial appointments. To "hearken to his voice," rather than to obey it, is what is meant: so far from obeying it, they would not hear the Prophets. This had been throughout their sin. — Ed.

testifies that whatever had happened to the people, was not by chance, but that a reward was rendered to their sins. Men in some measure acknowledge God's judgments, but this acknowledgment presently vanishes. Wisely then does the Prophet here shew that God's vengeance is evident in adversities, and that the people thus received the reward which they had deserved. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 32:24-25

24. Behold the mounts, they are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans, that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and what thou hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, thou seest it

24. Ecce aggeres (vel, catapultae, vel, arietes) venerunt ad urbem ad capiendum eam; et urbs tradita est in manum Chaldaeorum oppugnantium eam, propter gladium, famem et pestem; et quod tu loquutus es (quicquid loquutus es) evenit; et ecce tu vides.

25. And thou hast said unto me, O Lord GOD, Buy thee the field for money, and take witnesses; for the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.

25. Et tu dixisti mihi, domine Jehova, eme tibi agrum pecunia et testare testes; cum tamen urbs tradita sit in manum Chaldaeorum.

Here then at length the Prophet discovers his own perplexity. We have already stated the reason why he made so long an introduction before he came to the main thing: it was necessary for him to put on as it were a bridle; for except we restrain our thoughts, we shall become petulant against God, and there will be no moderation. The Prophet then, that he might not peevishly expostulate with God, set before himself his immeasurable power, and then he added that nothing happens except through his righteous vengeance. He now however asks, how it was, that he was bidden to buy the field when the city and the whole country were delivered up into their enemies. He then mentions here this inconsistency, and confesses that his mind was embarrassed, for he could not discover why God had bidden him to buy the field, and yet had determined to drive the people into exile and to scatter them into remote lands. But we have said that the Prophet was fully persuaded of God's truth; and hence it was that he was so willing and ready to obey; for he made no delay in buying the field; and he afterwards laid up with Baruch the writings of the purchase. But after having performed all this, he brought a complaint against God; and as the thing appeared unreasonable, he desired this knot to be untied.

He then says, Behold the mounts, or, the warlike engines, for the word may mean either. The word {סללות} sallut, often means mounts; but as mention is made here of a siege, the Prophet seems to refer, as we have said in the sixth chapter, to warlike engines or battering rams. And there were engines to beat down walls; great stones or a number of stones were also cast. I am therefore inclined to the opinion of those who consider that they were either engines to shoot stones and darts, or battering rams. Behold, then, he says, there are moved to the city battering rams to take it, and the city is delivered up to the Chaldeans It was, it seems, the tenth year of Zedekiah, and at the beginning of the eleventh month the city was taken. But the Prophet is the best interpreter of his own words, and what he means may be

easily gathered from the context, for he says that the city was taken by the sword, by famine, and by pestilence; as though he had said, that though the enemies had not as yet entered into the city, yet it was all over with it, that there was no hope remaining, because it was not only assailed by arms and a powerful force, but it had also enemies within, which pressed hard on it, even famine and the pestilence As then a great number had already been consumed by pestilence and famine, the Prophet says, that though, the enemies should cease to assail it, and make no forcible entrance into it, yet it was all over with it, because the pestilence and famine had so prevailed, that there was no hope of deliverance. By these words he intimates an extremity of despair; and hence also arose the thought which tormented the mind of the Prophet, that it appeared wholly unreasonable that God should bid him to buy the field when the city had been already delivered up into the power of enemies.

He adds, and what thou hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, thou seest it He confirms what he had just said, even that the destruction of the city did not otherwise happen than through God's judgment. And he confirms it, because whatever then happened, had already been testified during the time of the Prophet himself. And it hence appeared, that the city was not distressed through chance, because God had foretold nothing by his servants but what he had decreed and resolved to do. Then the ruin of Jerusalem was the work of God, of which he had foretold by his servants. For these two things ought to be joined together --- the mouth of God and the hand of God. Nor is it lawful to imagine such a thing as some fanatics do, that God sees from heaven whatever is done on earth, and yet continues in an idle state. But he decrees what is right, and then when it is necessary, he testifies it by his servants the Prophets. However, the mouth of God ought not to be separated from his hand. The Prophet then shews that the destruction of the city was the righteous judgment of God, because the Prophets had previously spoken of it.

The words, thou seest it, refer to the preceding sentence, or to that which immediately follows, even because it seemed inconsistent or unreasonable that the Prophet should buy the field as God commanded, and yet that God knew that the land was possessed by enemies, and that the people were to be driven into exile. Since then God had resolved to cast out the people from the land, how was it that he had bidden his servant to buy the field? Had all this been unknown to God, the inconsistency would not have been so evident But when God perfectly knew that what he had so often proclaimed as to the exile by his Prophets could not be changed, what could be his purpose in bidding the field to be bought and the purchase to be confirmed by witnesses, when yet the city was delivered up to enemies? Jeremiah, after having mentioned the substance of his prayer, now adds the answer he received from God, in which is seen the fruit of his prayer, even that he had been taught what had regard to the deliverance and return of the people, in order that the faithful might entertain hope, and also that they, relying on the promise, might cheerfully bear their exile until the prefixed time came. The words are these, ---

Jeremiah 32:26-27

26. Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,

26. Et fuit sermo Jehovae ad Jeremiah, dicendo,

27. Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?

27. Ecce ego Jehova Deus universae carnis, An a me abscondita erit ulla res (vel, An mihi difficilis erit ulla res)?

We have already said that the verb {פלא} pela, admits of two meanings; it means to be hid and to be wonderful, and hence by a metaphor it means what is difficult and impossible. Many take it to mean here, that nothing escapes the observation of God. But as I have said in the last lecture, I am more inclined to refer it to God's power, even that all things are in the hand and at the pleasure of God, so that there is no difficulty in his way. For whence comes to men so much anxiety, except that they are stopped by obstacles? but God can surmount all obstacles without any labor. That our minds then may not be perplexed, rightly is set before us the power of God.

And this meaning is most suitable to this passage: for Jeremiah, when that which seemed inconsistent occurred to him, was constrained to cast his anxiety as it were into the bosom of God. Then God, in order to relieve him, says that nothing is difficult to him, because he is the God of all flesh. Though by the words all flesh, the Scripture often means all kinds of animals, yet oftener the human race only. I do not, however, refinedly explain this passage, as though God did set the Gentiles in opposition to the Jews, and thus denied that he would be any longer the God of Abraham's children, because he had repudiated them on account of their sins; but he says that he is in an especial manner the king of the whole earth, and rules over the whole human race. As God then, he says, is the God of all flesh, can anything be impssible to him?

Jeremiah 32:28-29

28. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and he shall take it:

28. Propterea sic dicit Jehova, Ecce ego trade urbem hanc in manum Chaldaeorum et in manum Nebuchadnezer regis Babylonis, et capiet eam;

29. And the Chaldeans, that fight against this city, shall come and set fire on this city, and burn it with the houses, upon whose roofs they have offered incense unto Baal, and poured out drink offerings unto other gods, to provoke me to anger.

29. Et ingredientur Chaldaei, qui oppugnant urbem hanc, et succendent urbem hanc igne, et exurent eam, et domus in quibus suffitum fecerunt super tecta ipsarum Baal, et libamen libarunt diis alienis ad me provocandum.

The import of the answer is, that though God would bring to an end the seventy years of exile, yet there was no reason for hypocrites to gather encouragement, for this promise did not belong to them. God then speaks here, in the first place, of his vengeance, in order to fill the despisers of his Law with dread, and to intimate that they were excluded from the favor of redemption, he afterwards adds, that he would at length be merciful to the exiles; but this favor is confined to the elect and faithful alone.

The two parts of the answer ought then to be noticed, for God seems here to set in opposition one to another two contrary things. But as I have said, in the former clause, he has in view the hypocrites, who applied to themselves, without faith and

repentance, what the Prophet had testified of restoration. God then sets forth here his extreme severity, and then he mitigates that rigor; but he then turns his discourse to the elect, because they alone were capable of receiving his favor.

Let us now come to the words, I will deliver this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and into the hand of King Nebuchadnezar, and he will take it this purpose was, that what Jeremiah himself had predicted by his command, should remain unalterable, that the city could not be delivered. For it might have disturbed the mind of the Prophet were the Jews shortly after to be delivered, and were the siege of the city to be raised: he might, in that case, have been exposed to ridicule, together with his prophecies, and rashness might have been objected to him, because he had dared to announce in God's name what we before noticed. For this reason and purpose God declares that nothing could be changed, for the Chaldeans were to take the city; and thus he bids the Prophet to retain a quiet mind, and not to disturb himself, as though it was his intention to expose his prophecies to ridicule; for God's sacred name would thus have been subjected to many reproaches. Had Jeremiah been proved guilty of falsehood, what would have been the consequence, but that the Jews would have insolently triumphed over God? God then declares again that the city was given over to destruction.

And therefore he adds, enter in shall the Chaldeans who assail the city; for he does not say that they would come, but he confirms in other words what he had said; Break then into the city shall the Chaldeans, though it was closed up and fortified; and shall set on fire this city It was not without purpose that he mentioned the word city so often; for as it was the sanctuary of God, and the royal seat, the Jews thought that it was impregnable, and that the sun could be sooner cast down from heaven than that; enemies could take possession of it: in order then to subvert this false confidence, God often mentioned the word city. He at last adds, that the Chaldeans would burn it, as though he had said, that whatever Jeremiah had predicted would certainly be fulfilled, not only respecting the attack on the city, but also its destruction, so that not a stone would be left on a stone, but that there would be a dreadful desolation until the time of its restoration. The rest to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou shewest that thou so rulest over the whole world as to exercise a peculiar care over us whom thou hast been pleased to gather into the bosom of thy Church, --- O grant, that we may be so restrained by thy awful power within the bounds of our duty, as that we may yet be always fully persuaded that thou art our God and Father, and thus submit ourselves willingly to thy word, and not only taste of thy goodness, which is laid up for thy children, but also feed on it, so that we may at length come into thy blessed kingdom above, where there will be full satisfaction and fruition, through Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Twenty-Ninth

I did not, in the last lecture, fully explain the passage in which the Prophet announced the burning of the city. After having spoken of the city, he mentions the houses on which they had offered incense to their idols, and poured out libations He then expresses the cause why so heavy a vengeance from God awaited that holy

city, even because its houses had been polluted by superstitions. And he says, that incense had been made to idols on their tops or roofs; for the roofs, as it appears from many parts of Scripture, were places, as it were, to walk in; and we know that idolaters ever sought high places, as they imagined that they were thus nearer to God. Then the design is to shew, that the punishment of which the Prophet had spoken, was not too severe, because all the houses had been contaminated by many sacrilegious acts.

He first mentions Baal, and then foreign gods Baal, we know, is sometimes taken specifically, and sometimes includes all sorts of idols, and yet the Prophets often used the plural number, and called them Baalim, that is, patrons; whom the Jews thought that they were first to propitiate, in order that they might in the same manner pacify God. For superstition is never satisfied with the one only true God, but seeks many gods, as we shall hereafter see in the 35th verse (Jeremiah 32:35), where Molech is mentioned, being added to Baal. And the Prophet says here, that they had poured libations to foreign gods We hence see that Baal includes idols of every sort.

He adds, that they might provoke me By these words God intimates, that no ignorance could have been pretended by the Jews, for they had been more than sufficiently taught from the Law how God was to be worshipped; and a rule had been also prescribed to them to worship God alone: but they worshipped many gods, and according to their own fictitious superstitions. Justly, then, does God here complain that they had, as it were, purposely provoked him, for ignorance could not have been made a pretext, since the doctrine of the Law was sufficient to guide them. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 32:30

30. For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have only done evil before me from their youth: for the children of Israel have only provoked me to anger with the work of their hands, saith the LORD.

30. Quia fuerunt filii Israel et filii Jehudah tantummodo parrantes malum in oculis meis a pueritia sua; quia Israel tantummodo fuerunt provocantes me in opere manum suarum, dicit Jehova.

He amplifies the sin of the people, that they never departed from their vices. And he mentions the ten tribes, and also the tribe of Judah. The ten tribes, we know, had departed from the pure worship of God, when as yet true religion continued at Jerusalem. By mentioning then the children of Judah, he no doubt aggravated their guilt, intimating that they had fallen together with the Israelites, while yet they had for a time been preserved. The Israelites had become degenerated, afterwards the whole seed of Abraham became implicated in the same defection, so that they forsook the true worship of God. But afterwards he mentions only the children of Israel, but he includes also the tribe of Judah. For it ought to be observed, that when Scripture connects Israel with Judah, Israel then means the ten tribes, and that for the sake of honor or reproach the house of Judah is referred to separately; from the kingdom of Israel; but that when Israel is alone mentioned, it includes generally all the children of Abraham without exception. So it is in this place, when he says that the children of Israel and the children of Judah had done nothing but provoked God.

Afterwards he mentions only Israel, and includes the twelve tribes.

But he says that the children of Israel and of Judah had only provoked him from their youth The particle {אך} ak, is sometimes taken as an affinnative, and sometimes as an adversative, but, or nevertheless; and this latter sense would be suitable, were the context to allow it. I am inclined to agree with those who render it ``only;'' and the Prophet seems to have removed all ambiguity, for he not only says, that they had done, but that they had been doing evil, which is a mode of speaking that intimates a continued action; they had then been doing evil, that is, they never ceased. And he confirms this declaration by saying {אך}, ak, only, that is, their purpose had been nothing else, or all their study has been no other than to provoke me without end and measure. [294] We hence see that every ground of complaint is taken away from the Jews, because God, by long forbearance, had deferred his vengeance, for he might have punished them many ages before. As then they had never ceased to provoke God, the rigor shewn to them could not have appeared too much, for he had, in his goodness, invited them to repentance, but with no effect.

And from their youth here is not to be understood of individuals, but is to be extended to the whole people; and so youth is to be taken for the time of their redemption, as we shall hereafter see. For the Church was in a manner then born, and in the desert, when they had been recently brought to the light, for God had delivered them from the darkness of death. In their very childhood they began to provoke God; from that time they had always been perverse in their wickedness.

The meaning then is, that the people of Israel had been of such a perverse disposition that it became necessary at length to punish them severely, for they ceased not to add evils to evils. And the particle {אך} ak, shews their aggravated guilt, because they applied their whole minds to provoke God, and had been ingenious in devising superstitions, by which they polluted the worship of God: They have then, he says, been only doing evil

And he adds, with the work of their hands This explanation is added, because the Israelites might have raised a clamor, and asked what that evil was. God had indeed shewn sufficiently that it availed them nothing to seek evasions, for he had made himself their judge when he said, before my eyes; for by these words the Prophets intimate that a right judgment cannot be formed of men's works by themselves, for willing or unwilling, they must stand or fall according to the judgment of God. Whenever then God declares that men have sinned before his eyes, he means that it is in vain for them to seek subterfuges, by alleging their good intentions, as they are wont commonly to say, because with him is the authority to judge. But this truth he confirms, when he says, that they had provoked him by the work of their hands [295] By the work of their hands the Prophet means the superstitions will tell the

[294] The particle {{אך means also truly, verily, surely. It is rendered ``only,'' by the Sept., --- ``continually,'' by the Vulg., --- ``verily,'' by the Targ., --- and is omitted by the Syr; Its most proper meaning is, ``nevertheless,'' but is often rendered ``surely'' in our version: and it might be rendered here, surely or doubtless. --- Ed.

[295] It appears evident, that the last clause of this is explanatory of the first, as Calvin shews. “The evil,” for the article precedes it, was “the work of their hands,” that is, idolatry: For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have doubtless been doing the evil before mine eyes from their youth; for the children of Israel have doubtless been provoking me with the work of their hands, saith Jehovah. The connection in this way appears more obvious. — Ed.

people had invented for themselves. And we must ever bear in mind the contrast between God's commands and the works of our hands, for whatever we obtrude on God besides his Law is the work of our hands; but obedience is better than sacrifice. Then God here expressly condemns all the inventions of men, as though he had said, that however men may delight in their own superstitions, they are yet impious and detestable, for it is not lawful to devise anything. For God having given us his Law, has left nothing for us to do, except to follow what he has commanded; and when we turn aside and add something of our own, we do nothing but what is sacrilegious. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 32:31

31. For this city hath been to me as a provocation of mine anger and of my fury from the day that they built it even unto this day; that I should remove it from before my face,

31. Quia ad tram meam et excandescentiam meam fuit mihi urbs ista ex quo die aedificarunt eam ad diem hunc usque, ad tollendum ipsam e conspectu meo;

He confirms what we have just said, even that God, however, severely he might punish the Jews, would not yet exceed due limits in his judgment, because their iniquity had reached the highest pitch. It was a dreadful judgment when the city was wholly demolished by fire, and the Temple destroyed. Hence the atrocity of the punishment might have driven many to complain that God was too severe. Here he checks all such complaints, and says, that the city had been built as it were for this end, even to provoke him, as we say in French, Elle a este faite pour me depiter, pour me facher. Some read, ``Reduced to me has been the city;'' but they pervert and obscure the meaning. It might more properly be rendered, ``The city has been destined to me for my wrath and indignation.'' But the meaning which I have given is simpler. Thus the words {אפי}, aphi, and {חמתי} chemeti, are to be taken passively, even that the city Jerusalem had been in a manner devoted to this madness, so that it ceased not to inflame more and more against itself the vengeance of God. In a word, he repeats in other words what he had before said, even that the children of Israel did nothing else than provoke God by their misdeeds.

There is then nothing new said here, but as it was a thing difficult to be believed, the Prophet dwells on it, and says, that the city Jerusalem had been for the wrath and indignation of God, from the time in which it had been founded And we may gather from the end of the verse that this is the true meaning, for he says, Even to this day, that I should remove it from my sight; as though he had said, that the Jews had made no end of sinning, so that it was now quite the time to punish a people so wicked, whose impiety was un-healable. And he points out their persistency when he says, even to this day [296] For the people had not only begun to sin in the wilderness, but they pursued in a regular course, so to speak, their impiety, so that at no age, in

[296] It has been found difficult to render this verse literally, though the general meaning is evident, and is given in our version, which is more paraphrastic than usual. If we take {{על for ,{עלה} in its Chaldee sense, as in Daniel 6:5, 6, we shall find the version easy, --- 31. For the occasion of my wrath, and the occasion of my indignation, has this city been to me from the day that they have built it even 32. to this day; so that I shall remove it from my sight on account of all the wickedness of the children of Israel, etc. etc. So the latter part of Jeremiah 32:31 ought to be connected with the following verse. The verb for ``remove'' is in the infinitive mood preceded by .{ל} It is an elliptical phrase, as is sometimes the case, where a resolution, obligation, or duty is intended. --- Ed

no year, in no day, did they cease from their vices. Here then is pointed out their constant habit of sinning. It follows ---

Jeremiah 32:32

32. Because of all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to anger, they, their kings, their princes, their priests, and their prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

32. Super omne malum (vel, propter omne malum) filiorum Israel et filiorum Jehudah, quod patrarunt ad provocandum me, ipsi, reges eorum, proceres eorum, sacerdotes eorum et prophetae eorum, et viri Jehudah et incolae Jerusalem.

This verse is connected with the last: God had complained, that the city had been so perverse in its character, that it seemed to have been founded and built for the purpose of seeking its own ruin by its sins. He confirms that declaration by adding, On account of all the wickedness of the children of Israel, and of the children of Judah. By all the wickedness or evil, he means what he before said, that they had been doing only evil, for they had offended not only in one thing, but had abandoned themselves to impiety, so that there was nothing pure or honest among them; for they had given themselves up to impiety, so that they omitted nothing that was calculated to provoke God. A universal blot is extended to every part of life, as though he had said, that they were imbued with so much wickedness, that no sound part remained in them. It is possible for man's body to labor under one or two diseases, while there may be soundness in some of the members; but the Prophet means here, that the Israelites had become so corrupt, as it is said in Psalm 14:1, that nothing remained whole among them.

Now God condemns here all ranks of men: in the first place he says, that the kings had sinned; for they not only themselves had forsaken the true worship of God, but had become the cause of defection or apostasy to others. To kings he adds princes, or counsellors, and then priests and prophets. And, doubtless, the kings with their counsellors ought to have been one eye, the priests and the prophets the other; for the two eyes in a true and legitimate government are the judges and the pastors of the Church. But the Prophet says, that the kings and their counsellors had been ungodly, and then that the priests and the prophets had been implicated in similar crimes. And it was indeed something monstrous to see such blindness and madness in those priests whom God had, by a hereditary right, set over the Church as the interpreters of the Law, according to what is said,

``The priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the Law at his mouth, for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts.'' (Malachi 2:7)

And when the priests failed in their office, either through ignorance or sloth, God raised up prophets in their place, and his purpose was to prevent by such a help the ruin of his Church. But Jeremiah says, that the prophets had become like the priests.

This passage deserves to be carefully noticed; for we see how delighted many are when the Church is disturbed by discords; for they think that they are thus excused, when they cast aside every care and every concern for religion; and many indulge in this kind of indifference. But if the faithful had been so careless at that time, must not religion have a thousand times vanished away, having been wholly extinguished

and obliterated from their hearts? Let us then learn, that though false prophets may rise and obscure pure doctrine by their fallacies, and though the sacrificers should become apostates, and raise up, as it were, a banner to demolish the whole Church --- yet let us learn to be firm; for our faith ought not to be shaken, though the whole world were in confusion, nay, though Satan mingled heaven and earth together. In short, it is the real trial of our faith, when we firmly abide in God's truth at the time when Satan attempts above all things to throw everything into confusion. For Jeremiah does not speak here of the Egyptians or the Assyrians, but of the chosen people, the children of Abraham, the sacred heritage of God; and yet he says that the priests and prophets had become leaders to the people in their sinful courses, so that they cast aside the true worship of God, perverted the Law, and in short, departed from religion.

He afterwards adds, and the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem He speaks not of the Israelites, who had long ago become polluted, and had abandoned themselves to ungodly superstitions, for they had become, as it were, aliens to the people of God; but he names only the Jews, who remained alive, that God's Church might continue in the world. He proceeds by degrees, for he mentions the inhabitants of Jerusalem in the last place. It was indeed less to be endured that those, who had the Temple before them, who were constantly reminded of God's true worship, should be apostates, than if they dwelt in villages; for those who lived in the country, and were wont to come to the Temple three times a year, had apparently some excuse. But as the citizens of Jerusalem enjoyed so many religious means, as the Law of God continually sounded in their ears, as the sacrifices were as trumpets by whose blast they were summoned to serve and fear God, it was, as we have said, a great aggravation to their guilt. Hence the Prophet, for the sake of a greater reproach, joins them to the men of Judah It follows ---

Jeremiah 32:33

33. And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction.

33. Et verterunt mihi cervicem et non faciem; et docendo eos, et mane surgendo et docendo, et non audierunt (et ipsi non audientes, ad verbum, sed, non audierunt) ut reciperent correctionum (vel, disciplinam)

Here the Prophet expresses more clearly the perverseness of the people, as though he had said, that they had deliberately rejected every instruction, and had shewn no regard for God; for he who turns his back on us, does this knowingly and wilfully, and indeed not without contempt. When any one addresses me, and I look another way, is it not a manifest sign of contempt or disdain? and he who speaks, does he not see that he is disregarded? Thus God then complains that the Jews had not fallen away through ignorance, but as it were through a premeditated obstinacy: they then turned to me, he says, the neck, [297] when yet they ought to have been attentive to hear the doctrine of the Law. For God shews to us his face

[297] So the original is; but we say the back. The same words are found in Jeremiah 2:27. — Ed.

whenever he is pleased to prescribe what ought to be done, or to shew the way of salvation. When he looks on us, how detestable must be our pride, if we look not also on him in return? This, then, is the first thing, that the Jews had knowingly and wilfully despised God and his Law.

Then he amplifies their guilt by saying, And I taught them, I rose up early and taught them, and they hearkened not [298] If the Law had been only once promulgated, the Jews might have objected and said, that they were for the most part illiterate; but no color of pretense remained for them, since the Prophets were continually interpreting the Law, as God had also promised by Moses,

``A Prophet will I raise up for thee from the midst of thy brethren.'' (Deuteronomy 18:18)

For he intimates that this benefit would be perpetual in the Church, so that there would never be wanting Prophets to shew the right way to the people. For he sets Prophets in opposition to soothsayers, diviners, foretellers, and all other ministers of Satan, as though he had said, that there was no reason for the people to seek the fallacies of Satan, since the Prophets were sufficient. Lest the Jews then should complain that they were hardly dealt with, God here shews that he had taught them, for he ascribes to himself what he had done by his Prophets: and doubtless Prophets and teachers are nothing else but the instruments of the Holy Spirit; for no one is fit to teach, but when he is guided by the Spirit of God. Justly then does God claim for himself these offices, so that all the praise for the building up of his Church is due to him, though he employs the labors of men. In this sense it is, that he says, that he had taught them.

Then he adds, that he rose up early, that is, that he had been sedulous. As a master of a family, who is solicitous for his own, early inquires how they are, and looks around the whole house; so also God represents himself here, speaking of his care in teaching the Israelites, as though he had said, that not only his Law was set before their eyes, by which they might learn what was right, but that Prophets were also given who ceased not to admonish and exhort them.

Now this manner of speaking ought to be particularly observed, as we hence learn how base their ingratitude is who reject the teaching of the Prophets; for they not only disregarded men, but God himself, as Christ also declares,

``He who hears you, hears me; and he who rejects you, rejects me.'' (Luke 10:16)

This form of speaking, then, commends the truth of the doctrine taught by the Prophets; for God comes forth and shews that he speaks by his servants. And on the other hand, we learn what an incomparable blessing it is to have faithful and true teachers; for God, through them and their labors, with certainty declares that he cares for our salvation, as though he watched over us, as though he rose up early, as though he visited us; and the preaching of the Gospel is not without reason called the visitation of God. There is, then, no reason for us to seek anything better, when

[298] The words for teaching, and early rising, are participles, dependent on "me," in the previous clause, and by making a little change in the order of the words, the sense would be more evident, — And they turned the neck and not the face to me, while teaching them, early-rising and teaching; yet they hearkened not to receive instruction. They turned their back, while God was teaching them! — Ed.

God is present with us by his word; for we have a sure testimony of his presence whenever true and faithful teachers rise up.

He adds, to receive correction He intimates by the word {מוסר} musar, that the Jews had not sinned through ignorance, but that they had been intractable, for they refused to be corrected. The word is, indeed, taken sometimes for doctrine, but it means here correction, even when any one, who generally holds a right course, deviates from the right way, but being warned, repents. We hence see what the Prophet means, even that the Jews had not only closed their eyes against the clear light which shone forth in the Law, but that they had been wholly refractory, so that they could not be subdued when God called them to repentance, that when he sought to heal their diseases, they showed such stubbornness that they cast aside all correction and discipline. [299] We hence learn that the time of vengeance had come, because God had tried all means to promote their welfare, and had lost, as the common saying is, both pains and cost. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 32:34

34. But they set their abominations in the house, which is called by my name, to defile it.

34. Et posueruut abominationes suas in domo super quam invocatum est nomen meum, ad poiluendum ipsam.

There was here, as it were, an extreme wickedness, for the Jews had profaned the Temple itself. It was a grievous offense, when every one had, as we have seen, private services at home, where they burned incense on the roofs, and poured libations to foreign gods; but when impiety had gone so far, that even the Temple itself was polluted with idols, what hope was there of repentance?

He says that they had set their abominations in the Temple. It is called, indeed, a house after the manner of the Hebrews, but it is afterwards distinguished from private buildings, when he says, on which my name is called [300] and then, that they might defile it God here shews that the Temple had been dedicated to him; it was then a sacrilegious profanation when they offered their sacrifices to idols. They were, indeed, already apostates; but such a sacrilege was not so notorious in their private superstitions as in the Temple; for this was to deprive God of his own honor. Though it was not right in them to abandon themselves to all kind of wickedness when they came forth from the Temple; yet the Temple itself ought to have continued, as it were, safe and free from every defilement. For this reason, therefore, he says that it was called by his name, and then that the Temple itself had been defiled, so that they did not spare his sacred name. The rest I shall defer till to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou stretchest forth thy hand to us daily, and invitest us also by continual exhortations to repentance, --- O grant, that we may not be so ungrateful as by our obstinacy to reject such and so great a benefit; but that, if at

[299] It is true that the word means correction as well as instruction; but as "teaching" is what was previously mentioned, our version, which gives the latter word, seems to present the true meaning here. It is so rendered by Blayney. — Ed.

[300] The Vulg. and the Targ. very incorrectly render the words, "In which my name is called." The Sept. and the Syr. are the same as our version. It was, no doubt, a house of prayer; but what is here meant is, that it was called God's house. — Ed.

any time we should happen to turn from the right way, we may immediately tuae to thee and become obedient to thy will, and that thus the medicine which thou hast provided for us may avail for our salvation, until, being at length purified from all vices, we shall enjoy that blessed and immortal glory which thou hast prepared for us in heaven, through thine only-begotten Son, our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Thirtieth

Jeremiah 32:35

35. And they built the high places of Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire unto Molech; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my mind, that they should do this abomination, to cause Judah to sin.

35. Et adificarunt excelsa ipsi Baal, qui erat in valle filii Hinnom (vel, quae erant) ad trajiciendum filios suos et filias suas ipsi Moloch {למלך} idolo) quod non mandavi ipsis, et non ascendit in cor meum, ad faciendum abominationem hanc, ut peccaret Jehudah (vel, ut peccare facerent Jehudah)

After having complained of the profanation of his own Temple, God now says that the Jews had sinned through another superstition, even because the valley of the son of Hinnom had become to them a temple instead of the true one. God had forbidden in the Law sacrifices to be offered except where he appointed,

``Thou shalt not do so to thy God, but thou shalt come to the place where he has put the memorial of his name.''
(Deuteronomy 12:4, 5)

As God then had expressly testified that sacrifices are not acceptable to him except in one Temple, and on one altar, he shews here that the lawful worship had been corrupted by the Jews, even because they caused their sons and their daughters to pass through the fire in honor to Molech. And yet in a former passage he calls him Baal. Hence it appears, as we said yesterday, that the word Baal includes all kinds of idols. For the Jews, no doubt, while they worshipped their Baalim, ever wished to ascribe to the one true God the chief sovereignty, but, at the same time, they devised patrons for themselves, and hence was the multitude of their gods. But Molech was a particular deity, as we learn from other parts of Scripture.

We now, then, perceive the Prophet's meaning, --- that the Jews had not been satisfied with one kind of idolatry, but built high places or altars for themselves; for so do some explain {במות}, bemut: {במה} beme, means a high place, and is everywhere taken for the groves, as they were called, that is, tall trees. But as mention is tiere made of a valley, some think that the word high-places is not suitable here; therefore they render the word ``altars.'' [301] As to the main point, God no doubt condenms the Jews here, because they had dared to set up a foreign mode

[301] In Jeremiah 7:31, we have “the high places,” or elevations, “of Tophet.” Blayney thinks that they were artificial mounts thrown up for the purpose of performing some of their superstitious rites. Trees were, no doubt, planted on some of the high places; but there might be mounts without trees. That these high places were in a valley, favor the idea that they were artificial mounts without trees. And it indeed appears from this verse and from Jeremiah 7:31, that the image of Molech was set on the artificial mounts, for it is said that they built or erected these high places for this purpose, — that they might burn their children to Molech. And, probably, there were several mounts in this valley, in order to accommodate a large number of people. — Ed.

of worship in the valley of Hinnom, when the Law expressly forbade it. The relative {אשר} asher, as I have said, may be applied to the altars as well as to Baal. But it seems to me a more suitable meaning, if we say that Baal himself, that is, the idol, was in the talley of Hinnom. Of the passing through the fire, I have spoken elsewhere --- it was a kind of lustration. There is no doubt, however, but that some exceeded the moderation commonly observed, who wished to excel others in the fervor of their zeal; for they actually burned their sons and their daughters, which was a deed the most savage. But they yet thought that it was a service acceptable to God. Others performed their superstition in a milder manner, as they deemed it enough that their children should pass through the fire as a symbol of purification, as also the heathens were wont to purify themselves. [302]

But the Prophet speaks of sons and of daughters, in order to shew that so great was the intemperate zeal of the Jews, that they not only prostituted themselves before their idols, but also contaminated their offspring with these defilements.

He at last says, that he had commanded no such thing, and that it never came to his mind We have said elsewhere, that whenever this manner of speaking occurs, God cuts off every handle from objectors, because the superstitious ever have something to allege as a pretense when they are summoned to an account. We know that the Papists, by pretending good intentions, confidently glory against God; and they think that this one pretense is sufficient to defend them against all reproofs; and they think also that the servants of God and the Prophets are too morose and scrupulous when such an excuse does not satisfy them. But God, that he might not tediously contend with the superstitious, assumes this principle, --- that whatever they attempt beyond the Law is spurious, and that, therefore, the inventions of men cannot be defended by any disguise or pretense. Let us then know that true religion is always founded on obedience to God's will; and hence everything devised by men, when there is no command of God, is not only frivolous, but also abominable, according to what was said yesterday respecting the work of the hands; and so here the command of God is set in opposition to all the inventions of men. But as such declarations often occur, I now touch but slightly on this passage.

This doctrine, however, ought to be especially noticed, that is, that there is no need of a long refutation when we undertake to expose fictitious modes of worship, which men devise for themselves according to their own notions, because, after all that they can say, God in one word gives this answer, that whatever he has not commanded in his Law, is vain and mischievous. He then says, that he had not commanded this, and that it had never entered into his mind.

God in the last clause transfers to himself what applies only to men; for it cannot be said with strict propriety of God, that this or that had not come to his mind. But here he rebukes the presumption of men, who dare to introduce this or that, and think that an acceptable worship of God which they themselves have presumptuously devised; for they seek thus to exalt their own wisdom above that of God

[302] There is no ground for this supposition as to the practice in Tophet; for, in other parts of Scripture, what they did is specifically mentioned. In this very book it is said, that they burnt their children in the fire, Jeremiah 7:31, and that they burnt them as burnt-offerings to Baal, Jeremiah 19:5. See also Deuteronomy 12:31; Ezekiel 23:37. — Ed.

himself. And we even find at this day that the Papists, when we shew that nothing has proceeded from the mouth of God of all the mass of observances in which they make religion to consist, do always allege that they do not without reason observe what has been commanded by the fathers, as though some things had come into the minds of men which had escaped God himself! We then see that God in this place exposes to ridicule the madness of those, who, relying on their own inventive wits, devise for themselves various kinds of worship; for they seek, as we have said, to be wiser than God himself. We now, then, perceive the force of the expression, when God says that it never came to his mind, because men boast that it had not been contrived without reason, and glory in their own acuteness, as though they were able to appoint a better thing than God himself.

He afterwards says, That they should do this abomination God now goes farther, and calls whatever he had not commanded an abomination. And this clause confirms what I have before said, that there is no need of long arguments when the question is respecting the inventions of men, for nothing can be approved of in the worship of God but what he has himself commanded. Whatever therefore has proceeded from the notions of men, is not only frivolous and useless, but it is also an abomination; for God so represents it in this place. It is therefore not enough at this day to repudiate and to treat with disdain the fictitious modes of worship in which the Papists so much glory; but if we would prove that we have a true zeal for religion, we must abominate all these fictitious things; for God has once for all declared them to be abominable.

He adds, that Judah might sin, or, that they might make Judah to sin: either is admissible, and there is a twofold reading. [303] However this may be, he declares that those who build not on the Law, do nothing but sin, though they may think that they render to God the best service, even because they ought to have begun with this principle, --- to do nothing but according to what the Law prescribes. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 32:36-37

36. And now therefore thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning this city, whereof ye say, It shall be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence;

36. Et nunc propterea sic dicit Jehova, Deus Israel, ad urbem hanc (vel, de urbe hac) de qua vos dicitis, Tradita est in manum regis Babylonii in gladio et fame et peste;

37. Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely:

37. Ecce ego congrego cos ex omnibus terris, ad quas expulero eos in ira mea, et excandescentia mea, et indignatione magna; et reducam eos ad locum hunc, et habitare faciam secure.

God has hitherto been shewing that the Jews were worthy of that extreme punishment with which he had already visited the kingdom of Israel, and that they could

[303] The Keri, {{החטיא ``to cause to sin,'' is no doubt the true reading, even the {את} before Judah is a proof of it, and it is the meaning given by the versions and the Targ. --- Ed.

not complain of extreme severity, though they were to rot in exile after the ruin of the city and the Temple, for they had polluted the land which ought to have been sacred to God, and had everywhere spread abroad their abominations, so that even the Temple was not free from their filth and defilements, and they had not thus offended for a short time, but, as we have seen, they had despised all warnings; and though God had been solicitous for their safety, they had yet proudly rejected and even extinguished his favor. As then they were of a disposition so wicked, and their impiety had become altogether incurable through so much hardness, God shews that he would render to them the reward due to their works, by wholly rejecting them. But now he adds the promise of favor, in order to shew that he would in such a manner be the avenger of wickedness, as ever to have a regard for the gratuitous covenant which he had made with Abraham.

We have already said often, that whenever God mitigates the bitterness of punishment with some hope of mercy, he has a peculiar respect to his chosen people. The word then is not indiscriminately addressed to all, when God declares that he will be at length merciful and propitious, for he encourages his chosen people alone, as I have said, to entertain hope. As then there were some godly seed remaining among the people, God intended to relieve them, so that they might not wholly despond.

We now see the Prophet's object; and this truth ought to be carefully observed; for we shall be mistaken as to the doctrine taught by the Prophets, except we know, that after having threatened the wicked and the despisers of God, they then turn their discourse to the elect, to encourage them to bear patiently and with calm minds the punishment laid on them, as Jeremiah did in his own case when he exhorted the faithful to lay their mouth in the dust, and then patiently to wait for God, though he would for a time hide his face from Jacob, that is, from his Church. Jeremiah then, after having shewn that the Jews could not be too severely treated, because they had been wholly intractable, now adds,-

And now therefore, thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, concerning this city, or, to this city. The preposition {אל} al, signifies both, but it is more suitable to take it here in the sense of ``concerning:'' of which, it is added, ye say that it has been delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon [304] This does not seem to be consistent with facts, for the Jews themselves had not announced this sentence respecting Jerusalem, but on the contrary they sturdily rose up against the Prophets, and made a clamor whenever the ruin of the city was announced. What then is meant when God upbraids them with speaking in this manner? To this I answer, that this had indeed proceeded from the Spirit of God, and also that the Prophets had been the testifiers and heralds of this punishment; but when the Jews saw that they could not escape, they then had such a dreadful apprehension of God's judgment, that they became wholly stunned with fear; and thus it always happens to the despisers of God, for except he presses hard on them, they scorn all his threatenings; or they think that fables are told them, when God announces that he will execute on them his vengeance. But when they come to extremities, they are filled with amazement,

[304] "Ye are saying," is the original, which betokens a habit at that time; they were continually saying this during the siege. — Ed.

and without any hope confess only that God is angry with them; hence their despair. The Prophet then does not without reason upbraid them with this --- that they said that the city was delivered up to the Chaldean king, even while he was not only assailing it with a strong army, but was also assisted by the sword, the famine, and the pestilence as his associates. For before the siege pressed hard on them, they esteemed as nothing, according to what we have seen, all that Jeremiah declared to them; for he lost all his labor for nearly forty years, though the prophecy concerning the ruin of the city, exile, the rejection of the people, and the abolition of all holy things, was proclaimed daily. But now when they saw that the affair was serious, and that they could not escape God's vengeance, they went to another extreme, and said, that God was false in his promises, that his covenant was void and useless, that they had in vain worshipped him, that he had deceived them and had given them false hopes, when he promised that he would dwell in the midst of them. It is, then, in this sense that they said, that the city was delivered up into the hand of the king of Babylon; it was the same as though they had said, that the hope of return had been cut off. For they wholly cast away the favor held forth by God, and said that all that Jeremiah had promised was vain, because terrors had laid such hold on their minds and feelings, that they could not entertain any hope of God's mercy.

I have said that the case with all the reprobate is, that they deride God while he spares and bears with them; but when they find that he is a judge, then they do not look to his mercy, but he prostrate in despair as though they were lifeless.

We now understand what the design of the Prophet was, when he spoke of the Jews as saying, that the city was delivered up to the Chaldeans and the Babylonians, even because the promised deliverance could afford them no comfort, inasmuch as they fully believed that their salvation was hopeless. Ye then say, he says, that the city has been delivered up; but I, he adds, will gather them from all the lands to which I shall drive them in my wrath and hot displeasure and great indignation [305]

Here God promises that the exile would only be temporary, because he would at length gather, as it is said in Psalm 147:2, the dispersed of Israel. No name is here expressed, but a pronoun; there is however no ambiguity, for it is sufficiently evident that he speaks of the Jews when he says, I will gather them As they had been scattered here and there, the gathering of them might have appeared incredible; for had they been only driven from their own country, and a place of exile had been granted them where they might have lived together, they might have hoped some time to return: but the scattering took away every hope, for they had been driven into different countries, and far distant from each other. In order then to obviate this difficulty, God expressly says that he would restore them from all the lands into which he had driven them And the Prophet no doubt alludes to a passage in Deuteronomy 30:4,

``Though they be scattered to the four quarters of the world,
I will thence gather them.''

As then God had through Moses promised, that though they were banished into

[305] This promise clearly shews what Calvin says as to their meaning in saying “The city has been delivered up,” etc. that is, irretrievably. No, says God, I will restore it. — Ed.

the farthest parts of the world, yet their restoration would not be difficult to him; so the Prophet applies this declaration of Moses to his own prophecy, even that God would gather from the whole of the East those who had been scattered.

He adds, in my wrath, hot displeasure, and great indignation [306] God does not here speak of his wrath, but in order that the Jews might perceive that they deserved so great a punishment: for we know that as God is the judge of the world, nothing unjust can belong to him. When therefore God's wrath is said to be great, we may with certainty conclude that the vices of men are great; for he is never angry with us, except when he is offended by the greatness of our sins. We hence perceive the reason why the Prophet mentions here the wrath, the hot displeasure and great indignation of God, even that the faithful might feel assured that God would be propitious to them, though they were worthy of eternal ruin. In short, Jeremiah shews that there would be a place for God's mercy, though the Jews had merited destruction a hundred times through their obstinacy.

And he adds that his favor would be continued, And I will cause them to dwell safely After having promised to them a return, he promises now a tranquil condition: for it would have been better for the Jews to remain always in exile and in foreign lands, than to return to their own country and to live there in misery. This was the reason why the Prophet expressly added, that there would be a quiet habitation for them.

But we know that this was not fulfilled when the Jews returned to their own country; for they were greatly harassed by their neighbors, and the building of the Temple was at first hindered, and they endured many troubles from all quarters, and at length they were oppressed with tyranny by the Syrian kings, and reduced to such extremities, that exile would not only have been more tolerable, but even pleasanter and more desirable, in comparison with the many miseries with which they were oppressed. But, as it has been said elsewhere, whenever the Prophets prophesied of the return of the people, they extended what they taught to the whole kingdom of Christ. For liberation from exile was no more than the beginning of God's favor: God began the work of true and real redemption when he restored his people to their own country; but he gave them but a slight taste of his mercy. This prophecy, then, with those which are like it, ought to be extended to the kingdom of Christ. He afterwards adds, ---

Jeremiah 32:38

38. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God:

38. Et erunt mihi in populum, et ego ero ipsis in Deum.

This promise held the first place in the restoration of the Church; for had the Jews been filled to satiety with wealth and plenty, and all variety of blessings, their condition would still have been by no means superior, had they not been the people of God; for men have no happiness, if they live only on the good things of this earthly and frail life, or on its pleasures and delights. Most truly it is said in the Psalms,

``Happy is the people whose God is Jehovah.'' *

[306] There is a gradation in the words, — wrath, hot wrath, foaming wrath. Extreme displeasure betokens, as Calvin intimates, extreme wickedness, and inflicts extreme punishment. — Ed.

*(Psalm 144:15)

For though God commands his own blessings, and designs them as testimonies of his paternal favor towards the godly, yet he will not have them to live as it were on these; but he raises up their minds by means, as it were, of these steps to the spring-head of true felicity, the very fountain itself, so that they may know that they are under his protection, and that he will ever be a Father to them.

We hence see that the Prophet, when he spoke of the restoration of the people, propounded to them the chief and the most desirable thing, even to know that God was reconciled to them, and that they were become thus his people.

We hence learn, that though God in his kindness bore with the infirmities of his ancient people, and so mentioned the fruitfulness of the land and other things, yet the end of all the promises was spiritual; nor would have this promise been true, were it explained only of God's temporal blessings. For we must bear in mind that saying of the Prophet,

``Thou art our God, we shall not die.''*

*(Habakkuk 1:12)

And doubtless the Prophet in the Psalm which we have just quoted, meant to distinguish the Church of God from all heathen nations, and meant also to distinguish the felicity of the Church from all the pleasures, honors, and those advantages, by which men persuade themselves they can be made happy, provided they obtain them. Since then the Prophet there marks the difference between the felicity of the Church and all the fleeting and empty things wished for by those who look no higher than to this world and the present life, it follows, that whenever these words are mentioned, ``I will be your God,'' the hope of an eternal and a celestial life is set before us.

There is another thing to be noticed, --- that whatever we seek as to the things of this world can yield us no real good, except God be reconciled to us. When therefore we have all things in abundance, when nothing is wanting as to every kind of pleasure, when we are favored with great wealth, when peace and security are granted to us, yet all this, as I have said, will prove ruinous to us, except God owns us as his children, and becomes a Father to us. Therefore when we seek to become happy, we must direct our minds to the principal thing, even to be reconciled to God, so that we may be able with confidence to call him our Father, to hope for salvation from him, and ever to flee to his mercy. Ungodly men desire this and that, as their own cupidity leads them: the avaricious wishes for a large quantity of money, wide farms, and great revenues; the ambitious seeks to subdue the whole world; the man of pleasure wishes for everything that may satisfy his lusts, and even he who seems to be moderate, yet desires what is suitable to his disposition; and thus God is neglected, and also his grace. Let us then know that the wishes of men are wholly unreasonable, when they anxiously seek anything in this world except what flows from this fountain, even from the gratuitous favor of God, and when they do not prefer this singular privilege to all blessings, even that God may be reconciled to them.

We now apprehend the meaning of the words, when God declares that the Jews, after their return to their own country, would become his people, and that he would

be their God.

Let us at the same time observe, that though God possesses the sovereignty of the whole world, he is not yet properly called the God of any, but of his chosen people; for as he gathers the Church for himself as a peculiar treasure, as he speaks everywhere, so this privilege cannot exist without a mutual relationship, that is, exept men know that God is their God, and are also fully persuaded that they are counted by him as his peculiar people. Now follows an explanation of this verse, which, on account of its brevity, might seem somewhat obscure.

Jeremiah 32:39

39. And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them:

39. Et dabo illis cor unum et viam unam, nt timeant me cunctis diebus, ut bene sit illis et filius eorum post ipsos.

He more clearly explains the last verse; for he mentions the effects of the favor referred to. God indeed includes everything in one word, when he declares that he will be our God, for he thus adopts us as his children. Hence comes the certainty as to our heavenly inheritance, and also as to his mercy, which is better than life. There is then nothing that can be desired beyond this benefit, that is, when God offers himself to us, and deigns to receive and embrace us as his people.

But as I have already said, we do not fully comprehend the benefit of this doctrine; for, first, we are very tardy and dull, we perceive not what God means by this expression, and then we know how much our nature is prone to diffidence, so far is the distance between us and God. Hence this doctrine has need of explanation. Therefore the Prophet, after having pointed out the cause and the beginning of all blessings, now mentions the effects, which more fully confirm what he had said. Hence he says, I willgive to them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever: for God does not otherwise own us as his people, nor can he be our Father, except he regenumtes us by his Spirit; for it is of regeneration that the Prophet here speaks. But I must defer the rest until to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since our earthly life is appointed as a life of warfare, and we must necessarily be exposed to continual disquietude as long as we sojourn here, --- O grant, that we may always look forward to that blessed rest, to which thou invitest us, and in the meantime remain quiet in dependence on thy protection, and courageously fight to the end, not doubting but that through thy favor all things shall turn out for good, until we shall at length enjoy that eternal and glorious inheritance, which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen

Lecture One Hundred and Thirty-First

We began yesterday to explain the words of Jeremiah, in which are promised to the people a new heart and a new way Now, as God promises these, it is certain that they are in his power, and not in the power of man. We hence learn that it is not in man to form his heart for God's service; for it would have been a superfluous, nay, an absurd promise, had God said, that he would give us a heart which was already ours, or which any one might confer on himself. The promises, then, are

sure evidences of God's favor, not only as to the end and effect, but also in order that we may know that God ascribes to himself the praise of all these things which he promises to us. And it is with this argument that Augustine often fights against the Palagians, and rightly, because it would be a mere mockery, as I have said, had God promised anything, which depended not on his favor, but on the will and power of man.

When he now speaks of one heart, he refers to union and consent, but of such a kind that they all obey God. Men often unite together for evil, and the children of God are often compelled to separate themselves from the ungodly; and hence are those discords which now prevail in the world, the blame of which is cast on us. But as it is necessary for us to separate from the Papists if we wish to follow God, it is better a hundred times to separate from them than to be united together, and thus to form an ungodly and wicked union against God. Agreement or union is, indeed, singularly a good thing, because there is nothing better or more desirable than peace. But we must ever bear in mind, that in order that men may happily unite together, obedience to God's word must be the beginning. The bond, then, of lawful concord among us is this --- that we obey God from first to last; for accursed is every union where there is no regard to God and to his word.

We must also observe, that when God promises one heart, he adds one way; and this is to be understood of outward works. And Paul seems to have borrowed from this place when he says that God gives us to will and to do according to his good pleasure. (Philippians 2:13) He mentions ``to will'' first, and the Prophet names the heart, and the heart, we know, is the seat of all the affections. By one heart, then, the Prophet means united affections; and then by way he means what Paul expresses by ``to do;'' for it is not enough ``to will,'' except ``to do'' be added to it; while yet the external work is of itself of no value, except it be preceded by the will and a genuine feeling.

We now, then, understand what the Prophet means: first, he shows how God would become a God to Israel, even because he would give them one heart and one way. We hence learn, as I have said, that to change the heart, to put off or cast aside corrupt affections, is not in the power of man, because it is a benefit that proceeds from God. But it would not be sufficient for us to be formed for obedience, except God added another favor, even to lead the will itself into action. With regard to concord or union, we have said, that the principle of a right and lawful agreement is, to have regard to God, to depend on his word, and, with one consent, to obey what he commands.

According to this meaning, he afterwards adds, That they may fear me Hence, also, it appears that the fear of God is not otherwise produced than by the regeneration of the Spirit. For were men naturally inclined to fear God, it would not have been ascribed to God and to his grace; and God claims nothing for himself except what is his own. It then follows that the beginning of the fear of God is the regeneration of the Spirit. But we ought to notice the words when he says, that he would give them one heart and one way, that they might fear him; for he does not say, ``That they may be able to fear me,'' or, ``That there may be a free option, and yet a flexible

will;'' but he mentions, so to speak, the actual fear of God, as the result of forming anew the hearts of men. [307] This, I have said, ought to be carefully observed, because the Papists confess with us that we are wholly weak as to what is good, and that all our faculties are so corrupt, that the will cannot move itself, nor can any effect follow, without the constant co-operation of the grace of the Holy Spirit; but, at the same time, they imagine that the Holy Spirit does only one half of the work in us; and hence the grace of the Spirit is called by them aid and cooperation. We hence see how far we and the Papists agree; for they are ashamed to deny, that man's nature is so corrupted by original sin as not always to need the grace of the Holy Spirit. But when God claims entirely for himself whatever good there is in us, the Papists concede to him only the half, and imagine a two-fold grace of God, a grace going before and a grace following. What do the Papists mean, or what do they understand by this grace going before? Even that God inspires us with good and pious feelings, so that if we wish we may be free to follow what is right; for, as I have said, the Papists confess that we are under the tyranny of the devil, and slaves to him, and that there is no right will in men, except through the prevenient (proeunte) grace of the Holy Spirit. But as I have already said, they talk vainly of the grace of the Spirit, and say that it is an influence by which God enables us to follow that which is right, if we have a will to do so. Thus, then, the grace of God, according to them, leaves men in suspense, so that they are free either to receive or to reject the grace of God. Afterwards, they join the subsequent grace, which, in their view, is a reward; for if I assent to God, that is, if I suffer myself to be ruled by his Spirit, and embrace the grace offered to me, God will then reward me with another grace to confirm me in my right purpose. And thus they confess that perseverance is in part the gift. of God; but they always imagine it a co-operating grace. And then, as perseverance, according to them, is God's subsequent grace, and is, as it were, a handmaid, it ceases to be grace, for it is rather the reward of merit. But what does the Prophet say? I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me

We hence see that the grace of God is of itself efficacious; and then he does not say that he would give them a power to turn either way, but that he would give them one heart, as the same thing is afterwards more clearly expressed. We see then that the one heart or will is the work of the Holy Spirit, and the mere favor of God. This ought in the flrst place to be borne in mind. We further see that this grace works effectually in men; it not only gives them a free option, but the actual work, as they commonly say, follows, that they may fear me, and it is added, all their days. Here God promises also perseverance as the singular gift of the Holy Spirit; for it would not be sufficient that our hearts should be formed for his service, were he not to sustain us in it; for such is our levity and weakness; that we might every moment fall away from his grace. There is, then, need of grace to preserve us. It hence appears, that not only the beginning of good works proceeds from his Spirit, but also that he enables us to go on to the end; for otherwise there would be no perseverance in a right course.

[307] "One heart" and "one way," seem to refer to the previous divisions between Israel and Judah. They were before divided in thoughts respecting God and in the way of worshipping him. This division would no longer exist. — Ed.

He adds, That it may be well with them, and with their children after them By these words he intimates, that the Israelites themselves had been the authors of all their evils, because they had not feared God; for they could not have been happy without continuing in obedience to him. And the Prophet confirms what we said yesterday, that external prosperity is in itself evanescent; therefore we ought to seek first the grace of God. But when is it that God is propitious to us? Even when we know him as our Father, and obey his commandments; that is, when we render ourselves submissive to him as it becomes children. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 32:40

40. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.

40. Et percutiam (vel, insculpam, feriam) cum ipsis foedus perpetuum, nempe qued non discedam ab ipsis (ad verbum, de post ipsis) ut benefaciam! psis, et timorem mei ponam in cordibus ipsorum, ut non discedant a me.

He pursues the same subject; but the repetition is intended emphatically to recommend the grace of God, for we know how men ever strive to withhold the praise due to his grace, and that on account of their pride. God, then, on the other hand, celebrates in high terms his grace, lest men should malignantly obscure it.

He first says, I will strike with them a perpetual covenant We must notice the contrast between the covenant of the Law, and the covenant of which the Prophet now speaks. He called it in the thirty-first chapter a new covenant, and gave the reason for it, because their fathers had soon fallen away after the Law was proclaimed, and because its doctrine was that of the letter, and deadly, and also fatal. But he now calls it a perpetual covenant That the covenant of the Law was not valid, this was accidental to it; for the Law would remain in force, were we only to keep it; but through men's fault it happened that the covenant of the Law became void and immediately vanished. When, therefore, God promises anything, there is a manifest difference; but what is it? God intimates that his doctrine is set before men with no effect, for it only sounds in their ears, it does not penetrate into their hearts. There is, then, need of the grace of the Holy Spirit; for except God speaks within and touches our hearts, the sound will be to no purpose, only beating the air. We now, then, see why the covenant is called perpetual which God now promises.

We must, at the same time, bear in mind that this covenant peculiarly belongs to the kingdom of Christ. For though it was a part of God's grace, which was manifested in delivering his people from captivity, yet the continued stream of his grace ought to be extended to the coming of Christ. The Prophet then, no doubt, brings Christ before us, together with the new covenant; for without him there is not the least hope that God would make another covenant, as it appears evident from the whole Law and the teaching of the Prophets. Then Christ is here opposed to Moses, and the Gospel to the Law. It hence follows, that the Law was a temporary covenant, for it had no stability, as it was that of the letter; but that the Gospel is a perpetual covenant, for it is inscribed on the heart. And for the same reason it is also called a new covenant, for the Law must have become obsolete, since the perpetuity of

which the Prophet speaks has come in its place.

Now follows an explanation, Because I will not depart, etc. The {אשר} asher, here is not a relative, but rather an explanatory or exegetic particle. It then briefly designates the form or nature of the covenant, even that God would never depart from behind them God is sometimes said to go before his faithful people, when he shows to them the right way. He is said also to rule them from behind, as when Isaiah says,

``They shall hear a voice behind them, saying,
`This is the way, walk ye in it.'" (Isaiah 30:21)

God no doubt testifies here, that he would be always an Instructor and Teacher to his people. And he says, that he will speak from behind, as schoolmasters follow the pupils committed to their care, even that they may observe and watch all their gestures, walking, words, and everything else. So God compares himself to those teachers to whom children are committed to be taught and trained; and he says that he speaks from behind. We may then explain what is here said in this sense, ``I will not depart from after thee:" but we may also take a simpler view that God would not depart from them, even because he would show them perpetual favor and kindness, according to what is immediately added, that I may do them good In a word, God shows that he would be an eternal Father to his people, who would never forsake nor cast them away. [308]

But the manner or method is also expressed, that he would put his fear in their hearts, that they might never depart from him. This is the same doctrine with what we have already seen; it is now repeated, but in other words; and thus God, as I said, more fully illustrates his favor, he says then that he would put his fear in the hearts of men. We now see how that puerile fiction is refuted, with which the Papists are inebriated, when they say that God's grace co-operates, because the Spirit helps the infirmity of men, as though they themselves brought something of their own and were co-operators. But the Prophet here testifies that the fear of God is the work and gift of the Holy Spirit. He does not say I will give them power to fear me, but I will put my fear in their hearts We then see that he again shews that the Spirit works effectually in us, so as to form anew our affections, and does not leave us capable of turning or suspended. The same thing is said by Ezekiel,

``And I will cause them to fear me." (Ezekiel 36:27)

Thus the same doctrine is confirmed there, for it is said, that God would make Israel to fear him, not that they might be able to fear him.

He adds again, That they may not depart from me We see that clearly refuted are those foolish notions about neutral grace, which offers only power to men, which they may afterwards receive if they please; for the Prophet says, ``that they may not depart from me." Thus he again shews that perseverance, no less than the

[308] The {{אשר may be rendered that, or because. It would be a perpetual covenant, because he would ``not turn from being after them to do them good," or, as the Syr. is, ``from following them to do them good." The Vulg. omits {אשר} and so does the Targ.; the Syr. gives it the meaning of that, but it is rendered which, by the Sept., ``which (that is covenant) I will not turn away from behind them," that is, as it seems, from those behind them, i.e., posterity. And this is the meaning which Blayney has adopted, ``which I will not withdraw from their posterity, to be a benefactor to them;" which last words he evidently connects with the first clause. What favors this rendering is, that ``children" are mentioned in the previous verse. Still, owing to the last clause, the Syriac version seems to be the most suitable. There are here two remarkable promises, --- that God would not turn away from them, --- and that he would put in his fear, so as to keep them from turning away from him. --- Ed.

commencement of acting rightly, is the gift of God and the work of the Holy Spirit: and as I have already said, were God only to form our hearts once, that we might be disposed to act rightly, the devil might, at any moment, entice us, by his wiles, from the right way, or, as he employs sudden and violent attacks, he might drive us up and down as he pleases. To rule us then for one hour would avail us nothing, except God preserved us through the whole course of our life, and led us on to the end. It hence then follows, that the whole course of our life is directed by the Spirit of God, so that the end no less than the beginning of good works ought to be ascribed to his grace. Whatever merit then men claim for themselves, they take away from God, and thus they become sacrilegious.

A question may, however, be here raised: we see that the faithful often stumble, not ten times during life, but every day: how then is this, that where God's Spirit works, his efficacy is such that men never turn aside from the right way? Were any to answer, that the faithful indeed stumble, but do not wholly fail, and that God here refers to that defection which shakes off every fear of God, it would not be a full solution. For we see that even the elect themselves are sometimes like apostates, for the fear of God and piety are, as it were, choked in them. Piety is not indeed extinguished, but not even a spark of the Spirit appears in them. But we must notice, that inflexible perseverance is given to the faithful, so that when they fall, they soon repent. Hence interruptions are no hinderances that God should not guide them from the starting-post to the goal, until they complete their whole course. And thus true is what Augustine says, that the Spirit so works in us, that we invariably have a good will. For he compares our state with that of Adam, such as he was in his first creation. We know that Adam was then without any stain, for he was formed in the image of God: he was then upright and free from every vice. We are as yet imperfect; though God has regenerated us by his Spirit, there abide in us still some remnants of the flesh, and we do not run with so much alacrity as it behoves us; nay, we are constrained to exclaim with Paul, that we are ``wretched,'' and to confess that we do not the good which we would, but the evil which is hateful to us. (Romans 7:15) Then the condition of Adam seems to have been better than ours. To this Augustine replies, --- that God deals better with us now than he did with Adam, our first parent; for though he created him just and innocent, and without any stain, yet he gave him a nature liable to a change; and hence Adam, having a free-will, immediately fell. To what end then did free-will serve? even that man immediately fell and brought us into the same ruin with himself. This is the praise of free-will! even that man, possessed of it, cast himself down into the lowest abyss, whence he could never of himself have risen. But now, with respect to us, though we halt, and also turn out of the right way, and our depraved lusts entice us to evil, and our corruption hinders us from running as we desire to do, yet our condition is far better, because God endues us amidst all our conflicts with the power of his own Spirit, so that we are never overcome or overwhelmed. This indefectible constancy, (indeclinabilis constantia) as Augustine calls it, is then far superior to the excellency and honor which Adam at first possessed. This may be clearly gathered from the words of the Prophet when he says, that God would put his fear in the hearts of his

people, so that they may never depart from him.

It may be again asked, why is there no mention made of gratuitous justification? for the covenant of God cannot be valid, except he reconciles us to himself, for regeneration is not sufficient for the obtaining of God's favor, as in part only we will rightly and act rightly. To this we answer, that there is no doubt but that God includes faith in the word fear; hence remission of sins, by which men return into favor with God, is not excluded when regeneration is spoken of. This passage may at the same time be explained in this way, that the Prophet states a part for the whole. Doubtless the new covenant, as we have before seen, consists of two parts, even that God, in adopting us as his children, forgives us, and pardons all our infirmities, and then governs us by his Spirit: but here he speaks only of the last. So the sentence may be viewed as including a part for the whole. Still the Scripture, as it has been said, when it speaks of God's fear, often includes faith, for God, as the Psalmist says, cannot be feared, except we taste of his goodness,

``With thee is propitiation, that thou mayest be feared.''
(Psalm 130:4)

For there would be no reverential fear of God, except it were preceded by a knowledge of his paternal favor.

Jeremiah 32:41

41. Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul.

41. Et laetabor super ipsos beneficiendo ipsis, et plantabo eos in terra hac, in veritate (id est, fideliter) in toto corde meo, et in tota anima men.

When God says that he would take pleasure in doing good to his people, he adopts the language of man, for fathers rejoice when they can do good to their children. God then, as the paternal love with which he regards his people could not have been otherwise expressed, made use of this similitude. Further, the contrast also ought to be noticed, even that God had rejoiced when he punished his people for their wickedness. For God delights in judgment as well as in mercy. God then for a time rejoiced when he punished the peopie; for as his judgment is right, he delights in it. But now he says that he would manifest his paternal affection, so as to take pleasure in doing them good.

He adds, I will plant them in this land He had indeed planted them, when, by Joshua, the possession of the land was given them, according to what is said in the 80th Psalm, where a similar expression is used, even that God had brought his vine out of Egypt, and planted it in the promised inheritance. (Psalm 80:8) But afterwards the people were plucked up by the roots. Hence the first possession of the land to the time of the exile was not, strictly speaking, a plantation, for the people did not then strike firm roots. God then promises here something new and unusual, when he speaks of a plantation. Nor is there a doubt but the perpetuity, of which mention has been made, is intended; for this plantation of the people depends on the covenant, and the covenant is not temporary as before the exile, but perpetual in its duration.

We now then understand what the Prophet means when he compares to a plantation the restoration of the people after their return from exile. We know, indeed,

that the people from that time had not been banished, and that the Temple had ever stood, though the faithful had been pressed down with many troubles; but this was only a type of a plantation. We must therefore necessarily pass on to Christ, in order to have a complete fulfillment of this promise. The beginning, as we have said, and I am often compelled to repeat this, is to be taken from this return; but Christ is not to be excluded from that liberation which was like the morning star, before the sun of righteousness itself appeared in its own splendor. When Christians explain this passage and the like, they leave out the liberation of the people from Babylonish exile, as though these prophecies did not belong at all to that time; in this they are mistaken. And the Jews, who reject Christ, stop in that earthly deliverance. But the Prophets, as I have said, begin with the return of the people, but they set Christ also in the middle, that the faithful might know that that return was but a slight taste of the full grace, which was alone to be expected from Christ; for it was then, indeed, that God really planted his people.

Further, when the Jews were afterwards expelled from the land of Canaan, it was owing to their ingratitude; and it was a total abdication. In the meantime, however, God planted there his own vine until Jerusalem was extended and had its limits in the farthest parts of the earth: and we are said to be grafted in Christ and planted, when God adopts us into his Church; and hence that saying of Christ,

``Every tree which my Father hath not planted shall be rooted up.'' (Matthew 15:13)

Let us then know that the Church was planted in Judea, for it remained to the time of Christ. And as Christ has pulled down the wall of partition, so that there is now no difference between Jews and Gentiles, God plants us now in the holy land, when he grafts us into the body of Christ.

He says, in truth, that is, faithfully, so as never to pull them up again. And he adds, with my whole heart and with my whole soul The words are indeed singular, for God transfers to himself the affections and feelings of men; but it is necessary that he should in a manner transform himself, that he may be understood by us; for unless he prattled, where would be found so much understanding as would reach the immense altitude of his wisdom? As then the mysteries with which he favors us are incomprehensible, it is necessary that he should accommodate himself to our limited capacities. By the whole heart, then, and the whole soul, he means that faithfulness and constancy which will ever endure until the faithful shall obtain eternal life. Integrity in man is called the whole heart, because there may be a double heart. It cannot, it is true, be for this reason applied to God or to his nature. But as I have already said, he says by a similitude that he would do this with the whole heart, because he will do it so perfectly that there will be nothing wanting to render salvation complete, and the same thing is also meant by truth; though some philosophize more refinedly as to this word, for by truth they understand the firmness or veracity of the promises, [309] But we know that according to the usage of

[309] The word {אמת most commonly means reality in opposition to dissimulation or pretense, or what is only apparent; truth in opposition to falsehood, and stability in opposition to what is evanescent and temporary. The planting was to be a real planting, and not one in disguise or appearance. The following words explain the meaning, ``with all my heart and with all my soul,'' that is, with sincerity and earnestness, or, with the full purpose of mind and with the full assent of the will and affections.

the Hebrew language, that truth means often what is solid and perpetual. He means then that the plantation would be so firm and solid, that there would be no danger that the people would ever be removed elsewhere, even because there would be a living root, as we have explained: the Church was fixed in Judea until the coming of Christ, who brought in the real accomplishment of this plantation; for when we are grafted into him, we already in a manner possess eternal life and are become the citizens of heaven.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since we are by nature wholly addicted to evil and bring nothing from the womb but depravity, --- O grant, that being regenerated by thy Spirit we may strive to please and obey thee; and as our frailty is such that we may at any moment fall away, simply thou us with firmness and constancy, that we may never faint in the middle of our course, but so constantly obey thee, that we may at length enjoy that blessed rest, which is prepared for us, after we shall have passed through our earthly warfare, in Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Thirty-Second

Jeremiah 32:42

42. For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them.

42. Quia sic dicit Jehova, Quemadmodum venire feci super populum hunc omne malum hoc grande, sic ego reducam super eos bonum quod ego pronuntio super eos.

God shews here again to his Prophet that exile would be temporary as to the remnant; for we know that the greater part of the people had been wholly rejected; but it pleased the Lord, that his Church should survive, though very small in number. Then this promise is not to be extended indiscriminately to all the twelve tribes, but refers especially to the elect, as the event sufficiently proved, and Paul also is a most faithful interpreter of this truth. And this ought to be carefully borne in mind, because hypocrites always steal for themselves whatever God promises to his faithful people, while yet they falsely pretend his name. Let us then understand the design of God, even that his purpose was to support with strong confidence his chosen, lest despair should close up the avenue to prayer. Since, then, a portion of the people remained, that the Church might not wholly be cut off, this promise was fulfilled; and as we can never embrace the promise of mercy, except repentance and acknowledgment of sin precede, the two things are here referred to by the Prophet.

He says that God had made to come, or had brought, a dreadful calamity; and it then follows, that he would bring on them all the good that he had promised. By these words God intimates that what he had before promised would not be difficult for him to accomplish, because he could heal the wound which he had inflicted. Had the Chaldeans, as it had been said elsewhere, taken the city according to their own will, the remedy might have been difficult; but as God had employed the Chaldeans, and as they had fought, as it were, under his banner, it was an easy thing for him to restore the city, and to recall from exile those whom his righteous vengeance had

--- Ed.

banished.

We must notice especially what is said, I will render to them all the good which I have spoken concerning them. For God shews on what support the faithful were to rely in hoping for their liberation; he bids them to depend on his own mouth; for whatever men may promise is evanescent and without fruit. If, then, we would have our hope to be firmly fixed, so that it may not disappoint us, let us learn to rely on God's promises, so that no one of us may presumptuously dream of this or that, as we thus often deceive ourselves; but let us acquiesce in the word of God. But when the evidence of God's grace fails us, we may have recourse to many confidences, but it will be without profit. We now perceive why the Prophet expressly added this particular respecting God's word. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 32:43-44

43. And fields shall be bought in this land, whereof ye say, It is desolate without man or beast; it is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.

43. Et acquiretur ager in terra hac de qua vos dicitis, Deserta est ab homine et jumento, tradita est in manum Chaldaeorum.

44. Men shall buy fields for money, and subscribe evidences, and seal them, and take witnesses in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in the cities of the mountains, and in the cities of the valley, and in the cities of the south: for I will cause their captivity to return, saith the LORD.

44. Agros pecunia ement, scribendo in libro, et obsignando, et obtestando testes in terra Benjamin, et per circuitus Jerusalem, et in urbibus Jehudah, et in urbibus montanis, et in urbibus campestribus, (quanquam alii volunt esse proprium nomen, sed hoc non convenit) et in urbibus austri, (id est, quae respiciunt versus austrum) quia reduco captivitatem eorum, dicit Jehova.

He confirms the prediction respecting the return of the people, and makes application of the vision which had been presented to the Prophet; for he had been commanded, as we have seen, to buy a field in the land of Benjamin. God now then annects that sign to the prophecy; for the use of signs is to secure faith to doctrine, which yet deserves of itself to be believed, and is fully authentic, and of itself worthy of belief; it is however conceded to our infirmity, that signs are given us, in order that the promises may be more fixed and ratified in our hearts.

This order God now follows, and says, Yet bought shall a field be in this land The verb, {קנה} kone, means to acquire or to buy and to possess; but as in the next verse he says, Buy shall they with money a field, the meaning ought not to be changed. Bought then shall be a field (the singular for the plural) in this land, of which ye say, [310] Deserted it is by man and beast The chief men did not say this, as we have elsewhere shewn; nay, when Jeremiah declared this to them, he was in treated and cruelly dealt with by them; for it was a thing difficult to be believed that the land, which was as it were the sacred habitation of God, should be laid waste by the

[310] This is not the literal rendering of the Hebrew, but the following, — Which, ye say, is desolate, without man or beast, Given into the hand of the Chaldeans. Had "which" been governed by "say," there would have been a pronoun after it with a preposition prefixed. The Sept., the Syr., and Arab. have retained the right construction, though the Vulg. has not. "Without," i.e., with not, or not with, is literally the Hebrew, {{מאין --- Ed.

Chaldeans. God had indeed called it his rest, and it had been given as a heritage to the children of Abraham. The Jews, then, did not originate this saying; nay, it was God himself. But this question has been solved elsewhere; they did not indeed speak of the desolation of the land in the same sense or manner as God did; for when the Prophets threatened them with the desolation of the land, they always added the hope of deliverance and of a return; but they, when that calamity happened to them, cast aside every hope, and gave themselves up wholly to despair. And it is a usual thing with the ungodly to ridicule all God's threatenings as long as he spares them or defers their punishment; but when God makes it known that he speaks in earnest, then they are swallowed up with despair, and conclude that nothing remains for them.

This, then, is what Jeremiah upbraids his own nation with, that is, that they cast off from themselves every hope, while yet God had fixed for them the term of seventy years. While God then was stretching forth his hand to them, they chose rather thus to sink in the abyss of despair, so that nothing could alleviate their minds. This ingratitude the Prophet justly condemns; for they considered their land as devoted to perpetual ruin, when yet its restoration had been promised to them; as though he had said, ``The mercy of God and his faithfulness will surpass all your wickedness; but ye, as far as you can, extinguish his promises, abolish his grace, and give no place to his promises: nevertheless he will complete what he has promised; for though the land is falsely deemed by you to be given up for ever to destruction, yet the Lord will cause it to be inhabited by its own legitimate heirs, even the children of Abraham.'' This is the reason why he intimates that the Jews had regarded the land as given up to perpetual desolation.

To shew more fully what is said in the preceding verse, he adds, Fields with money shall be bought, and by writing (the verbs are in the infinitive mood) they shall write on tablets and sign by witnesses even if the land of Benjamin [311] Then the Prophet mentions all the boundaries by which Jerusalem was surrounded. We know that a part of the city was in the lot of Benjamin, and even one gate was so called: in the land of Benjamin, he says, and also through the circuits of Jerusalem, even in the cities of Judah, those on the mountains, as well as those in the valley, and in the cities which he to the south, even Egypt, for the southern country was towards Egypt. The reason is added, Because God would restore their captivity, that, is, restore the captives that they might again rossess the land. Now follows, ---

[311] The infinitives in Hebrew are often as in Welsh, verbal nouns. The rendering may be made as follows, — Fields with money shall they buy; And there shall be writing in a book, And sealing, and the witnessing of witnesses, In the land of Benjamin, etc. etc. Our version is the Syr. and nearly the Targ. — Ed.

Jeremiah 33

CHAPTER 33

Jeremiah 33:1-6

1. Moreover, the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah the second time, while he was yet shut up in the court of the prison, saying,

1. Et fuit sermo Jehovae ad Jeremiam secundo, cum ipse adhuc captivus esset in atrio custodiae, dicendo,

2. Thus saith the LORD the maker thereof, the LORD that formed it, to establish it; The LORD is his name;

2. Sic dicit Jehova, faciens ipsam, Jehova formans ipsam, ad stabiliendum ipsam; Jehova nomen ejus;

3. Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not.

3. Clama ad me, et respondebo tibi, et annunciabo tibi res magnificas et reconditas, quas non novisti:

4. For thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, concerning the houses of this city, and concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, which are thrown down by the mounts, and by the sword;

4. Quia sic dicit Jehova, Deus Israel, super domibus urbis hujus, super domibus regum Jehudah, quae dirutae fuerunt catapultis (vel, balistis, vel, machinis aliis) et gladio, (alii autem vertunt, ad catapultas, vel, balistas, vel, alias munitiones, et ad gladium; dicemus postea de sensu: hoec omnia legenda sunt uno contextu)

5. They come to fight with the Chaldeans, but it is to fill them with the dead bodies of men, whom I have slain in mine anger and in my fury, and for all whose wickedness I have hid my face from this city.

5. Venerunt ad praeliandum cum Chaldaeis, et ad replendas ipsas (domos) cadaveribus hominum, quos percussi in ira mea et indignatione mea, et quia abscondi faciam meam ab hac urbe propter universam malitiam ipsorum;

6. Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth.

6. Ecce ego adduco illi restitutionem et sanationem, et sanabo eos, et aperiam ipsis multitudinem pacis et veritatis (alii vertunt, orationem)

This prophecy refers to the same subject; nor was it to be wondered at, that God spoke so much of the same thing, for it was necessary to render the Jews inexcusable, as they always pretended ignorance, except God made frequent repetitions. And this was also the reason why Paul said, that by the mouth of two or three witnesses everything should be established, when he said that he would come the second and the third time to Corinth. (2 Corinthians 13:1) He intimated that his coming would not be useless, for except they repented they could not have escaped by pretending ignorance, as hypocrites are wont to do. It was, then, God's purpose to confirm by many prophecies what he had once testified respecting the restoration of the people; but he had an especial care for the faithful, that they might not grow faint and succumb under those many trials which remained for so long a time; for as some died in exile, they might have forgotten the covenant of God, and thus the soul might have perished with the body. And those who were to return to their own country had need of no common support, so that they might continue firm for seventy years, and rely with confidence on God's mercy. We now, then, understand why God repeated the doctrine as to the return of the people.

It is said that the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah while he was yet in prison Then the Prophet was bidden to consult the benefit of his enemies, and to promote their welfare, however unworthy they were through their ingratitude; for though they had not all demanded his death, yet the greater part of them had clamorously condemned him, and he had been with difficulty delivered, and was now lying in prison. It was a great cruelty that the people, while he was faithfully discharging his prophetic office, should thus furiously rage against him. He is, however, bidden still to proceed in the duties of his office, to comfort them, to ease their grief, and to afford them some alleviation in their evils and miseries.

There is also no doubt but that it was profitable to Jeremiah himself; for it was a most iniquitous reward, that he should, while serving God faithfully and conscientiously, be cast ignominiously into prison, and be there kept a captive so long. It was, then, some mitigation of his grief, that God appeared to him in that very prison; it was an evidence that God esteemed him higher than all the Jews. God did not then speak in the Temple, nor throughout the whole city. The prison then was God's sanctuary, and there he gave responses to his Prophet, though he was wont to do this before from the mercy-seat, from the ark of the covenant. We hence see how great was the honor that God was pleased at that time to bestow in a manner on a prison, when he had forsaken his own Temple.

Now follows the prophecy, the substance of which is, that though the city was to be given up into the hand of the king of Babylon, yet that calamity was not to be perpetual, for God at length, after the completion of seventy years, would restore it. But why this promise was given has been stated already: it was given that the faithful might submit patiently to God, and suffer themselves with calm minds to be

chastised, and also recumb on the hope the promise gave them, and thus feel assured, that as they were smitten by God's hand, their punishment would prove their medicine and an aid to their salvation. Now, then, we perceive what this prophecy is, and also for what purpose it was delivered.

But before God promised anything respecting the return of the people, he strengthened the mind of the Prophet by a preface, and also encouraged and animated the godly to entertain good hope. The preface is, that God created and formed Jerusalem There was, then, no doubt but he would at length rescue it from the hands of enemies; nay, that he would raise it up even from hell itself. To prove this, he says that he is Jehovah We hence see why the Prophet, before he recited the promise, honored God with magnificent titles. But it is doubtful whether the past or the present time is to be understood, when it is said, Jehovah the maker of it, Jehovah the former of it; for either would be suitable, --- that is, that God at the beginning built Jerusalem and was its founder, or that he had purposed again to create and form it anew. If the past time be taken, then the meaning is, that the city, which had been built by God, could not possibly perish, because his will was that it should remain perpetually. And the same sentiment often occurs in the Prophets, and also in the Psalms. For it was God's design to be regarded as the founder of Jerusalem, in order that he might distinguish it from all other cities of the world. We know that there is nothing under the sun perpetual, for the whole world is subject to various changes; nay,

``the fashion of this world,'' as Paul says, ``passeth away.''
(1 Corinthians 7:31)

As, then, changes so various take place in all cities, God, by a singular privilege, exempted Jerusalem from this common lot; and hence the Prophet truly and wisely concludes, that the ruin of the city would not be perpetual, because God had formed it. And hence its future restitution is sufficiently proved.

But if any one prefers the present time, then the meaning would be, that he who had resolved to create and form Jerusalem is Jehovah, the God of hosts: no one then can hinder his work. As this sense is not unsuitable, I do not reject it, though I follow the former. We must, at the same time, bear in mind this principle, --- that restoration is promised to the Jews, because Jerusalem had been, as it were, chosen by God, so that he took it under his care and protection, so as to preserve it perpetually. Whether then we take the words to be in the past or present time, that God is the creator and former of Jerusalem, we see that the promise of deliverance is founded on the mercy of God, even because he had cliosen Jerusalem for his own habitation, according to what is in the Psalms,

``His foundations are on the holy mountains.'' (Psalm 87:1)

And there, also, the pronoun is used instead of God's name, as here instead of the city's name, Thus saith Jehovah, who has created it, who has formed it, that he might establish it Here Jerusalem is not named; but the narrative is much more emphatical than if it was expressed, as also in the place we have just quoted, the word God is not given, nor the word Church, if I mistake not, in the 37th chapter of Isaiah (Isaiah 37). When the Prophet says,

``His foundations are on the holy mountains,''

there is no doubt but that the word God is to be understood, though not expressed. So here, when speaking of the city, he says that Jehovah formed it, or will form it. [312]

He adds, Jehovah is his name Here he exalts the power of God, that the Jews might not set up against him what otherwise might have terrified them, and, as it were, reduced them to a lifeless state, and caused them wholly to faint away. He, therefore, sets before their eyes the power of God, as though he had said, that there would be no obstacle which could delay God's work, for he had resolved to form and create anew his own city after its demolition; it is, in a word, the same as though he had bidden the people to turn their eyes and all their thoughts to God, to consider his immeasurable power, and so to entertain hope, and thus to look down, as it were, from on high on all the impediments which might have otherwise wholly weakened their confidence.

He afterwards adds, Cry to me, and I will answer thee, and I will announce to thee things magnificent and recondite, which thou hast not known It was not so much for the sake of the Prophet as of others that this was said. For the Prophet, no doubt, had earnestly prayed, and his prison must have inflamed his ardor, so as to intercede constantly with God. God then does not here reprove his torpor or his sloth by saying, Cry to me; but as I have said, the word is so directed to the Prophet, that God excites all the godly to pray. There is indeed here an implied reproof, as though he had said that it was their fault that God did not cheer their minds with a joyful and happy message, for they had closed the door against themselves, so as to prevent God from offering them that comfort which they yet especially wished; but men, while they expect God to be propitious to them, do not yet give entrance to his grace, because they bolt up, as it were, their hearts with unbelief. We hence see why it was said, Cry to me, and I will answer thee

But this passage ought especially to be noticed; for we may hence conclude, that whenever we pine away in sorrow, or are worn out by affliction, it is our own fault, because we are tardy and slow to pray: for every one who cries acknowledges that God is always nigh, as he promises in the Psalms, to those who truly call on him. That we are then sometimes worn out with long grief, and no comfort given to us, this happens, let us know, through our neglect and sloth, because we cry not to God, who is ever ready to answer us, as he here promises.

And he says, I will declare to thee great things, and of hidden things thou knowest not So are the words literally; but they cannot be thus suitably rendered: then we may read, ``and things hidden which thou knowest not,'' or, ``I will make thee acquainted with hidden things which are unknown to thee.'' It may, however, be asked, why God called those things hidden, of which Jeremiah had already prophesied? The answer is obvious, --- that they had, as it were, made void all the promises of God,

[312] The Sept. give the present time, “who makes,” etc.; the Vulg. the future, “who will make,” etc.; and the Syr. and the Targ. in the past, “who made,” etc. The verse may be thus rendered, — Thus saith Jehovah, — Made it hath Jehovah, Having formed it in order to establish it; Jehovah is his name. That the city is meant cannot be disputed, as the word itself is introduced in the 4th verse (Jeremiah 33:4), and at the end of the 5th verse. In the Sept. it is land, “who makes the land,” and in the Syr., “who made thee:” both which are no doubt wrong. — Ed.

and the holy man might, have been even confounded, when he saw that God's favor was thus rejected; for it was reasonable to conclude, that as the people obstinately rejected the hope of deliverance, it was all over with them, and that their condition was, as it were, hopeless. We hence see that those things are often hidden to us which God has again and again made known to us; for either they do not immediately penetrate into our minds, or the memory of them is extinguished, or faith is not so vigorous in us as it ought to be, or we are disturbed and confounded by obstacles thrown in our way.

He now expresses what these hidden things were, As to the houses, he says, (so it is literally) thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, as to the houses of this city, and as to the houses of the kings of Judah The proposition; {על}, upon, often means with regard to, concerning. He names the houses of the kings, for the kings of Judah were not satisfied, as it is well known, with one palace, but had many houses without the city. As to the houses, he says, which had been thrown down This is variously explained; the houses, say some, had been pulled down for the warlike engines, that is, that these engines might be made from the materials, and for the sword. The sense, however, would appear more obvious were we to take this view, that the houses had been thrown down by the warlike engines, and also by the sword, that is, by the violence of the enemies. The word, {סללת} sallut, as it has been already stated, is rendered by some fortifications; but when the storming of cities is spoken of, it means no doubt warlike machines, such as the engines to throw darts, or battering-rams: but we know not in what form they were made by the Jews and the Chaldeans.

There are two parts to this prophecy, --- that the Jews were about to perish through their own fault, --- and that they were to be restored through the favor and goodness of God alone. Here, then, in the first place, the Prophet condemns the false confidence of the people, who stoutly resisted the Chaldeans. They came, he says, to fight with the Chaldeans; but what would be the issue of the battle? even to fill, he says, with the carcases of men their very houses When he says that the Jews were come, he speaks of what had already, as it were, taken place. It is indeed a participle in the present tense, coming; but the Prophet here sets before their eyes what was to be, as though he had said, ``The Jews will boldly rush forth, and will think themselves equal, and even superior to the Chaldeans; thus they will arm themselves with courage for the battle.'' Then he says this, in order to ridicule the audacity of the people. The sad issue of the fight follows, the filling of their own houses with the carcases of men. The copulative is redundant, or it must be taken as explanatory, and rendered, even. They shall come then to fight, evern that they may fill their own houses with carcases, and thus inflame the fury of their enemies. [313] For it hence happened that the Chaldeans shed more blood, and spared not the mass of the peo-

[313] These two verses have been improperly separated, so that {,{באים ``coming,'' stands by itself without connection with anything; it ought to be in regimine with ``sword.'' The versions vary, but none give any tolerable meaning. The verses may be thus rendered, --- 4. For thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Concerning the houses of this city, And concerning the houses of the kings of Judah, --- Which are thrown down by the engines, 5. And by the sword of those who come To make war, even the Chaldeans, And to fill them [i.e., houses] with the carcases of the men, Whom I have smitten in mine anger, And in my wrath, and for all whose wickedness I have hidden my face from this city, --- 6. Behold, I will bring, etc. etc. The present and past time in the 4th and 5th verses, is used for the future, which is often the case in prophecies. --- Ed.

ple; because we know that when a city is won by force, more cruelty is exercised, and the slaughters become much greater. Had the Jews willingly surrendered, they would have received more humanity at the hand of their conquerors; but the Chaldeans became implacable, because their fury had been kindled by the pertinacity of the people fighting against them. God, at the same time, shews that the Chaldeans would not be victorious through their own valor, but because he himself would smite or slay the Jews. Then he ascribes to his own vengeance the calamity which might have seemed to proceed from the Chaldeans; for Jeremiah could not have exhorted the people to repentance except he shewed that it happened through a righteous judgment, that the Chaldeans so cruelly raged against them. But we must defer the rest until to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that we may so learn to humble ourselves under thy mighty hand, whenever thou chastisest us, that we may not faint in our miseries, but flee to thy mercy with more confidence, and by acknowledging our sins, may become so displeased with ourselves, that we may never lose the taste of thy mercy but gird ourselves up so as to entertain good hope, and call upon thee, until we shall at length find by success that our prayers are not in vain; and may we ever thus find comfort in our evils, so that we may at length enjoy that perfect felicity, which thou hast prepared for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Thirty-Third

I was compelled yesterday to stop at the second clause of the fifth verse, where God declares that the Jews were slain by him, while they were exerting all their strength to resist. He then says that that slaughter happened to the city and to the people, because they had sinned against him. But he says, first, I have slain them, and then, I have hid my face from this city, and he also adds the reason, on accorent of all their wickedness Then he declares that he was the author of that slaughter, and he also shews that in just judgment he punished the wickedness of the people. For as they had never ceased for a long time to provoke his vengeance, he here shews that they deserved that reward, even of having their city forcibly taken by the Chaldeans, and also of being everywhere slain, and of having their houses filled with dead bodies.

He afterwards says, Behold, I will bring a renewal and a healing, and I will heal them This is the main point, as they say, in the passage. He had been hitherto shewing, that the Jews had deserved so heavy a punishment, because by their obstinacy they had not ceased to provoke God against themselves. But he promises here to be propitious to them after having moderately corrected them. For we have said, that the design of this prophecy was to sustain the Jews, so that they might not despond, but rely on the promise of favor, however bitter exile might be. Then he says, I will bring a renewal, or restoration, and a healing [314]

And it is added, I will open to them abundance of peace and of truth Some render the last word, {אמת}, amet, prayer; for the verb {אמן} amen, means sometimes to

[314] The word rendered "renewal," means lengthening, that is, of man's life; hence it is taken in the sense of recovery, — "I will bring to it a recovery and a healing." See Jeremiah 8:22. — Ed.

pray and also to multiply. There may then be a twofold meaning; the first, that God would open to them an access to prayer; for things were so hopeless among the people, that no one dared to utter a word. Even Jeremiah himself was forbidden to pray, (Jeremiah 11:14) because God had resolved to destroy those miserable men respecting whom there was no hope of repentance. Some therefore understand that an access to prayer is here promised, so that the faithful and the servants of God might pray for the prosperity of the city. But this explanation seems to me to be too far-fetched. I take, therefore, a simpler interpretation, --- that God would give them abundance of peace, or rather the prolonging or continuance of peace. By peace is meant, as it is well known, a happy state. Then to Jerusalem, reduced to extreme miseries, God promises joyful things, so that she should afterwards live prosperously; and he adds the word truth, which is to be taken here for stability, [315] as, indeed, everywhere in Scripture, as though he had said, that the prosperous state of the city would notbe for a month, or a short time, but continual and even perpetual, as he declares in the next verse.

Jeremiah 33:7

7. And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first.

7. Et reducam captivitatem Jehudah, et captivitatem Israel, et aedificabo cos sicuti a principio.

By the word building, God means that they would return to their own country for this end --- that they might remain secure in it. And this promise was very needful, since the Jews were on every side surrounded by enemies; for all their neighbors had united together against them, and were most hostile, so that they never ceased to create new troubles. For this reason mention is made of building, as though the Prophet had said, that the prosperity of the city would be lasting, for it would be so founded, that it would not fall or totter at any kind of assault.

But he promises deliverance, not only to the tribe of Judah, but also to the whole kingdom of Israel. Though very few returned, yet God offered the benefit which he had promised to all in common: and then, as it has been often said, this promise is to be extended to the coming of Christ. For God confined not his favor to those few years in which liberty was granted to the Jews, when they returned from their exile in Babylon; but included the eternal salvation which remained for them, of whiclx the prelude was their return. Let us now proceed, ---

Jeremiah 33:8

8. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me.

8. Et purgabo eos ab omni iniquitate eorum, qua peccarunt mihi (hoc est, in me) et ignoscam omnibus iniquitatibus eorum quibus peccarunt in me, et quibus scelerate egerunt contra me.

He says first, that he would cleanse themfrom all iniquity, and then, that he would

[315] The best word for it here, as given by the Syr., is security; "And I will unfold to them abundance of peace and security." — Ed.

be propitious to all their iniquities He no doubt repeats the same thing; but the words are not superfluous, for it was necessary seriously to remind the Jews of their many vices, of which indeed they were conscious, and yet they did not repent. As then they perversely followed their own wills, it was needful for the Prophet to goad them sharply, so that they might know that they were exposed to eternal destruction, if God's mercy, and that by no means common, came not to their aid. Here, then, he represents the greatness of their sins, that he might on the other hand extol the mercy of God.

By the word cleanse, one might understand regeneration, and this may seem probable to those who are not well acquainted with the language of Scripture; but {טהר}, theer, means properly to expiate. This then does not refer to regeneration, but to forgiveness, hence I have said, that the Prophet mentions two things here in the same sense, --- that God would cleanse them from iniquity, --- and that he would pardon all their iniquities We see now the reason why the Prophet used so many words in testifying that God would be so merciful to them as to forgive their sins, even because they, though loaded with many vices, yet extenuated their heinousness, as hypocrites always do. The favor of God, then, would never have been appreciated by the Jews had not the atrocity of their guilt been clearly made known to them. And this also was the reason why he said, I will pardon all their iniquities He had said before, I will cleanse them from all iniquity; then he added, I will pardon all their iniquities For by this change in the number the Prophet shews the mass and variety of their sins, as though he had said, that the heaps of evils were so multiplied, that there was need of no common mercy in God to receive them into favor.

He says further, By which they have sinned against me, and by which they have acted wickedly against me These words confirm what I have already said, that the Jews were severely reproved by the Prophet, in order that they might first consider and reflect on what they deserved; and secondly, that they might extol the favor of God according to its value.

We must at the same time observe, that the Jews had their attention directed to the first and chief ground of confidence, so that they might have some hope of a restoration; for the origin of all God's blessings, or the fountain from which all good things flow, is the favor of God in being reconciled to us. He may, indeed, supply us bountifully with whatever we may wish, while yet he himself is alienated from us, as we see to be the case with the ungodly, who often abound in all good things; and hence they glory and boast as though they had God as it were, in a manner, bound to them. But whatever God grants and bestows on the ungodly, cannot, properly speaking, be deemed as an evidence of his favor and grace; but he thus renders them more unexcusable, while he treats them so indulgently. There is then no saving good, but what flows from the paternal love of God.

We must now see how God becomes propitious to us. He becomes so, when he imputes not our sins to us. For except pardon goes before, he must necessarily be adverse to us; for as long as he looks on us as we are, he finds in us nothing but what deserves vengeance. We are therefore always accursed before God until he buries our sins. Hence I have said, that the first fountain of all the good things that are to be

hoped for, is here briefly made known to the Jews, even the gratuitous favor of God in reconciling them to himself. Let us then learn to direct all our thoughts to God's mercy whenever we seek what seems necessary to us. For if we catch as it were at God's blessings, and do not consider whence they proceed, we shall be caught by a bait: as the fish through their voracity strangle themselves, (for they snatch at the hook as though it were food) so also the ungodly, who with avidity seize on God's blessings, and care not that he should be propitious to them; they swallow them as it were to their own ruin. That all things then may tuae to our salvation, let us learn to make always a beginning with the paternal love of God, and let us know that the cause of that love is his immeasurable goodness, through which it comes that he reconciles us freely to himself by not imputing to us our sins.

We may also gather another doctrine from this passage, --- that if the grievousness of our sins terrifies us, yet all diffidence ought to be overcome, because God does not promise his mercy only to those sinners who have slightly fallen, either through ignorance or error, but even to such as have heaped sins on sins. There is therefore no reason why the greatness of our sins should overwhelm us; but we may ever venture to flee to the hope of pardon, since we see that it is offered indiscriminately to all, even to those who had been extremely wicked before God, and had not only sinned, but had also become in a manner apostates, so that they ceased not in all ways to provoke God's vengeance. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 33:9

9. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honour before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.

9. Et erit mihi in nomen, laetitiam (alii in constructione vertunt, in nomen laetitiae) in laudem et in decorem (vel, gloriam) apud omnes gentes terrae, quae audient omnem beneficentiam, quam ego exercuero erga ipsos (quam ego facio ipsis, ad verbum) et pavebunt et contremiscent super omni beneficentia, et super onmi pace, quam ego facio illi (mutat humerum; dixerat, {אותם} nunc dicit, {לה} {עשה}, et refertur hoc pronomen ad urbem ipsam)

Here God testifies that his favor would be such as to deserve praise in all the world, or, which is the same thing, that his bounty would be worthy of being remembered. Hence he says, that it would be to him for a name among all nations; but as he designed to extol the greatness of his glory, he adds, a praise and an honor, or a glory; and it is emphatically added, among all nations And this passage shews to us that the Prophet did not speak only of the people's return, and that this prophecy ought not to be confined to the state of the city, such as it was before the coming of Christ; for though the favor of God was known among the Chaldeans and some other nations, it was not yet known through the whole world, for he says, among all the nations of the earth; and God no doubt included all parts of the world. We hence then conclude that the favor of which the Prophet speaks refers to the kingdom of Christ, for God did not then attain a name to himself among all nations, but, as it is well known, only in some portions of the east. When, therefore, he says that the

favor he would shew to his people, would be to him a name, he promises no doubt that deliverance which was at length brought by Christ.

And in the same sense must be taken what follows, Because they shall hear, etc.; for the relative {אשר} asher, is here a causative, as the Prophet expresses here the way and manner in which glory and honor would come to God on account of the deliverance of his people, even because the nations would hear of this; and this has been done by the preaching of the Gospel, because then only was God's goodness towards the Jews everywhere made known, when the knowledge of the Law and of prophetic truth came to aliens who had previously heard nothing of the true doctrine of religion. We now then understand the design of the holy Spirit.

Further, by these words God exhorts all to gratitude; for whenever the fountain of God's blessings is pointed out to us, we ought not to be indifferent, but to be stimulated to give thanks to him. When therefore God declares that the redemption of his people would be a name to him among all nations, he thus shews to the godly that they ought not to be torpid, but to proclaim his goodness. And at the same time it serves for a confirmation, when God intimates that he would be the Redeemer of his people, in order that he might acquire to himself a name, for there is to be understood a contrast, that in this kindness, he would not regard what the Jews deserved, but would seek for a cause in himself, as it is expressed more fully elsewhere,

``Not on your account will I do this, O house of Israel,'' (Ezekiel 36:22)

and the faithful sing in their turn,

``Not on our account, O Lord, but on account of thy name.''

(Psalm 79:9; Psalm 115:1)

We then see that God brings forward his own name, that the Jews might continue to entertain hope, however guilty they may have been, and own themselves worthy of eternal destruction.

If we read, ``It shall be to me for a name of joy,'' the sense would be, ``for a name in which I delight.'' If we read the words apart, ``For a name and joy,'' the sense would be still the same; nor ought it to be deemed unreasonable that God testifies that it would be to him for joy. For though he is not moved and influenced as we are, yet this mode of speaking is elsewhere adopted, as in Psalm 104:31,

``The Lord shall rejoice in his works.''

God then is said to take delight in doing good, because he is in his nature inclined to goodness and mercy.

He afterwards adds, they, shall fear and tremble for all the goodness, etc. The word {כל} cal, ``all,'' denotes greatness, and is to be taken emphatically. The words, however, may at first sight appear singular, ``they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness,'' etc.; for it seems not reasonable that men should fear, when they acknowledge God's goodness, for this, on the contrary, is a reason for joy and confidence. This clause is sometimes applied to the ungodly, for they have no taste for God's favor so as to be cheered by it, but on the contrary they fret and gnash their teeth when God appears kind to his people; for they are vexed, when they see that they are excluded from the enjoyment of those blessings, which are laid up, as it is said elsewhere, for them who fear God. But I have not the least doubt but

the Prophet means the conversion of the Gentiles when he says, they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness, etc.; as though he had said, that not only the name of God would be known among the nations, so that they would proclaim that he had been merciful to his people, but that it would at the same time be the effect and influence of his grace, that the nations would become obedient to God. Moreover, it is a usual thing to designate the worship and fear of God by the words fear, dread, and trembling. For though the faithful do not dread the presence of God, but cheerfully present themselves to him whenever he invites them, and in full confidence call on him, there is yet no reason why they should not tremble when they think of his majesty. For these two things are connected together, even the fear and trembling which humble us before God, and the confidence which raises us up so as to dare familiarly to approach him. Here then is pointed out the conversion of the Gentiles; as though the Prophet had said, that the favor of deliverance to the Church would not only avail for this end, to make the Gentiles to proclaim God's goodness, but would also have the effect of bringing them under his authority, that they might reverence and fear him as the only true God. He again adds the word peace, but in the same sense as before: he mentions goodness, the cause of prosperity, and then he adds peace or prosperity as its effect. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 33:10-11

10. Thus saith the LORD; Again there shall be heard in this place, which ye say shall be desolate without man and without beast, even in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, that are desolate, without man, and without inhabitant, and without beast,

10. Sic dicit Jehova, Adhuc audietur in loco hoc, de quo vos dicitis, Exterminatus est (vel, traditus exitio) ab homine (hoc est, ut non supersit homo) neque supersit jumentum in urbibus Jehudah et in compitis Jerusalem, quae in solitudinem redacta sunt, ut non sit homo et non sit habitator, et non sit animal (vel, jumentum)

11. The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, the voice of them that shall say, Praise the LORD of hosts: for the LORD is good; for his mercy endureth for ever: and of them that shall bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause to return the captivity of the land, as at the first, saith the LORD.

11. Vox laetitiae et vox gaudii, vox sponsi et vox sponsae, vox dicentium, celebrate Jehovam exercituum, quia bonus Jehova, quia in seculum misericordia (vel, clementia) ejus, afferentium laudem (hoc est, testimonium gratiarum actionis, pro sacrificio hic capitur) in domum Jehovae, quia reducam captivitatem terrae sicut ab initio, dicit Jehova.

These two verses are connected together, and have been improperly divided, for the sentence is not complete. In the first place we have, Yet shall be heard, but what? the voice of joy, etc., as we find in the following verse. Jeremiah confirms at large what he had taught respecting the return of the people, because there was need of many and strong supports, that, the faithful might proceed in their course with confidence It was indeed difficult to muster courage under so great a calamity; and had they for a short season breathing time, yet new trials constantly arising might

have cast them down and laid them prostrate. There is no wonder then that the Prophet here speaks diffusely of that favor which was deemed incredible; and then the memory of it might not have always remained fixed in the hearts of the faithful, had not a repeated confirmation been given.

He again introduces God as the speaker, that the promise might have more effect. Again, he says, shall be heard in this place --- even in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem --- the voice of joy, etc. He repeats what we noticed yesterday, that the Jews put every obstacle they could in the way of their restoration. The narrowness of our hearts, we know does in a manner exclude an entrance as to God's favor; for being filled, nay, swollen with unbelief, we suffer not God's grace to enter into us. So the Jews, by desponding and imagining that their calamity was incurable, and that no remedy was to be expected, rejected as far as they could the promised favor of deliverance This, then, is what the Prophet again upbraids them with, even that they said that the whole country and all the cities were destroyed, so that neither man nor beast remained. This was, indeed, the fact at that time, and the Jews had spoken correctly; but as it was said yesterday, the ungodly never feel the scourges of God without rushing headlong into despair. Then what is condenmed is this, that the Jews thought that they were to perish without any hope of deliverance. Hence the Prophet here reproves their unbelief, and at the same time exhorts them to entertain hope. But he testifies that God's grace would surpass all their wickedness.

Heard then shall be the voice of joy, and the voice of gladness; the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride; that is, marriages shall again be celebrated. And this way of speaking often occurs in the Prophets when they refer to the joyful condition of the city and of the people; for in seasons of mourning no one thinks of marrying a wife, so that marriage-feasts then cease as well as all festivals. Then the Prophet briefly shews that God would put an end to the calamities of the people, and give them reasons for rejoicing after he had for a time punished their sins.

But he shews also of what kind their joy would be, The voice of them who shall say, Praise ye Jehovah of hosts Here he distinguishes between the faithful and the ungodly, for joy is common to both, when prosperity happens to them; for God's children may rejoice when the Lord shews himself to them as a bountiful Father. But the profane exult through intemperate joy, and at the same time they make no mention of God, for they live only on present things; but the faithful raise up their thoughts to God, and never rejoice without thanksgiving. Thus they consecrate and sanctify their joy, when the ungodly, by polluting God's blessing, do also contaminate their joy. We ought then to take special notice of this difference which the Prophet here intimates, between godly and profane joy; for the children of this world do indeed exult, but as we have said, immoderately in their joy; and they are unthankful to God, and never duly reflect on his goodness; nay, they designedly turn away their eyes and their thoughts from God; but the faithful have always a regard to God whenever it succeeds well with them, for they know that everything flows to them from God's goodness only.

Hence he says, Heard shall be the voice of them who shall say, Praise ye Jehovah, for he is good, etc. The Prophet here alludes to the customary practice of singing,

which is spoken of in sacred history. For we know that when the Temple was dedicated, the praises of God were celebrated, and the Levites always sang, For his mercy is for ever They first exhorted others to praise God, and to every sentence this repetition was added, ``For his mercy is for ever.'' What then had formerly been in common use the Prophet refers to: Heard then shall be that usual song, Praise ye Jehovah, for his mercy is for ever

He then adds, Of them who shall bring praise to the house of Jehovah; for I will restore the captivity of the land He mentions sacrifices, for the service, according to the Law, required, that these should be added as evidences of gratitude. God indeed had no need of vetires, nor did he delight in external displays; but these exercises of religion were necessary for a rude people, and still learning the elements of truth. The Prophet then speaks here with reference to a particular time, when he connects sacrifices with praises and thanksgiving, he yet shews for what end God required sacrifices to be then offered to him, lest the Jews should think that God was pacified when a calf had been slain. He then shews that all this had been prescribed to them, and enjoined for this end --- that they might shew themselves thankful.

This metonymical mode of speaking ought then to be carefully observed; for hence we conclude, that sacrifices of themselves were of no moment, but were only acceptable and of good odor to God on this account --- because they were evidences of gratitude.

He then adds, To the house of Jehovah Now, this also ought in the last place to be noticed, --- that it is not sufficient for one to be thankful to God, but that public thanksgiving is also required, so that we may mutually stimulate one another. And we also know that confession ought not to be separated from faith; as faith has its seat in the heart, so also outward confession proceeds from it; and therefore it cannot be but that the interior feeling must break out from the soul, and the tongue be connected with the heart. It hence follows, that all those are guilty of falsehood who say that they have faith within, but are at the same time mute, and, as far as they can, unworthily bury the benefits of God. And as I have said, this zeal is required of all the godly, in order that they may stimulate one another to praise God; for it was for this purpose and for this reason, that express mention is made of the Temple; that is, that the faithful might understand, that God is to be worshipped, not only privately and within closed doors, but that also a public profession ought to be made, so that they may together with common consent celebrate and acknowledge his benefits and blessings.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we cease not to separate ourselves often from thee, we may at least know that reconciliation is prepared for us, provided we seek it by a true and sincere faith in thine only-begotten Son, and so return to thee as really to loathe ourselves on account of our sins, and that relying on thine infinite mercy we may never doubt but that thou wilt be reconciled to us, until having at length finished our present course of life, and being cleansed from all the pollutions of the flesh, we shall be clothed with that celestial glory, which thy Son by his death and resurrection has obtained for us. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Thirty-Fourth

Jeremiah 33:12-13

12. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Again in this place, which is desolate without man and without beast, and in all the cities thereof, shall be an babitation of shepherds causing their flocks to lie down.

12. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Adhuc erit in loco hoc destructo, ut non sit homo et jumentum, et in omnibus urbibus ejus, habitaculum pastorum accubare facientium oves:

13. In the cities of the mountains, in the cities of the vale, and in the cities of the south, and in the land of Benjamin, and in the places about Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, shall the flocks pass again under the hands of him that telleth them, saith the LORD.

13. In urbibus montis (hoc est, montanis) et in urbibus planicei (campestribus) et in urbibus Austri (id est, quae vergunt ad meridiem) et in terra Benjamin, et per circuitus Jerusalem, et in urbibus Jehudae, adhuc transibunt oves per manus numerantis, dicit Jehova.

Jeremiah still pursues the same subject; but he speaks here of the settled happiness of the people, as though he had said, that there was no reason for the Israelites to fear, that God would not open for them a way of return to their own country, and preserve and protect them after their return. But in setting forth their quiet and peaceable condition, he speaks of shepherds; for we know that it is a sure sign of peace, when flocks and herds are led into the fields in security. For enemies always gape after prey, and the experience of wars proves this; for whenever incursions are made by enemies, they send spies that they may know whether there are any shepherds or keepers of cattle; and then they know that there is a prey for them. As then shepherds, when an invasion from enemies is dreaded, dare not go forth, and as there is then no liberty, the Prophet, in order to intimate that the Jews would be in a tranquil state, says, There shall again be in this place the habitation of sheepherds, who will make their sheep, or their flock, to lie down

We now perceive the design of the Prophet; for one not sufficiently acquainted with Scripture might raise a question, Is this promise to be confined to shepherds and herdsmen? But, as I have already intimated, the answer is obvious, --- The promise is general, but expressed in this way, --- that God would be the guardian of his people, so that shepherds would drive here and there their flocks, and herdsmen their cattle, in perfect safety, and without any fear of danger.

And in the next verse Jeremiah confirms the same thing, where he mentions, as before, the cities of the mountains, and the cities of the plains, and then the cities of the south, and adds also the land of Benjamin, which was a different part of the country, and he mentions generally the circuits of Jerusalem and the cities of Judah What then? The flocks, he says, shall pass under the hands of a numberer Here, again, is set forth a greater security, because shepherds would not, as it were, by stealth lead forth their sheep, and afterwards gather them in a hurry, as it is usually done, when there is any fear of danger. The sheep, he says, shall pass under the hands of a numberer This could not be the case but in time of perfect peace

and quietness; for where there is fear, the shepherds can hardly dare send forth their flocks, and then they dare not number them, but shut them in; and they are also often compelled to drive their flocks into forests and desert places, in order to conceal them. When, therefore, Jeremiah mentions the numbering of them, he intimates that the whole country would be in a state of peace, as in other words, and without a figure, he presently will tell us. But the Prophet in this way exalted the benefits of God, and at the same time strengthened the minds of the weak, for as it has been said, this favor could have hardly been tasted by the Jews while in a state so despairing. The Prophet then made use of a homely and ordinary style when he spoke of flocks and herds. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 33:14

14. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah.

14. Ecce dies veniunt, dicit Jehova, et excitabo (vel, stabilium) sermonum meum benum, quem loquutus sum (vel, pronuntiavi) ad domum Israel et ad domum Jehudah.

Jeremiah now shews why God had promised that there would be a quiet habitation for shepherds, so that no one would by force take away their flocks. For God declares, that his promise would not be void, as its effects would shortly be evident, even when his mercy was known by the ten tribes and by the kingdom of Judah. Hence he says, The days shall come; for it behoved the faithful to look farther than to their present condition. As they were then exposed to slaughter, though the unbelieving still entertained vain hopes, yet the children of God saw thousand deaths; so that it could not be but that terror almost drove them to despair; and in their exile they saw that they were far removed from their own country, without any hope of a return. That the Prophet then might still support these, he bids them to extend their thoughts to a future time; and he had prefixed, as we have before seen, seventy years. It is the same then as though he had said, that the favor of which he predicts could not be laid hold on, except the faithful held their minds in suspense, and patiently waited until the time of the promised deliverance came.

Coming then are the days, and I will rouse, or as some render it, ``and I will establish;'' and both meanings may suit; for {קוּם} kum, means to rise, but here in an active or transitive sense it means to make to rise. However, its meaning sometimes is to establish, and sometimes to rouse, [316] so as to make that to appear which was before hidden. And this mode of speaking is fitly adopted as to the promises of God; for they seem for a time to he dormant without any effect, or seem to disappear or vanish away. Hence the stability of the promises then appears, and is seen when God raises them up, they being before hidden and concealed from the faithful. The meaning of the Prophet is, that God would at length render evident the power of his word, by fulfilling it.

But from this manner of speaking, a useful doctrine may be deduced: for we are thus reminded that the promises of God are not always so manifest, that their

[316] So is the Vulg., "suscitabo," "I will awake," or rouse; and also the Sept. and the Targ. — Ed.

effect or accomplishment is evident to us, but on the contrary they may appear to be dead and void. When it is so, let us learn to exercise faith and patience, so that our souls may not tremble, though God's promises may not every moment manifest their power by being actually fulfilled. In short, the true application of prophetic truth is, that we never lay hold on, and really embrace the promises of God, except we look forward to the days that are coming, that is, except we patiently wait for the time prefixed by God: and further, except our faith leans on the promises, when they seem to he dormant, it is not firm, and has no roots or foundations; for as the root which nourishes the tree is not seen, but lies hid in the earth, and as the foundation of a house is not visible to our eyes, so ought our faith to be in like manner founded, and to drive deep roots into God's promises, so that its firmness may not be in the air, nor have a visible surface, but a hidden foundation. This then is the import and the proper application of this doctrine.

But God calls it his good word, because he had promised to be the deliverer of his people. The word of God, when it denounces all kinds of death, and contains nothing but terrors, is always good, if goodness be taken for what is just and right; and hence God, by Ezekiel, reproves the Jews, because his word was bitter to them, and says,

``Are the ways of the Lord crooked and thorny? Ye are awry,'' he says, ``and not my word.'' (Ezekiel 18:25)

But here the goodness of the word is to be taken for the deliverance of the people; for when God shakes the despisers of his Law with terror, his word is called evil on account of its effect. At the same time, as I have already said, whether God offers to us his favor and mercy, or denounces vengeance on the unbelieving, his word is ever good and right, though it may not be pleasant. This then relates to the apprehensions of men when he says, I will rouse, or establish, my good word

He afterwards adds, which I have spoken;'by which clause he confirms the doctrine of Jeremiah, for he shews that he was its author, and that Jeremiah brought nothing from himself, but faithfully testified of his mercy and of the liberation of the people according to the commission he had received. We are at the same time reminded, that we are not presumptuously to hope for anything, except God has spoken. Let us then learn to embrace his promises, so that none of us may look for this or that, but know that then only he will be propitious to us, when we lean on his word. He afterwards speaks of the kingdom of Israel, and of the kingdom of Judah, to intimate that he would be merciful to the whole people, though the ten tribes had been for a long time separated from the tribe of Judah, and from the half tribe of Benjamin, as it has been stated elsewhere. It follows ---

Jeremiah 33:15

15. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land.

15. Diebus illis et termpore illo germinare faciam Davidi germen justitiae; et faciet judicium et justitiam in terra.

Here the Prophet shews what Paul afterwards has spoken of, that all the promises of God are in Christ yea and amen, (2 Corinthians 1:20) that is, that they do not stand nor can be valid as to us, except Christ interposes to sanction or confirm them. Then

the efficacy of God's promises depends on Christ alone. And hence the Prophets, when speaking of the grace of God, come at length to Christ, for without him all the promises would vanish away. Let us also know that the Jews had been so trained as ever to flee to God's covenant; for on the general covenant depended all particular promises. As, for instance, Jeremiah has hitherto been often prophesying of God's mercy to the people, after having punished them for their sins; now this promise was special. How then could the Jews and the Israelites believe that they should return to their own country? This special promise could have been of no moment, except as it was an appendix of the covenant, even because God had adopted them as his people. As then the Jews knew that they had been chosen as a peculiar people, and that God was their Father, hence their faith in all the promises. Now, again, we must bear in mind, that the covenant was founded on Christ alone; for God had not only promised to Abraham that he would be a Father to his seed, but had also added an earnest or a pledge that a Redeemer would come.

We now then perceive the reason why the Prophets, when they sought to strengthen the faithful in the hope of salvation, set forth Christ, because the promises had no certainty without the general covenant. And further, as the general covenant could not stand, nor have any validity, except in Christ, this is the point to which Jeremiah now turns his attention, as we have also seen in other places, especially in the twenty-third chapter, from which he repeats this prophecy. God then had promised that his people would be restored; he had also promised that he would be so propitious to them as to preserve them in safety as his people: he now adds ---

In those days, and at that time, I will raise up, I will cause to germinate; the verb in the twenty-third chapter is {הקמתי}, ekamti, I will cause to rise; but here, ``I will cause to germinate;'' and there we read, ``a righteous branch,'' but here, ``a branch of righteousness,'' which means the same thing. But why does the Prophet now speak of the seed of David? It is not an abrupt sentence; and the reason is, because the minds of the faithful would have alwass vacillated, had not Christ been brought forward, on whom the eternal and unchangeable covenant of God was founded. But they could not have had any taste of God's grace, had they not known that they had been gratuitously chosen by him. Adoption then was the foundation of the covenant; and then Christ was the earnest and pledge of the covenant, as well as of gratuitous adoption. Hence it was, that the Prophet, wishing to seal and confirm his prophecy, bids the faithful to look to Christ.

He says, In those days, and at that time; for, as it is said in the proverb, ``Even quickness is delay when we have ardent wishes,'' so now a long delay might have produced weariness iu the Israelites. That they might not, then, be carried away by too much haste, he mentions those days and that time So that if God deferred the time, that they might check themselves, he says, I will make to grow for David a righteous branch

This passage ought, no doubt, to be understood of Christ. We know that it was a common thing with the Jews, that whenever the Prophets promised to them the seed of David, to direct their attention to Christ. This was then a mode of teaching

familiarly known to the Jews. The Prophets, indeed, sometimes mentioned David himself, and not his son,

``I will raise up David,'' etc. (Ezekiel 34:23)

Now David was dead, and his body was reduced to dust and ashes; but under the person of David, the Prophets exhibited Christ. Then as to this passage, the Jews must shew their effrontery in a most ridiculous manner, if they make evasions and attempt to apply it otherwise than to Christ. This being the ease, were any one to ask now the Jews, how this prophecy has been fulfilled, it would be necessary for them to acknowledge Christ, or to deny faith in God, and also in Jeremiah. It is, indeed, certain that Jeremiah celebrates here the grace of deliverance especially on this account, because a Redeemer was shortly to come. For the return of the Jews to their own land, what was it? We know that they, even immediately at their restoration, were in a miserable state, though their condition then was much better than afterwards; for in after times they were cruelly treated by Antiochus and other kings of Syria: they were ever exposed to the heathens around them, so that they were harassed and plundered by them at pleasure. Then during the whole of that time which preceded the coming of Christ, God did not fulfill what he had promised by Jeremiah and his other servants. What is now their condition? Dispersed through the whole world; and they have been so for more than fifteen hundred years, since Christ arose from the dead; and we see that they pine away under their calamities, so their curse seems dreadful to all. God had, indeed, spoken by Moses, and then repeated it by his Prophets,

``Ye shall be for a hissing and for a curse to all nations.''
(Deuteronomy 28:37; Jeremiah 25:18)

But that punishment was to be for a time. There is, therefore, no reason for what the Jews allege. It hence appears that they are wholly destitute of all credit, and only perversely pretend, I know not what, that there may be some show, though wholly hypocritical, in what they assert. But with regard to us, we see that the promise respecting the coming of the Messiah has not been made in vain; and we also know, that it happened, through the wonderful purpose of God, that the Jews did not enjoy full and real happiness, such as had been promised at the coming of Christ, lest they should think that what all God's servants had promised was then accomplished: for we know how disposed men are to be satisfied with earthly things. The Jews might then have thought that their happiness was completed, had not God exercised them with many troubles, in order that they might ever look forward to the manifestation of Christ.

He calls it the Branch of righteousness, by way of contrast, because the children of David had become degenerated; and God had almost deemed them accursed, for the greatest part of the kings were destitute of God's grace. There was, then, but one Branch of righteousness, even Christ. We further know how wide and extensive is Christ's righteousness, for he communicates it to us. But we ought to begin with that righteousness which I have mentioned, that is, what is in opposition to the many changes which happened to the posterity of David, for things often were in a very low state. Though unto David, {לדוד} Ladavid, is often taken as meaning, ``I will

raise up the branch of David,'' yet God seems here to refer to the promise which he had made to David, as God is said in many passages to have sworn to his servant David. (Psalm 89:3; 132:11)

It follows, And he shall execute judgement and justice in the land By these words a right government is denoted; for when the two words are joined together, justice refers to the defense of the innocent, and judgment to the punishment of iniquity; for except the wicked are restrained by the fear of the law, they would violate all order. Judgment, indeed, when by itself, means the right administration of the law; but as I have already said, justice and judgment include the protection of the good, and also the restraint of the wicked, who become not obedient willingly or of their own accord. In a word, the promise is, that the king here spoken of would be upright and just, so as to be in every way perfect, and exhibit the model of the best of kings.

But we must always observe the contrast between the other descendants of David and Christ. For the Jews had seen the saddest spectacles in the posterity of David: many of them were apostates, and perverted the worship of God; others raged against the Prophets and all good men, and were also full of avarice and rapacity, and given to all kinds of lusts. Since, then, their kings had debased themselves with so many crimes, there is here promised a king who would so discharge his office as to be owned as the true minister of God.

It is, at the same time, necessary to bear in mind the character of Christ's kingdom. It is, we know, spiritual; but it is set forth under the image or form of an earthly and civil government; for whenever the Prophets speak of Christ's kingdom, they set before us an earthly form, because spiritual truth, without any metaphor, could not have been sufficiently understood by a rude people in their childhood. There is no wonder, then, that the Prophets, wishing to accommodate their words to the capacity of the Jews, should so speak of Christ's kingdom as to portray it before them as an earthly and civil government. But it is necessary for us to consider what sort of kingdom it is. As, then, it is spiritual, the justice and judgment of which the Prophet speaks, do not belong only to civil and external order, but rather to that rectitude by which it comes that men are reformed according to God's image, which is in righteousness and truth. Christ then is said to reign over us in justice and judgment, not only because he keeps us by laws within the range of our duty, and defends the good and the innocent, and represses the audacity of the wicked; but because he rules us by his Spirit. And of the Spirit we know what Christ himself declares, ``The Spirit shall convince the world of righteousness and judgment,'' etc. (John 16:8) Hence we must come to spiritual jurisdiction, if we wish to understand what that righteousness is which is here mentioned: of the same kind also is the judgment that is added. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 33:16

16. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness.

16. Diebus illis servabitur Jehudah, et Jerusalem habitabitur secure; et hoc nomen quo vocabitur ipsa, Jehova justitia nostra.

Here the Prophet extends the benefits of the kingdom to all the Jews, and shews

how much was to be expected fromthat kingdom which he had promised; for in it would be found perfect happiness and safety. Had not this been added, what we have heard of the righteous king would have appeared cold and uninteresting; for it sometimes happens, that however much the king may exercise justice and judgment, yet the people continue still miserable. But the Prophet testifies here that the people would be in every way blessed and happy, when governed by the King promised to come. Hence he says, In those days Judah shall be saved He promises salvation to the Jews, though under that name are included also, as it is often the case, the ten tribes. He adds Jerusalem, but in a similar sense, Jerusalem shall dwell safely, that is, shall be in a peaceable state. This mode of speaking is taken from Moses; for the Prophets, whenever they spoke of God's blessings, are wont to borrow their doctrine from that fountain. He then says, that the people would be saved, and then that they would be in peace and quietness.

It may now be proper to repeat what I have already touched upon, --- that the salvation mentioned here belongs to the kingdom of Christ. Had he been speaking of some earthly or temporal government, the salvation must also have been temporal. But as the spiritual and celestial kingdom of Christ is the object of the promise, the salvation mentioned must reach to the very heavens. Hence its limits are far wider than the whole world. In short, the salvation of which Jeremiah now prophesies, is not to be confined to the boundaries of a fading life, nor is it to be sought in this world, where it has no standing; but if we wish to know what it is, we must learn to raise our thoughts upwards, and above the world and everything that exists here. It is an eternal salvation. In the meantime, Christ gives us some foretaste of this salvation in this life, according to what is said,

``godliness has the promises of the present as well
as of the future life.'' (1 Timothy 4:8)

But as this promise ought to be applied to the kingdom of Christ, there is no doubt but it is perpetual, and ought to raise up our thoughts to heaven itself.

To salvation is added safety; for were the faithful ever to fear and tremble, where would be their salvation? And we know that the happiness brought to us by Christ cannot be otherwise received, except through peace, according to what Scripture so often teaches us:

``Having been justified,'' says Paul, ``we have peace with God.''
(Romans 5:1.)

And then when he speaks in the fourteenth chapter of the same Epistle of the kingdom of God, he says that it consists in joy and peace; and in another place he says,

``May the peace of God, which surpasses all conception, obtain the victory in your hearts.'' (Philippians 4:7)

Hence these things are connected together, salvation and peace, not that we enjoy this joyful and peaceful state in the world; for they greatly deceive themselves who dream of such a quiet state here, as we have to engage in a perpetual warfare, until God at length gathers us to the fruition of a blessed rest. We must, therefore, contend and fight in this world. Thus the faithful shall ever be exposed to many trou-

bles; and hence Christ reminds his disciples, ``In me ye have peace; but in theworld'' --- what? Sorrows and troubles. (John 16:33)

We now, then, see why the Prophet joined safety or security to salvation, even because we cannot otherwise know that we shall be saved, except we be fully persuaded that God so cares for our salvation as to protect us by his power, and that his aid will be always ready whenever needed.

He in the last place adds, And this is the name by which they shall call her, Jehovah our righteousness In chapter 23 (Jeremiah 23) this name is given to Christ, and to him alone it properly belongs; but it is here transferred to the Church, for whatever belongs to the head, is made common to all the members. For we indeed know that Christ has nothing as his own, for as he is made righteousness, it belongs to us, according to what Paul says,

``He is made to us righteousness, and redemption, and sanctification, and wisdom.''
(1 Corinthians 1:30)

As, then, the Father conferred righteousness on his own Son for our sake, it is no wonder that what is in his power is transferred to us. What, then, we found in the twenty-third chapter was rightly declared, for it belongs peculiarly to Christ, that he is God our righteousness. But as we partake of this righteousness, when he admits us into a participation of all the blessings by which he is adorned and enriched by the Father, it hence follows, that this also belongs to the whole Church, even that God is its righteousness. [317] Hence it is wisely said by the Prophet, that this would be the name of the whole Church, which could not be, except it had put on Christ, so that God might reign there in righteousness, for the righteousness of Christ extends to all the faithful; and Christ also dwells in them, so that they are not only the temples of Christ, but, as it were, a part of him; and even the Church itself is by Paul called Christ,

``As there are,'' he says, ``many members in the human body,
so is Christ.'' (1 Corinthians 12:12)

This cannot be applied to Christ personally, but he thus calls the Church by a metonymy, on account of that participation which I have mentioned.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast been pleased to perform to the Jews what thou didst promise, by sending the Savior, and hast also designed, by pulling down the middle wall of partition, to make us partakers of the same invaluable blessing, --- O grant, that we may embrace him with true faith, and constantly abide in him, and so know thee as our Father, that, being renewed by the Spirit of thy Son, we may wholly devote ourselves to thee, and consecrate ourselves to thy service, until at length that which is begun in us be completed, and we be filled with that glory to which thy Son, our Lord, daily invites us. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Thirty-Fifth

Jeremiah 33:17-18

17. For thus saith the LORD; David shall never want a man to sit upon the throne

[317] See Preface to the third volume. — Ed.

of the house of Israel;

17. Quia sic dicit Jehova, non exeidetur Davidi vir qui sedeat super solium domus Israel;

18. Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually.

18. Et sacerdotibus Levitis non excidetur vir coram facie mea, qui aecendat holocaustum, adoleat oblationem et faciat sacrificium cunctis diebus.

The Prophet had spoken of the restoration of the Church; he now confirms the same truth, for he promises that the kingdom and the priesthood would be perpetual. The safety of the people, as it is well known, was secured by these two things; for without a king they were like an imperfect or a maimed body, and without a priesthood there was nothing but ruin; for the priest was, as it were, the mediator between God and the people, and the king represented God. We now, then, perceive the object of the Prophet, why he speaks expressly here of the kingdom and the priesthood, for the people could not otherwise have any ground to stand on. He therefore declares that the condition of the people would be safe, because there would always be some of the posterity of David, who would succeed to govern them, and there would always be some of the posterity of Levi, to offer sacrifices.

But this passage ought to be carefully noticed, for we hence gather, that though all other things were given to us according to our wishes, we should yet be ever miserable, except we had Christ as our head, to perform the office of a king and of a priest. This, then, is the only true happiness of the Church, even to be in subjection to Christ, so that he may exercise towards us the two offices described here. Hence also we gather, that these are the two marks of a true Church, by which she is to be distinguished from all conventicles, who falsely profess the name of God, and boast themselves to be Churches. For where the kingdom and priesthood of Christ are found, there, no doubt, is the Church; but where Christ is not owned as a king and a priest, nothing is there but confusion, as under the Papacy; for though they pretend the name of Christ, yet, as they do not submit to his government and laws, nor are satisfied with his priesthood, but have devised for themselves numberless patrons and advocates, it is quite evident that, notwithstanding the great splendor of the Papacy, it is nothing but an abomination before God. Let us, then, learn to begin with the kingdom and the priesthood, when we speak of the state and government of the Church.

Now we know that in David was promised a spiritual kingdom, for what was David but a type of Christ? As God then gave in David a living image of his only-begotten Son, we ought ever to pass from the temporal kingdom to the eternal, from the visible to the spiritual, from the earthly to the celestial. The same thing ought to be said of the priesthood; for no mortal can reconcile God to men, and make an atonement for sins; and further, the blood of bulls and of goats could not pacify the wrath of God, nor incense, nor the sprinkling of water, nor any of the things which belonged to the ceremonial laws; they could not, give the hope of salvation, so as to quiet trembling consciences. It then follows, that that priesthood was shadowy, and that the Levites represented Christ until he came.

But the Prophet here speaks according to the circumstances of his own time, when he says, Cut off shall not be from David a man, who may sit on the throne of the house of Israel; and then, cut off shall not be from the priests, the Levites, a man who may kindle burnt-offerings burn an oblation, etc. [318] Why does he not speak in general of the whole people? Why does he not promise that the twelve tribes would be saved? for this would be, a matter of greater moment. But as we have said, we ought to understand this principle, that every kind of blessing is included here, so that men are always in a miserable state unless they are ruled by Christ and have him as their priest.

But it may be asked here, how does this prophecy agree with facts? for from the time Jeremiah promised such a state of things, there has been no successor to David. It is true, indeed, that Zerubbabel was a leader among the people, but he was without a royal title or dignity. There was no throne, no crown, no scepter, from the time in which the people returned from their Babylonian exile; and yet God testified by the mouth of Jeremiah that there would be those from the posterity of David, who would govern the people in continual succession. He does not stay that they would be chiefs or leaders, but he adorns them with a royal title. Some one, he says, will ever remain to occupy the throne. I have said already that there has been no throne. But we must bear in mind what Ezekiel says, that an interruption as to the kingdom is not contrary to this prophecy, as to the perpetuity of the kingdom, or continued succession, (Ezekiel 21:27) for he prophesied that the crown would be cast down, until the legitimate successor of David came. It was therefore necessary that the diadem should fall and be cast on the ground, or be transverted, as the Prophet says, until Christ was manifested. As, then, this had been declared, now when our Prophet speaks of kings succeeding David, we must so understand what he says as that that should remain true which has been said of the cast down diadem. God, then, did cast down the diadem until the legitimate successor came. Ezekiel does not only say, ``Cast ye it down transverted,'' but he repeats the words three times, intimating thereby that the interruption would be long. There was, therefore, no cause of stumbling, when there was no kind of government, nor dignity, nor power; for it was necessary to look forward to the king, to whom the diadem, or the royal crown, was to be restored.

We now then see how it was that there have been always those of David's posterity who occupied the throne; though this was hidden, yet it may be gathered from other prophetic testimonies. For Amos, when he speaks of Christ's coming, makes this announcement,

``There shall come at that time one who will repair the ruins of the tabernacle of David.'' (Amos 9:11)

It was therefore necessary that the kingdom should be, as it were, demolished when Christ appeared. We further know what Isaiah says,

[318] It is better to adopt the secondary meaning of the verb, rendered “cut off,” as it is done by the Syr. and the Targ., which is that of failing or wanting, — 17. For thus saith Jehovah, — Not wanting to David shall be a man, Sitting on the throne of the house of Israel; 18. And to the priests, the Levites, Not wanting shall there be a man before me, Burning a burnt-offering, And perfuming an oblation, And making a sacrifice all the days. — Ed.

``Come forth shall a shoot from the root of Jesse.''
(Isaiah 11:1)

He does not there name David, but a private person, who was content with a humble, retired, and rustic life; for a husbandman and a shepherd, as it is well known, was Jesse the father of David. In short, whenever the Prophets declare that the kingdom of David would be perpetual, they do not promise that there would be a succession without interruption; but this ought to be referred to that perpetuity which was at length manifested in Christ alone. We have said elsewhere, how the time of return ought to be connected with the coming of Christ. For it is not necessary nor expedient to introduce an anagogical sense, as interpreters are wont to do, by representing the return of the people as symbolical of what was higher, even of the deliverance which was effected by Christ; for it ought to be considered as one and the same favor of God, that is, that he brought back his people from exile, that they might at length enjoy quiet and solid happiness when the kingdom of David should again be established.

As to the priesthood, the same difficulty might be raised, for we know that the priesthood became corrupted; nay, that for the most part the priests not only became degenerate, but altogether sacrilegious. Hence the sacerdotal name itself became nothing else but a base and wicked profanation of all sacred things. But it was God's purpose in this manner to shew that another priest was to be expected, and that men were not to look on figures and types, but were to raise their thoughts higher, even to him who was to be the only true Mediator to reconcile God to men.

By saying, who may kindle a burnt-offering, etc., he specifies certain things, or some parts of the priest's office, because the Prophets accommodated their discourses to men of their own age and time, and described the kingdom and priesthood of Christ under those external symbols, which were then in use. It is hence proper to take the ceremonies of the Law as denoting the reality, or what they signified. For Christ offered no calves, nor any incense, but fulfilled all these things which were then set forth to the people under symbols. And he speaks of burning, or perfuming the oblation, {מנחה}, meneche, for though the oblation remained entire, there was yet a perfuming made by frankincense, and a small portion of the flour was burnt. It is then a mode of speaking, when a part is stated for the whole. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 33:19-21

19. And the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, saying,

19. Et fuit sermo Jehovae ad Jeremiam, dicendo,

20. Thus saith the LORD; If ye can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season;

20. Sic dicit Jehova, Si irritum feceritis foedus meum diei et foedus meum noctis, ut non sint dies et nox suis temporibus;

21 Then may also my covenant be broken with David my servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon his throne; and with the Levites the priests, my ministers.

21. Etiam foedus meum abolebitur (hoc est, irritum fiet) cum Davide servo meo, ut non sit ei filius, qui regnet supra solium ejus et cum Levitis sacerdotibus ministris

meis.

He confirms the same thing, but by introducing a similitude; for he shews that God's covenant with the people of Israel would not be less firm than the settled order of nature. Unceasing are the progresses of the sun, moon, and stars; continual is the succession of day and night. This settled state of things is so fixed, that in so great and so multiplied a variety there is no change. We have now rain, then fair weather, and we have various changes in the seasons; but the sun still continues its daily course, the moon is new every month, and the revolving of day and night, which God has appointed, never ceases; and this unbroken order declares, as it is said in Psalm 19, the wonderful wisdom of God. The Prophet then sets before us here the order of nature, and says, that God's covenant with his Church shall be no less fixed and unchangeable than what it is with mankind, with regard to the government of the world.

We now perceive the purpose of the Prophet in saying, If void ye can make my covenant respecting the day and the night, then abolished shall be my covenant with David and the Levites Now he indirectly touches on the wickedness of the people; for the Jews did, as far as they could, overthrow, by their murmurs and complaints, the covenant of God; for in their adversities they instantly entertained the thought and also expressed it, that God had forgotten his covenant. This want of faith then is intimated by the Prophet, as though he had said, ``Why are these complaints? It is the same thing as though ye sought to pull down the sun and the moon from the heavens, and to subvert the difference between day and night, and to upset the whole order of nature; for I am the same God, who has settled the succession of day and night, and has promised that the Church shall continue for ever: ye can, therefore, no more abolish my covenant with David than the general law of nature.'' We now then understand the Prophet's object: for this was not said without conveying reproof; because they were very wicked and ungrateful to God, when they doubted his truth and constancy, respecting the promise as to the perpetual condition of the Church. He in short intimates that they were carried away, as it were, by a blind madness, when they thus hesitated to believe God's covenant, as though they attempted to subvert the whole world, so that there should be no longer any difference between light and darkness.

Hence he says, There shall be abolished my covenant with David my servant, that he should not be my son, etc. He repeats what he had said, even that it could not be but that the posterity of David should obtain the kingdom, which we know has been fulfilled in Christ. The throne of David he now calls what he had named before as the throne of the house of Israel; but he means the same thing. It is called the throne of the house of Israel, because the king and the people are relatively connected, and also because the posterity of David ruled for the public good, not for their own sake.

He adds, and with the Levites, the priests, my ministers He had called David his servant, he now calls the Levites his ministers. The word {שרת} sheret, is commonly known, and is used often by Moses, when speaking of the Levitical priesthood. Its meaning is to serve. He adds ---

Jeremiah 33:22

22. As the host of heaven cannot be numbered, neither the sand of the sea measured: so will I multiply the seed of David my servant, and the Levites that minister unto me.

22. Sicut non numeratur exercitus coelorum, et non mensuratur (in futureo tempore ponuntur hoec verba, sed ira resolvi debent, sicutli non potest numerari exercitus coelorum, et non petest modum habere; {מדד} significat metiri; mensurare non est Latinum verbum, qualiquam cogimur uti; sicut ergo non mensuratur) arena maris; sic multiplicabo semen Davidis servi mei, et Levitarum ministrorum meorum (non dicit sicuti proximo versu, uno verbo, {משרתי}, sed dicit {אותי} {משרתי}, hoc est, qui ministrant mihi, sed idem est sensus)

There is an omission at the beginning; the particle of comparison is left out, for {אשר} asher, cannot be taken for {כאשר} caasher: As the hosts of the heavens cannot be numbered, nor the sand of the sea, so God promises that he would multiply the seed of David, and also the Levites. This promise, as given to Abraham, referred to the whole body of the people; for when Abraham was bidden to go out, and to look on the heavens, God made this promise to him, ``Number the stars, if thou canst, and the sands of the sea, so shall thy seed be.'' We hence see that this blessing was extended to the whole seed of Abraham, and especially to the twelve tribes. And now it is confined to the family of David, and to the Levitical tribe.

But what we have already touched upon ought to be borne in mind, --- that the safety of the people was grounded on the kingdom and the priesthood. As then kings ruled not for themselves, nor had the sacerdotal dignity been given to the Levites for their own private advantage, but for the sake of the people, so now the Prophet, stating a part for the whole, intimates that the whole people would be secure and safe, when the royal and sacerdotal dignity flourished. There is not, then, anything diminished from God's promise, as though the other tribes were not to multiply; but what Jeremiah testifies respecting the family of David and the Levitical tribe, is to be extended, without any difference, to the whole Church. It is yet not without reason that an especial mention is made of David and Levi; for, as it has been said, the Church must have been in a miserable state, without a head, and without a Mediator. There is, however, no doubt but that Jeremiah alluded to that passage which we have already quoted, (Genesis 15:5; Romans 4:18) and thus he reproved the want of faith in the people; for they could not have doubted the restoration of the Church without impugning the truth of God, as though he had given only vain words to Abraham, when he said,

``Number the stars of heaven if thou canst, and the sands of the sea, so shall thy seed be.''

He therefore shews that God would be true and faithful in that promise, so as to multiply his Church like the stars of heaven, and the sands of the sea. It follows ---

Jeremiah 33:23-24

23. Moreover, the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying,

23. Et fuit sermo Jehovae ad Jeremiam, dicendo,

24. Considerest thou not what this people have spoken, saying, The two families which the LORD hath chosen, he hath even cast them off? thus they have despised

my people, that they should be no more a nation before them.

24. An non vidisti quomodo populus hic loquantur? Duas familias quas elegit Jehova in ipsis, reprobavit eas (sed abundat particula {בהם} deinde copula etiam supervacua est, nisi vertatur in adverbium temporis, nunc; nunc ergo objecit eas) et populum meum spreverunt, ut non sit amplius gens in conspectu ipsorum (hoc est, ipsorum judicio)

He now assigns a reason why he had so largely spoken of the deliverance of the people and of their perpetual preservation, even because the blessing promised by God was regarded as uncertain by the unbelieving. Farther, God not only reminds his Prophet why he bade him to repeat so often the same thing, but speaks also for the sake of the people, in order that they might know that this repetition was not in vain, as it was necessary to contend against their perverse wickedness; for they had so filled their minds and hearts with despair, that they rejected all God's promises, and gave no place to faith or hope.

There are some who explain this passage of the Chaldeans, who regarded the people with great contempt. But this explanation is cold and unmeaning. I have no doubt but that God here expostulates with the Israelites, because they relinquished the hope of a deliverance; for Jeremiah would not have spoken thus of the Chaldeans, Hast thou not seen this people? He expostulates with Jeremiah, because he had not moved from the city. He then shews, according to what I have already observed, that there was a necessity why he should so often confirm what had been said so plainly before of the return of the people, Hast thou not seen, he says, how this people speak? saying, Jehovah now rejects the two families whom he had chosen, even the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah.

It was indeed an unhappy event, that the people had been divided into two parts; for they ought to have been one nation. But though it had happened through the defection of the ten tribes that the body of the people had been torn asunder, yet the Prophet, according to the usual way of speaking, says, that the two families had been chosen The election of God was indeed different, even that the seed of Abraham might be one: for as there is but one head, so there ought to be but one body. But God had not wholly cast away the ten tribes, though they had wickedly and impiously revolted from the family of David. He then says, according to the language which prevailed, that the two families had been rejected, that is, the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah. Now the people said, that both were rejected, which was true, but not in the sense they intended; for as it has been before said, they thought that there was no hope remaining, as though the covenant of God had been wholly abolished, while yet the rejection was only for a time.

We hence see what God reproved in the common language of the people, even because they entertained no hope of mercy and pardon; for being struck with amazement, they had cast aside every thought of God's promises, when they saw that they were to go into exile. For as before they had hardened themselves against threatenings, so now despair immediately laid hold on their minds, so that they could not conceive any idea of God's goodness and mercy. He adds, that the people were contemptible in their eyes, so as not to be a nation any more Thus in the third place

he teaches what we have before observed.

Jeremiah 33:25-26

25. Thus saith the LORD; If my covenant be not with day and night, and if I have not appointed the ordinantes of heaven and earth;

25. Sic dicit Jehova, Si non foedus meum diei et noctis, leges coelorum et terrae non posuero (repetendum est {אם} si, si non posuero leges, vel, statuta, coelorum et terrae:)

26. Then will I cast away the seed of Jacob, and David my servant, so that I will not take any of his seed to be rulers over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: for I will cause their captivity to return, and have mercy on them.

26. Etiam semen Jacob et Davidis servi mei reprobabo, ut non assumam ex semine ejus qui dominetur super semine Abrahae, Isaac et Jacob; quia reducam captivitatem eorum, et miserabor eorum.

Here God opposes the constancy of his faithfulness to their perverse murmurings, of which he had complained; and he again adduces the similitude previously brought forward: *``If,* then, I have not fixed my covenant, or if there is no covenant as to the day and the night, --- if there are no laws as to heaven and earth, then I shall now cast away the seed of Jacob and the seed of David: but if my constancy is ever conspicuous as to the laws of nature, how is it that ye ascribe not to me my due honor? For I am the same God, who created the heaven and the earth, who fixed all the laws of nature which remain unchangeable, and who also have made a covenant with my Church. If my faithfulness as to the laws of nature changes not, wily should it change as to that sacred covenant which I have made with my chosen people?''

We now see the reason why God so often confirmed a thing in itself sufficiently clear, even because the contest with the obstinate hopelessness of the people was difficult. For they thought that they were rejected without any hope of deliverance, when God punished them only for a time for their wickedness, as they deemed their exile to be without a return.

He mentions the seed of Jacob first, because it had been said to Abraham, For thy seed, and the same promise was repeated to Jacob. (Genesis 26:4; Genesis 28:14) He afterwards adds the seed of David, because an especial promise was afterwards given to David, (2 Samuel 7:12, 13:) Then also the seed of David, he says, will I reject, that I should not take of his seed to rule over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: he now fitly joins together what might have seemed unconnected; for he says, that there would be always some of David's posterity to rule over all the tribes. God, therefore, thus preserved his Church when he set a king over his Church; or a kingdom, as we have said, is inseparable from the safety of the people.

He lastly adds, For I will restore their captivity This obviated the diffidence of the people: for an objection was ready at hand, ``What can this mean? for the ten tribes have been already led away into distant regions, and are scattered; a part also of the kingdom of Judah has been cut off; and what remains is not far from entire ruin.'' Hence God calls their attention to the hope of deliverance, as though he had said, that they were acting foolishly, because they were thus hasty, for their expectation ought to have remained in suspense until the time prescribed, that is, till the end of

the seventy years, according to what we have before seen, when the Prophet spoke against impostors who boasted of a quick return. He therefore tells them that they ought patiently to bear their exile, until the full time of their deliverance came. And he points out the fountain or cause of their deliverance when he says, I will have mercy on them, as though he had said, that the very salvation whieh he promised to the people depended on his gratuitous mercy.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou settest before us daily, both in the heavens and on the earth, an illustrious example, not only of thy power and wisdom, but also of thy goodness and faithfulness, --- O grant, that we may learn to raise up our thoughts still higher, even to that hope which is laid up for us in heaven, and that we may so suffer ourselves to be agitated by the various changes of this world, that yet our hope may remain fixed in thee, and that whatever may happen, we may be fully persuaded that thou wilt be in such a way our Father, that we shall at length enjoy that blessed rest, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Jeremiah 34

Lecture One Hundred and Thirty-Sixth

CHAPTER 34

Jeremiah 34:1-2

1. The word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and all his army, and all the kingdoms of the earth of his dominion, and all the people, fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities thereof, saying,

1. Sermo qui fuit ad Jeremiam a Jehova, cum Nebuchadnezer rex Babylonis et totus excreitus ejus et omnia regna terrae, quae sub dominatione marius ejus erant, et omnes populi pugnarent contra Jerusalem (hoc est, oppugnarent Jerosolymam) et cunctas urbes, dicendo,

2. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; Go and speak to Zedekiah king of Judah, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire:

2. Sic dicit Jehova, Deus Israel, Vade et dices Zedechiae regi Jehudah, dices, inquam, illi, Sic dicit Jehova, Ecce ego trado urbem hanc in manum regis Babylonis, et incendet eam igni.

It is no wonder, nor ought it to be deemed useless, that the Prophet so often repeats the same things, for we know how great was the hardness of the people with whom he had to do. Here, then, he tells us that he was sent to King Zedekiah when the city was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar and his whole army. The Prophet mentions the circumstances, by which we may understand how formidable that siege was, for Nebuchadnezzar had not brought a small force, but had armed many and various people. Hence the Prophet here expressly mentions the kingdoms of the earth and the nations who were, under his dominion

Zedekiah was then the king at Jerusalem, and there remained two other cities safe, as we shall hereafter see; but it is evident how unequal he must have been

to contend with an army so large and powerful. Nebuchadnezzar was a monarch; the kingdom of Israel had been cut off, which far exceeded in number the kingdom of Judah; and he had subdued all the neighboring nations. Such a siege then ought to have immediately taken away from the Jews every hope of deliverance; and yet the Prophet shews that the king was as yet resolute, and there was still a greater obstinacy among the people. But Zedekiah was not overbearing; we find that he was not so proud and so cruel as tyrants are wont to be: as then he was not of a ferocious disposition, we hence see how great must have been the pride of the whole people, and also their perverseness against God, when they made the king to be so angry with the Prophet. Yet the state of things as described ought to have subdued his passion; for as ungodly men are elevated by prosperity, so they ought to be humbled when oppressed with adversity. The king himself, as well as the people, were reduced to the greatest extremities, and yet they would not be admonished by God's Prophet; and hence it is expressly said in 2 Chronicles 36:16, that Zedekiah did not regard the word of the Prophet, though he spoke from the mouth of the Lord, by whom he had been sent.

The sum of this prophecy is as follows: --- He first says that the word was given him by Jehovah; and secondly, he points out the time, for what reason we have already stated. For if he had reproved Zedekiah when there was peace and quietness, and when there was no fear of danger, the king might have been easily excited, as it is usual, against the Prophet. But when he saw the city surrounded on every side by so large and powerful an army, --- when he saw collected so many from the kingdoms of the earth, --- so many nations, that he could hardly muster up the thousandth part of the force of his enemies, wthat he could not and would not, notwithstanding all this, submit to God and acknowledge his vengeance just, --- this was an instance of extreme blindness, and a proof that he was become as it were estranged in mind. But God had thus blinded him, because his purpose was, as it is said elsewhere, to bring an extreme punishment on the people. The blindness, then, and the madness of the king, was an evidence of God's wrath towards the whole people; for Zedekiah might have appeased God if he had repented. It was then God's will that he should have been of an intractable disposition, in order that he might by such perverseness and obstinacy bring on himself utter ruin.

He mentions Nebuchadnezzar and his whole army; he afterwards describes the army more particularly, with all the kingdoms under his dominion, and all nations When Jerusalem was in this condition, the Prophet was sent to the king. The substance of the message follows, even that the city was doomed to destruction, because God had resolved to deliver it into the hand of the enemy. This was a very sad message to Zedekiah. Hypocrites, we know, seek flatteries in their calamities; while God spares them they will not bear to be reproved, and they reject wise counsels, and even become exasperated when God's Prophets exhort them to repent. But when God begins to smite them, they wish all to partake of their misfortunes; and then also they accuse God's servants of cruelty, as though they insulted their misery by setting their sins before them.

This is what we are taught by daily experience. When any one of the common

people, at the time when God does not chasten them either by disease or poverty, or any other adversity, is admonished, the petulant answer is, ``What do you mean? in what respect am I worthy of blame? I am conscious of no evil.'' Thus hypocrites boast as long as God bears with them, and though his kindness spares them. But when any adversity happens to them, when any one is laid on his bed, when another is bereaved of a son or a wife, or in any way visited with afltietion, --- if then God's judgment is set before them, they think that a grievous wrong is done to them: ``What! have I not evils enough without any addition? I expected comfort from God's servants, but they exaggerate my calamities.'' In short, hypocrites are never in a fit condition to receive God's reproofs.

There is then no doubt but that Jeremiah knew that his message would be intolerable to King Zedekiah, and to his people. However, he boldly declared, as we shall see, what God had committed to him. And we further perceive how stupid and hardened Zedekiah must have been, for he hesitated not to cast God's Prophet into prison, even at the time when things were come into extremity. It was the same thing as though God with a stretched out arm and a drawn sword had shewn himself to be his enemy; yet he ceased not to manifest his rage against God; and as he could do nothing worse, he cast God's servant into prison; and though he did this, not so much through the impulse of his own mind as that of others, he yet could not have been excused from blame.

Now the Prophet says, Behold, I will deliver this city into the hand of the king of Babylon Had he simply said that the city would in a short time be taken, it would have been a general truth, not effectual but frigid. It was therefore necessary to add this, --- that the ruin of the city was a just punishment inflicted by God. And Zedekiah was also thus reminded, that though he were stronger than his enemy, yet he could not effectually resist him, for the war was carrid on under the authority of God, as though he had said, ``Thou thinkest that thou contendest with men; it would be difficult enough for thee and more than enough, to contend with the eastern monarchy and so many nations and kingdoms; farther than this, God himself is thine enemy; have regard to him, that thou mayest learn to dread his judgment.'' And that the words might be more forcible, God himself speaks in his own person, Behold, he says, I will deliver this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he will burn it with fire This last sentence was a dreadful aggravation; for it often happens that cities are taken, and the conquerors are satisfied with the spoils. When, therefore, Nebuchadnezzar came against the city of Jerusalem with so much rage that he burnt it, it was a proof of the dreadful vengeance of God. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 34:3

3. And thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon.

3. Et tu non liberaberis e manu ejus, quia comprehendendo comprehenderis et in manum ejus traderis; et oculi tui videbunt oculos regis Babylonii, et os ejus loquetur ad os tuum (vel, eum ore tuo) et Babylonem migrabis.

As Zedekiah saw the people still doing their duty he despised his enemy; for as

the city was very strongly fortified, he hoped to be able to preserve it a little time longer. Hence was the false hope of deliverance; for he thought that the enemy being wearied would return into Chaldea. He was deceived by this expectation. But the Prophet forthwith assailed him, and declared that he would become a captive, which Zedekiah indeed deserved through his ingratitude: for Nebuchadnezzar had put hint in the place of his nephew, when Jeconiah was led away into Babylon and had made him king. He afterwards revolted from the king of Babylon, to whom he had pledged his faith, and to whom he became tributary. But the Prophet did not regard these intermediate causes, but the primary cause, the fountain, even because the people had not ceased to add sins to sins, because they had been wholly untameable and had rejected all promises, and had also closed their ears against all wise counsels. Then God, resolving to inflict extreme punishment on a people so perverse and desperate, blinded their king, as we have before said, so that he revolted from the king of Babylon, and thus brought destruction on himself, and the city, and the whole country. Thus God overruled the intermediate causes which are apparent to us; but he had his hidden purpose which he executed through external means.

He then says, Thou shalt not be freed from his hand, for thou shalt be taken; and then he adds, Thou shalt be delivered into his hand What he says in many words might have been expressed in one sentence: but it was necessary to rouse the king's sottishness, by which he was inebriated, so that he might be awakened in order that he might dread the punishment which was at hand, which, however, was not the case; but he was thereby rendered more inexcusable. Thus the threatenings which God repeats by his servants are never useless; for if the ears of those who are reproved are deaf, yet what God declares will be a testimony against them, so that every excuse on the ground of ignorance is removed.

He says afterwards, Thine eyes shall see the eyes of the king of Babylon And this happened; but his eyes were afterwards pulled out. He met, indeed, with singular disgrace, for he was taken to Riblah and tried as a criminal. He was not treated as a king, nor did he retain any of his former dignity; but he was taken before the tribunal of the king of Babylon as a thief or a miscreant. Then after he was convicted of ingratitude and treachery, the Chaldean king ordered his children to be slain before his eyes, and also his chief men and counsellors, and himself to be bound with chains and his eyes to be pulled out; and he brought him to Babylon. It was, then, a most cruel punishment which the king of Babylon inflicted on Zedekiah. And the Prophet seems to have indirectly referred to what happened, Thine eyes, he says, shall see the eyes of the king of Babylon: he was forced to look with his eyes on the proud conqueror, and then his eyes were pulled out; but he had first seen his own children slain.

He adds, and his mouth shall speak to thy mouth, that is, ``Thou shalt hear the dreadful sentence pronounced upon thee, after thou shalt be convicted of a capital offense; the king himself shall degrade thee with all possible disgrace.'' Now, this was a harder fate than if Zedekiah had been secretly put to death. He was dragged into the light; he then underwent many terrible things when led into the presence

of his enemy. This, then, the Prophet related, that Zedekiah might understand that he in vain defended the city, for its miserable end was near at hand. He afterwards adds, ---

Jeremiah 34:4-5

4. Yet hear the word of the LORD, O Zedekiah king of Judah; Thus saith the LORD of thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword:

4. Tamen audi sermonum Jehovae, Zedechia rex Jehudah, sic dicit Jehova de to, Non morieris gladio;

5 But thou shalt die in peace: and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they burn odours for thee; and they will lament thee, saying, Ah lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the LORD.

5. In pace morieris, et combustionibus patrum tuorum regum superiorum, qui ruerunt ante re, sic comburent to, et, Heus domine, plangent super to, quia sermonum ego locutus sum, dicit Jehova.

Here Jeremiah adds some comfort, even that Zedekiah himself would not be slain by the sword, but that he would die in his bed, and, as they commonly say, yield to his fate. It was indeed some mitigation of punishment, that God extended his life and suffered him not to be immediately smitten with the sword. And yet if we consider all circumstances, it would have been a lighter evil at once to be put to death, than to prolong life on the condition of being doomed to pine away in constant misery. When the eyes are pulled out, we know that the principal part of life is lost. When, therefore, this punishment was inflicted on Zedekiah, was not death desirable? And then he was not only deprived of his royal dignity, but was bereaved also of all his offspring, and was afterwards bound with chains. We hence see that what remained to him was not so much an object of desire, he might have preferred ten times or a hundred times to die. God, however, designed it as a favor, that he was not smitten with the sword.

A question may be here raised, Ought violent death to be so much dreaded? We indeed know that some heathens have wished it. They tell us of Julius Caesar, that the day before he was killed, he disputed at supper what death was the best, and that he deemed it the easiest death ({εὐθανασίαν}) when one is suddenly deprived of life, --- the very thing which happened to him the day after. Thus he seemed to have gained his wish, for he had said, that it was a happy kind of death to be suddenly extinguished. There is, however, no doubt but that natural death is always more easy to be borne, when other things, as they say, are equal; for the feeling of nature is this, that men always dread a bloody death, and it is regarded a monstrous thing when human blood is shed; but when any one dies quietly through disease, as it is a common thing, we do not feel so much horror. Then time is granted to the sick, to think of God's hand, to reflect on the hope of a better life, and also to flee to God's mercy, which cannot be done in a violent death. When, therefore, all these are duly weighed, it ought not to be deemed strange, that God, willing to mitigate the punishment of Zedekiah, should say, Thou shaft not die by the sword, but thou shall die in peace To die in peace is to die a natural death, when no violence is used, but when God hhnself calls men, as though he stretched forth his hand to them. It is

indeed certain, that it is much better for some to be slain by the sword, than to pine away through disease: for we see that many are either seized with frenzy on their bed, or rage against God, or remain obstinate: there are, in short, dreadful examples, which daily occur, where the Spirit of God does not work nor rule. For there is then no tenderness in man, especially when he has the fear of death; he then kindles up as it were into rage against God. But, on the other hand, many who are brought into affliction, acknowledge themselves to be justly condemned, and at the same time acknowledge the punishment inflicted to be medicine, in order that they may obtain mercy before God. To many, then, it is better to die a violent death than to die in peace; but this happens through the fault of men: at the same time, natural death, as I have said, justly deserves to be much preferred to a violent and bloody death, and I have briefly stated the reasons. The subject might indeed be more fully handled, but it is enough to touch shortly on the chief point as the passage requires.

In peace, he says, shalt thou die, and then adds, with the burnings of thy fathers shall they burn thee, and lament over thee, ``Alas! Lord.'' Here is added another comfort, --- that when Zedekiah should die, there would be some to bury him, not only in a humane, but also in an honorable manner. And burial in many places is reckoned as one of God's favors, as in life God shews himself kind and bountiful to us when we are in health and in vigor. For as health and food sufficient for the necessities of life, are evidences of God's love, so is burial after death; for burial distinguishes men from brutes. When a wild beast dies, his carcase is left to putrify. Why are men buried, except in hope of the resurrection, as though they were laid up in a safe place till the time of restoration? Burial, then, as it is a symbol of our immortality, makes a distinction between us and brute animals after death. In death itself there is no difference; the death of a man and the death of a dog, have no certain marks to distinguish the one from the other. Then it is God's will that there should be some monument, that men might understand how nmch more excellent: is their condition than that of brute animals. Hence then it is, that when God favors us with a burial, he shows his paternal care towards us. On the contrary, when the body of any one is cast away, it is in itself a sign of God's displeasure, as it appeared before, when the Prophet said of Jehoiakim that his burial would be that of an ass, (Jeremiah 22:19) As then Jehoiakim was threatened with the burial of an ass, so now he promises an honorable burial to Zedekiah.

I said that this is true, when the thing is in itself considered. For it sometimes happens that the most wicked are buried with honor and great pomp, when the children of God are either burnt or torn by wild beasts. Known is that complaint of the Psalmist, that the bodies of the saints were cast away and became food to birds and wild beasts. (Psalm 79:2) And it is said of the rich man, who lived in splendor, that he died and was buried, but there is no mention made of the burial of Lazarus. (Luke 16:22) We ought not then simply to conclude, that those are miserable who are not buried, and that those are blessed who obtain the honor of a burial. As the sun is said to rise on the children of God and on strangers, so also after death, as burial is a temporal benefit, it may be considered as belonging indiscriminately to the good and to the bad. It may on the contrary be, that God should deprive his children

of a burial; yet still that truth remains fixed, that burial in itself is an evidence of God's favor; and that; when any one is cast away and denied a burial, it is a sign of God's displeasure. When yet we come to individuals, the Lord turns a temporal punishment into a benefit to his own people; and makes his temporal blessings to serve for a heavier condemnation to all the reprobate and ungodly, hence they were barbarous who dared to deride burial, as the Cynics did, who treated burial with contempt. This was inhumanity.

But we ought to hold these points, --- that as God supplies us with bread, wine, and water, and other necessaries of life, in order to feed us, and to preserve us in health and rigor, so we ought to regard burial; but when the faithful are exposed to hunger, when they die through cold or nakedness, or when they are made subject to other evils, and when they are treated ignominiously after death, all this turns out for their salvation, for the Lord regards their good even when he seems to afflict them with adversities.

This, then, is the reason why the Prophet now in some measure mitigates the sorrow of Zedekiah, by saying,. They shall bury thee, and with the burnings of thy fathers shall they burn thee This was not a common but a royal mode of burial. He then promises, that after many degradations and reproaches, God would at length shew him, when dead, some favor. But one may say, what would this avail Zedekiah? for his body would then be without sense or feeling. But. it was well to hear of this kindness of God, for he might thereby conclude that God would be at length merciful to him, if he really humbled himself. There is then no doubt but that a hope of pardon was promised to him, though he was to be sharply and severely chastised even until he died. God then intended that this symbol should ever be remembered by him, that he might not wholly despair. We now then understand why the Prophet promised this to Zedekiah, not that it might be a matter of interest to him to be buried with honor, but that he might have some conception of God's kindness and mercy.

Now we know that the dead bodies of kings were burnt at a great expense; many precious odors were procured, a fire was kindled, and the bodies were seared; not that they were reduced to ashes, (for this was not the custom, as among the Romans and other nations, who burnt the bodies of the dead, and gathered the ashes) But among the Jews, the body was never burnt; only they kindled a fire around the dead body, that putrefaction might not take place. The bodies of the dead were dried by a slow fire. This was not indeed commonly done, but only at the burials of kings, as it appears from the case of Asa and of others. (2 Chronicles 16:14)

Then he says, With the burnings of thy fathers shall they burn thee, and they shall lament thee, ``Alas! Lord,'' it may be asked, whether these lamentations were approved by God? To this there is a ready answer, --- that the Prophet does not here commend immoderate mourning, and cryings, and ejaculations, when he says, they shall lament thee, but that he took the expression from what was commonly done, as though he had said, ``They shall perform for thee this office of humanity, such as is usually done over the remains of kings in full power, in the day of their prosperity.'' God, then, in speaking here of lamentation and mourning, does not commend them as virtues, or as worthy of praise, but refers only to what was then commonly done.

But we know what Paul especially teaches us, --- that we are so to moderate our sorrow, as not to be like the unbelieving, who have no hope, (1 Thessalonians 4:13) for they think that death is the death of the soul as well as of the body: they therefore lament their dead as for ever lost; and they also murmur against God, and sometimes utter horrid blasphemies. Paul then would have us to be moderate in our sorrow. He does not condemn sorrow altogether, but only requires it to be moderate, so that we may shew what influence the hope of resurrection has over us.

And yet there is no doubt but that men, in this respect, exceed moderation. It has commonly been the case almost in all ages to be ostentatious in mourning for the dead. For not only are they without genuine feeling in lamenting for their friends or relatives, but they are carried away by a sort of ambition, while burying the dead with great noise and lamentation. When they are alone they contain themselves, so that at least they make no noise; but when they go out before others, they break forth into noisy lamentations. It hence appears that, as I have said, mourning is often ostentatious. But as men have from the beginning gone astray in this respect, greater care ought to be taken by us, that each of us may check and restrain himself. Still it is natural, as I have said, to weep for the dead; but doubtless, it may be said, the ejaculations mentioned by the Prophet cannot be approved; for to what purpose was it to cry, ``Alas! Lord; our king is dead,'' and things of the same kind? But we ought to bear in mind, that eastern nations were always excessive in this respect, and we find them to be so at this day. The warmer the climate the more given to gestures and ceremonies the people are. In these cold regions gesticulations and crying out, ``Alas! Lord, alas! father,'' would be deemed impertinent and foolish. But where they tear off their hair, and also cut themselves and tear their cheeks not only with their nails, but also with knives, --- where they do these things, they also utter these ejaculations spoken of by the Prophet.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as it is ever expedient for us to be often chastised by thine hand, --- O grant, that we may learn to bear thy scourges patiently, and with quiet minds, and so acknowledge our sins, that we may not at the same time doubt but that thou wilt be merciful to us, and that we may with this confidence ever flee to seek pardon, and that it may avail also to increase our repentance, so that we may strive more and more to put off all the vices of the flesh, and to put on the new man, so that thine image may be renewed in us, until we shall at length come to partake of that eternal glory, which thou hast prepared in heaven for us, through Christ thy Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Thirty-Seventh

Jeremiah 34:6-7

6. Then Jeremiah the Prophet spake all these words unto Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem,

6. Et loquutus est Jeremias Propheta ad Zedechiam, regem Jehudah, omnes sermones istos in Jerusalem.

7. When the king of Babylon's army fought against Jerusalem, and against all the cities of Judah that were left, against Lachish, and against Azekah: for these

defenced cities remained of the cities of Judah.

7. Et exercitus regis Babylonii pugnabant (hoc est, oppugnabant) Jerusalem et onmes urbes Jehudah quae residuae erant, nempe Lachis et Azekah, quoniam ipsae restabant in urbibus Jehudah urbes munitionis (id est, minutiae)

Here Jeremiah only relates that he had delivered the message committed to him; and here is seen the Prophet's magnanimity, for as it appeared yesterday, he was an unwelcome messenger; and though there was danger, yet Jeremiah performed his office, for he knew that God would not suffer the king to do anything to him unless it were for some benefit. There is then no doubt but that he deposited his life in God's hand, and offered himself, as it were, a sacrifice, when he dared openly to threaten the king, which could not have been done without offending him; and

``the wrath of a king,'' as Solomon says,

``is the messenger of death.'' (Proverbs 16:14)

Here, then, the firmness of the Prophet is deserving of praise; for he dreaded no danger when he saw that necessity was laid on him by God.

He again repeats that Jerusalem was then surrounded by the army of the king of Babylon, as well as the other cities of Judah, which he names, even Lachish and Azekah. He seems, therefore, indirectly to reprove the arrogance of Zedekiah, for he still retained his high spirits, when yet he was reduced to such straits. All the cities of Judah, --- how many were they? Two, says the Prophet. This, then, was no unsuitable way of indirectly exposing to ridicule the vain confidence of the king, who still thought that he could overcome the enemy, though he was master only of three cities, that is, Jerusalem, Lachish, and Azekah. But the Prophet gives a reason why these cities did not immediately fall into the hands of the king of Babylon, because they were fortified. It hence follows, that the other cities were taken without trouble, or that they surrendered of their own accord. Zedekiah the king was then deprived of his power, and yet he had not relinquished the ferocity of his mind, nor was he terrified by the threatenings of the Prophet; and this was a proof of extreme madness. For he hence appears that he was alienated in mind; for. the dreadful hand of God was put forth against him, and yet he rushed headlong to his own ruin as a wild beast destitute of reason. Let us proceed, ---

Jeremiah 34:8-17

8 This is the word that came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, after that the king Zedekiah had made a covenant with all the people which were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty unto them;

8. Sermo qui factus est ad Jeremiam a Jehova, postquam percussit rex Zedechias foedus cum toto popalo, qui erant in Jerusalem, ad promulgandum ipsis (hoc est, inter ipsos) libertatem;

9. That every man should let his manservant, and every man his maidservant, being an Hebrew or an Hebrewess, go free; that none should serve himself of them, to wit, of a Jew his brother.

9. Ut dimitteret quisque servum suum, et quisque ancillam suam (vir, vir, ad verbum, sed significat quisque indefinite) Hebraeum vel Hebraeum liberos, ut ne ultra servirent ipsis (vel, transitive, ut alii malunt et bene quadrat, ut non haberent

cos servos) inter Judaeos vir fratrem suum.

10. Now when all the princes, and all the people, which had entered into the covenant, heard that every one should let his manservant, and every one his maidservant, go free, that none should serve themselves of them any more; then they obeyed, and let them go.

10. Et audierunt omnes principes et torus populus, qui venerant ad foedus, ut dimitteret servum suum et ancillam suam liberos, ut ne servirent amplius ipsis (vel, ut ne dominarentur) et obedierunt et dimiserunt.

11. But afterward they turned, and caused the servants and the handmaids, whom they had let go free, to return, and brought them into subjection for servants and for handmaids.

11. Et reversi aunt (hoc est, mutarunt concilium) postea, et reduxerunt servos suos et ancillas suas quos dimiserant liberos et subegerunt cos in servos et ancillas.

12. Therefore the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

12. Et fuit sermo Jehovae ad Jeremiam a Jehova, dicendo, (hoec necessario contexere oportet)

13. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel; I made a covenant with your fathers in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondmen, saying,

13. Sic dicit Jehova, Deus Israel, Ego percussi foedus cum pattibus vestris die quo eduxi ipsos e terra Egypti, e domo servorum, dicendo,

14. At the end of seven years let ye go every man his brother an Hebrew, which hath been sold unto thee; and when he hath served thee six years, thou shalt let him go free from thee: but your fathers hearkened not unto me, neither inclined their ear.

14. A fine septem annorum dimittetis quisque fratrem suum Hebraeum, qui venditus tibi fuerit et serviret tibi sex annis, et dimittes liberum abesse tecum (hoc est, ut non sit amplius tecum, vel apud to) et non audierunt patres vestri me, et non inclinarunt aurem suam.

15. And ye were now turned, and had done right in my sight, in proclaiming liberty every man to his neighbour; and ye had made a covenant before me in the house which is called by my name:

15. Et conversi estis vos hodie, et fecistis quod rectum erat in oculis meis, promulgando libertatem quisque proximo suo, et pepigistis foedus coram facie mea in domo super quam invocatum est nomen meum:

16. But ye turned and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom ye had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids.

16. Et reversi estis (hoc est, mutastis consilium) et profanastis nomen meum, et reduxistis quisque servum suum, et quisque ancillam suam, quos dimiseratis liberos animae suae, (hoc est, ad arbitrium suum) et subegistis ipsos ut essent vobis in servos et ancillas.

17. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold, I proclaim

a liberty for you, saith the LORD, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.

17. Propterea sic dicit Jehova, Vos non audistis ad promulgandum libertatem quisque fratri suo, et quisque proximo suo, ecce ego pro-mulgo contra vos libertatem, dicit Jehova, gladio et pesti et fatal, et dabo vos in commotionum (vel, concussionem) cunctis regnis terrae.

Though we do not read that what the Prophet relates here was done by God's command, yet we may easily gather that Zedekiah the king had been admonished to liberate the servants according to the Law, as written in Exodus 21:2. It was God's will that some difference should be between the people he had adopted and other nations; for God had chosen the seed of Abraham as his peculiar treasure, and other nations were in this respect aliens. It was therefore his will to establish this law among the people of Israel, that servitude should not be perpetual, except one bound himself willingly, of his own accord, through his whole life, according to what we read in Deuteronomy 15:16, 17; for when one of an ignoble mind deprived himself of the benefit of this law, his master bored his ear with an awl; and having this mark, he could no longer become free, except, perhaps, he lived to the jubilee year. By the words of the Prophet we learn that this command of the Law had been disregarded, for at the end of the seventh year the servants were not made free. Hence the King Zedekiah, having been warned on the subject, called the people together, and by the consent of all, liberty was proclaimed, according to what God had commanded. But this was done in bad faith, for soon after the servants were remanded, and thus treachery was added to cruelty. They had before unjustly oppressed their brethren, but now perjury was heaped on wickedness. We hence see that they not only wronged their own brethren, by imposing on them perpetual servitude, but they also wickedly profaned the sacred name of God, having thus violated a solemn oath.

Now, Jeremiah says that he was sent at the time when, by a wicked perjury, the people began to oppress again their servants and their maids. He therefore says, that the word of Jehovah came to him after the covenant was made. A covenant he calls that solemn agreement when God's Law was revived, that servitude should not be perpetual among the people of Israel. And he expresses the same thing when he says, that a covenant was made with all the people who were at Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty to them Some take ``to them,'' {להם}, laem, as referring to the servants and maids, but we may take it as meaning among them, so that the Law should be in force, not only for the present, but perpetually. Then follows what sort of liberty it was to be, even that every one should let free his servant, and every one should let free his maid, a Hebrew or a Hebrewess, so that they should not serve Some take the verb {עבר} ober, in an intransitive, and others in a transitive sense, as we say in French, Qu'ils ne leur fussent plus serfs, ou, Qu'ils ne se servissent plus d'eux. As to the main point there is not much difference. If we take {עבר} ober, in the sense of serving, we must read thus, ``That they may not serve,'' or, ``That they may not be their servants.'' But if we take {עבר} ober, in the sense of ruling, it must be read thus, That no man, that is, that no one may rule over them, that is, over his Jewish brother, or, That no man among them should serve, that is, his Jewish brother.

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Here a question arises, Is perpetual servitude so displeasing to God, that it ought not to be deemed lawful? To this the answer is easy, --- Abraham and other fathers had servants or slaves according to the common and prevailing custom, and it was not deemed wrong in them. Before the Law was given, there was nothing to forbid one who had servants or maids to exercise power over them through life; and then the Law, mentioned here, was not given indiscriminately and generally, but it was a peculiar privilege in favor of the chosen people. Hence it is without reason that any one infers that it is not lawful to exercise power over servants and maids; for, on the contrary, we may reason thus, That since God permitted the fathers to remain servants and maids, it is a thing lawful; and further, as God permitted the Jews also, under the Law, to bear rule over aliens, and to keep them perpetually as servants, it follows that this cannot be disapproved. And still a clearer evidence may be adduced; for since the Gentiles have been called to the hope of salvation, no change has in this respect been made. For the Apostles did not constrain masters to liberate their servants, but only exhorted them to use kindness towards them, and to treat them humanely as their fellow-servants. (Ephesians 6:9; Colossians 4:1) If, then, servitude were unlawful, the Apostles would have never tolerated it; but they would have boldly denounced such a profane practice had it been so. Now, as they commanded masters only to be humane towards their servants, and not to treat them violently and reproachfully, it follows that what was not denied was permitted, that is, to retain their own servants. We also see that Paul sent back Onesimus to Philemon. (Philemon 1:12) Philemon was not only one of the faithful, but a pastor of the Church. He ought, then, to have been an example to others. His servant had fled away from him; Paul sent him back, and commended him to his master, and besought his master to forgive his theft. We hence see that the thing in itself is not unlawful.

Our servitudes have been abolished, that is, that miserable condition when one had no right of his own, but when the master had power over life and death; that custom has ceased, and the abolition cannot be blamed. Some superstition might have been at the beginning; and I certainly think that the commencement of the change arose from superstition. It is, however, by no means to be wished that there should be slaves among us, as there were formerly among all nations, and as there are now among barbarians. The Spaniards know what servitude is, for they are near neighbors to the Africans and the Turks; and then those they take in war they sell; and as one evil proceeds from another, so they retain miserable men as slaves throughout life. But as no necessity constrains us, our condition, as I have said, is better, that is, in having hired servants and not slaves; for those called servants at this day are only hired servants.

When heathens commended humanity and kindness towards servants, they said, Let them not be treated as servants, but as those who are hired. So also Cicero said.

[319] The Tarq. and the versions, except the Sept., give the idea of domineering or ruling; and this is the meaning of the verb everywhere when followed by {{ל --- To send away, a man his servant, and a man his maid, The Hebrew and the Hebrewess, free; So as not to domineer over them, A man over a Jew his brother. This is a literal rendering of the verse. But perhaps it would be better to render ``servant,'' bondman; and ``maid,'' bondwoman, as they were the married as well as the unmarried. --- Ed.

(Off. 1) he distinguished between servants and such as were hired, he calls the first slaves, that is, those who were under the power of another, and those hired servants who undertook to work for hire, as the case is with us.

But as I have already said, the practice among the chosen people was peculiar. For it was the Lord's will that those whom he had redeemed should remain free and enjoy in this respect the benefits of freedom. That there might then be a memorial of God's favor among the people of Israel, it was the Lord's will that servitude among them should be temporary, even for six years only. And as the law had been disregarded, Zedekiah exhorted the people to set free their servants. But there is no doubt but that God at the same time made it known, that external enemies justly exercised cruelty towards the people, because they themselves shewed no commiseration towards their own brethren. For when they ruled over their servants according to their own wantonness, they in vain complained of the Chaldeans or of the Assyrians, they in vain proclaimed that they were unjustly oppressed, or that the people of God were harassed by the violence of a tyrannical power; for the first originators of cruelty were themselves, and not the Chaldeans or the Assyrians. It was then on this account that Zedekiah was induced to call the people together, and that by a public act all the servants were set free.

He says, that all the princes and all the people heard, who had come to the covenant, that every one should let his servant free, etc.; and then he adds, And they obeyed The verb {שמע}, shemo, is to be taken in a twofold sense; at the beginning of the verse it refers to the simple act of hearing, and at the end of the verse, to obedience. Then he says that they obeyed, and that every one set free his servant. By saying that the princes, as well as all the people, heard, he took away every pretense as to ignorance; so that they could not make an excuse, that they relapsed through want of knowledge or through inconsideration. How so? because they had heard; nor is it to be doubted, but that the Law of God to which we have referred, had been set before them, that they might be ashamed of the iniquity and tyrannical violence which they had exercised towards their servants. The hearing then mentioned here, proves that the Jews were wholly inexcusable, for they saw that God's Law had been long disregarded by them. And hence we learn, that each of them had sinned the more grievously, as he had been taught what was right, and had, as it were, designedly cast off the yoke. So also Christ teaches us, that the servant who knows his master's will and does it not, shall be more severely punished than one who offends through ignorance. (Luke 12:47)

He then adds, And they afterwards turned, that is, after they had heard and obeyed. The turning refers to a change of purpose, for they immediately repented of what they had done. They had felt some fear of God, and then equity and kindness prevailed; but they soon turned or changed. The word is taken sometimes in a good, and sometimes in a bad sense. He says that they turned, or returned, because they receded or turned back after having commenced a right course. And they remanded; there is a correspondence between the verbs {וישובו} ishibu, they turned, and {וישיבו} ishibu, they remanded, or made to return the servants and maids whom they let go free, and brought them under as servants and maids There is no doubt but that

the Jews alleged some excuse when they thus remanded their servants, and robbed them of the privilege of freedom: but God designed that they should act in sincerity and without disguise. Whatever, then, subtle men may contrive as an excuse for oppressing the miserable, and however they may disguise things before men, yet God, who requires integrity, does not allow such disguises, for he would have us to deal honestly with our neighbors, for all craftiness is condemned by him.

Now follows the message: The Prophet had, indeed, said that the word of God had been committed to him, but he interposed this narrative, that we might know for what reason God had sent this message to the Jews. For if he had thus begun, ``The word came to Jeremiah from Jehovah,'' and then added, ``Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, I have made a covenant,'' etc., the passage would have been more obscure. It was therefore necessary that the narrative should come first, and with this the Prophet's message was connected, even that the Jews had added perjury to cruelty, and thus had committed a heinous iniquity. The Prophet now then comes to close quarters with them, and introduces God as the speaker, I made a covenant with your fathers the day I brought them up from the land of Egypt, from the house of servants

God reminded the Jews of their own law; and though he might have justly required whatever he pleased, yet he proved that the Israelites were bound to him, because he brought then, out of the house of servants Who can dare to arrogate to himself dominion over others, who is himself a servant? for there cannot be dominion where there is no liberty. Any one may be free, though without a servant; but no one can be a master except he be free. So God declares that the Israelites were not once free, for they were in a miserable state of servitude, when he stretched out his hand to them. Whence then came liberty to the Israelites? even from the gratuitous mercy of God, who made them free, who brought them forth from tyranny in Egypt. It hence follows, that they could not be masters over others, since they themselves were servants. This is the reason why he says that he made a covenant the day he brought them up from the house of servants, as though he had said, that they came forth from their prisons, because he had been pleased to draw them out, not that they might domineer for ever over their brethren, but only for a time. He relates here the law given by Moses in Exodus 21, as we have stated. At the end of seven, years [320] every one shall set free his brother, a Hebrew, who had been sold to him, and him who has served him six years he shall let free from him, that is, that he should not be with him; but your fathers hearkened not to me, nor inclined their ear The Israelites at first, no doubt, submitted to what God had commanded, but shortly after the law was disregarded. When, therefore, he complains here that his voice was not hearkened to, it ought not to be so generally understood, as that the Law had been at all times disregarded; but it is the same as though he had said, ``Your fathers formerly were disobedient, because they did not set free their servants within the

[320] It is said afterwards that for six years was the servitude to be, and yet the statement here is, "at the end of seven years." Were it not for two other places, (Deuteronomy 15:1; 31:10,) where we find the same words, we might follow the Sept. and the Arab., and read six instead of seven. The Rabbins remove the difficulty by saying that the word, {,{קץ means the commencing, as well as the terminating end or extremity; so the meaning then would be, ``at the beginning of seven years;'' and this would agree with the six years afterwards mentioned. And this is the best explanation of the passage. --- Ed.

prescribed time, at the end of the sixth year.''

This passage, as many others, clearly shews the great perverseness of the people. Certainly the Law spoken of here ought to have been well approved by the Jews, for they found that they were by a privilege exempted from the common lot of men, and had been preferred before all nations. As, then, they saw that it was a signal evidence of God's bounty towards the seed of Abraham, this ought to have allured them to observe the Law, inasmuch as they found in it what was especially suitable to them; but as every one became addicted to his own private advantage, the poor were oppressed, and a temporary servitude was changed into what was perpetual. There is no wonder then that men soon forgot what was right, though they seemed to have hearkened for a short time to God. It has been the common vice of all ages that the laws of God became soon forgotten and disregarded; so the law of freedom, though especially excellent, became, as we see, neglected.

He adds, Nor inclined their ear We have stated elsewhere that this phrase is emphatic, when added to the expression of not hearkening; for it is a proof of deliberate wickedness, when men close up their ears, and listen not to what is right. It is possible for one to neglect what is said, or not to understand it; but when one intentionally closes his ears, it is a proof of hopeless obstinacy. God, then, is wont to express by this mode of speaking, the perverseness and hardness that prevailed in the ancient people, through which they rejected all sound doctrine. And this ought to be carefully noticed; for where the word of God is made clearly known, in vain we excuse ourselves for not following what he commands, for he speaks not obscurely, as he says by Isaiah. (Isaiah 45:19) How comes it, then, that doctrine does not produce fruit in us? even because we wilfully reject it, closing our cars and disregarding God himself when he speaks. Now the reason why God brings a charge against the fathers is, that the comparison might enhance the wickedness of their children, who, after having professed that they had some regard for religion and some feeling of mercy, soon returned to their old ways, according to what follows ---

And ye now turned, and did what was right in my eyes, by proclaiming liberty every one to his neighbor: God seems at first to commend the people; and no doubt it ought to have been deemed praiseworthy, that the people, after having been reminded that they had perversely disregarded God's law, willingly engaged in doing their duty; but as they gave but a false proof of repentance, and did not really perform what they had promised, it was, as I have said, a great aggravation of their crime. So then God commended the repentance of the people, in order to shew how detestable is hypocrisy; for they shewed for a short time some feeling of humanity, but soon after proved that it was nothing but dissimulation. He therefore says, that they did what was right by proclaiming liberty And hence it also appears that they had not gone astray through ignorance, for God had required this kindness from them, that is, to restore what had been wickedly taken away from servants and maids, and to let them free again: except they had been constrained by the clear testimony of the Law, they would have never thus given up their private advantages. But after having made a pretense that they wished to obey God, they again soon remanded their servants and their maids. It hence appears evident that they trifled with God,

and that it was a mere fraud to set free their servant only for a short time.

He says that they made a covenant in the house on which his name had been called, and also, that they had profaned his name All this added to their wickedness; for not only liberty had been proclaimed and confirmed by an oath, but this had also been done in the Temple. Hence he aggravates the sin of the people by this circumstance, --- that they had made the covenant which they afterwards violated in the presence of God. For though the eyes of God penetrate into the most hidden recesses, yet the wickedness of the people became greater, and it was an evidence of men lost to all shame, that they dared to violate their pledged faith, and thus to shew no regard for the Temple, as though they had lost all reverence for God and all fear. It is hence evident how profane they were become, that they dared to come to the Temple and to make an oath before God, and then immediately to forfeit their faith.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since we have been redeemed by thine only-begotten Son, not only from temporal servitude, but also from the miserable tyranny of the devil and death, --- O grant, that we may acknowledge thee as our Deliverer, and so wholly devote ourselves to thee, that we may also labor to serve one another, and by mutual acts of kindness so cherish among ourselves brotherly love, that it may appear that thou indeed rulest among us, and that we are subject to thee through the same thy Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Thirty-Eighth

Jeremiah 34:16

16. But ye turned, and polluted my name, and caused every man his servant, and every man his handmaid, whom he had set at liberty at their pleasure, to return, and brought them into subjection, to be unto you for servants and for handmaids.

16. Et reversi estis et polluistis nomen meum, et reduxistis quisque servum suum, et quisque ancillam suam, quos dimiseratis liberas animae suae (id est, arbitrio suo) et subegistis eos, ut essent vobis in servos et in ancillas.

The Prophet expostulates here with the Jews, as we said in the last Lecture, with regard to their perjury; for they had made in a solemn manner a covenant in the Temple of God, to set free their servants according to what the law prescribed. There would have been no need of such a ceremony, had they observed what they learnt from the Law; but neither they nor their fathers observed the equity prescribed to them by God. Hence there was a necessity for a new promise, sanctioned by sacrifice. The Prophet commended them for obeying God's command. But he now shews, that they were the more inexcusable, because they soon after returned to their old ways. But ye turned, he says, that is, they soon repented of the obedience they had promised to render to God. Their promptitude was worthy of praise, when they promised that they would willingly obey; but by doing this in bad faith, they treated God with mockery.

He adds that God's name was polluted We hence learn that whenever we misuse God's name, it is a kind of sacrilege; for nothing is deemed more precious by God than truth; yea, as he himself is truth, and is so called, (John 14:6) there is nothing more

adverse to his nature than falsehood. It is then an intolerable profanation of God's name whenever it is falsely appealed to; and thus perjury is allied with sacrilege. God's name is indeed polluted in other ways than by perjury, that is, when God's name is taken in vain rashly, thoughtlessly, and without reverence. But the most heinous pollution of it is, when the truth is changed into a lie. This passage then contains a useful doctrine, which teaches us to act faithfully, especially when God's name is interposed.

He afterwards adds, Ye have remanded every one his servant and every one his maid, whom ye have set free, etc. The crime was doubled by this circumstance, --- that they had emancipated their servants, and then remanded them. For had they not dissembled, their obstinacy could by no means have been tolerated; but their rebellion became still more base, when they had pretended to obey God, and it became shortly known that they had perfidiously promised liberty to their servants. He says that they were set free to their own soul, that is, to their own will; for we call men free when it is in their power to choose what they please, for when they are under the power of another, they have no will, no choice of their own. [321] And indignity is increased, when servants who have been made free are afterwards deprived of so great a privilege; for nothing is more desirable than liberty, as even heathens have declared. He adds that this was done by force, Ye have made them subject The verb {כבש} cabesh, means to subject and to oppress. The Prophet then shews, that those who had been made free, were not willing to return to their miserable condition, and that they were not constrained to submit to the yoke in any other way than by tyranny. [322] It hence appears that their masters not only employed deceit, but also cruel and tyrannical violence; so that to perjury they added inhumanity, which more increased their crime. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 34:17

17. Therefore thus saith the LORD, Ye have not hearkened unto me, in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother, and every man to his neighbour: behold, I proclaim a liberty for you, saith the LORD, to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will make you to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth.

17. Propterea sic dicit Jehova, Vos non audistis me ad promulgandam (hoc est, ut promulgaretis) libertatem quisque fratri suo, et quisque proximo suo (vel, propinquo, vel, sodali suo) ecce promulgo contra vos libertatem, dicit Jehova, gladio, pesti et fami, et dabo vos in commotionum cunctis regnis terrae (alii vertunt, ecce promulgo vobis libertatem ad gladium et ad pestera et ad famem; quantum ad summam rei pertinet, non multum est discriminis utrumvis legamus, nempe, promulgo vobis libertatem ad, etc., vel, promulgo contra vos libertatem gladio, etc., ut videbimus)

Here the Prophet shews that a just reward was prepared for the Jews, who robbed their brethren of the privilege of freedom, for they also would have in their turn to serve after the Lord had made them free. But he alludes to the way then in use in

[321] Our version, "at their pleasure," is the best, or we may render it, "to themselves," as {נפש often has this meaning. --- Ed.

[322] The verb means here evidently to constrain or to force, — And ye have forced them to be to you For bondmen and for bondwomen. It would be better throughout the passage to retain the words bondmen and bondwomen — Ed.

which they had granted freedom, and says, Ye have not proclaimed liberty They had indeed proclaimed it, as we have seen; but not in sincerity, for they who had been for a short time made free, were soon afterwards constrained to serve. God then makes here no reference to the outward act which the Jews had performed, but shews that faithfulness and integrity are so pleasing to him, that he makes no account of what is merely done outwardly. Hence the promulgation of liberty is not before God the verbal one, but that which is carried into effect. With men it is enough to profess a thing, but God regards as nothing all false professions. He therefore complains that the Jews did not obey his word. We have already said that it was not right according to the law to retain servants longer than six years; for in the seventh year the law ordered those who had given themselves up to servitude to be set free. But God restored this law as it were by way of recovery, as it had become almost obsolete. And this is the reason why he says that they hearkened not For he had not only taught by Moses what was right, but had also shewn by Jeremiah that the Jews impiously and wickedly disregarded this humane command. We hence learn what it is to obey God's word, even when we not only embrace what he declares, but also persevere in obedience to him: for it is not enough to exhibit some kind of a right feeling for a short time, except we continue to obey God. The Jews had with their mouth made a profession, and gave some evidence of a disposition to obey; the servants were allowed their liberty; but as the masters shortly after returned to their previous injustice, we see the reason why God says that they had not hearkened to him

It is added, that he would proclaim liberty to them, that is, against them. If we read, ``Behold, I proclaim liberty to you,'' then the meaning is, ``I will emancipate you,'' that is, ``I shall have nothing more to do with you; go and enjoy your own liberty; but ye shall immediately become a prey to other masters, even to the sword, to the pestilence, and to famine.'' This meaning is not unsuitable; for it was the happiness of the ancient people alone to be under the protection of God: but when they became disobedient, he dismissed them, and would not have them under his guardianship. But nothing can be more miserable than such emancipation, that is, when God rejects those over whom he had been pleased to rule, and whose patron he had for a time been; for all kinds of evils will soon come upon them, and God will not interpose his hand. This, then, is the liberty of those who are not willing to bear, as it becomes them, the yoke of obedience to God, even to be exposed to all evils, for it is only by him we can be defended. We hence see that the meaning is very suitable, when we read ``Behold, I proclaim to you liberty, but it is to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine.''

We may, however, take another view, ``Behold, I proclaim liberty for you,'' that is, against you; for {ל}, lamed, has this sense: ``I proclaim liberty against you,'' --- how? to the sword, etc., that is, ``I order the sword to exercise power against you, and I will permit also the same right to the pestilence, and I will permit a like dominion to the famine: the sword, then, and the pestilence, and the famine, shall rule over you, for ye cannot bear my authority.'' For though the Jews boasted that they were God's chosen people, yet as they were so refractory as to despise the Law and the Prophet, it is quite evident that what they wished was unbridled licentiousness. God

then renounces here his own right, and says that it was their fault that they were not free, for he would no more defend them, as an advocate his clients, or as a master his servants. So also it is said in the Psalms,

``Behold, our eyes are to God, as the eyes of servants who look to their masters, as the eyes of a maid to her mistress.'' *
*(Psalm 123:1, 2)

We indeed know that servants formerly were exposed to all sorts of wrongs; they dared not move a finger, when grievously treated; but if any servant was wronged by another man, his master would undertake his cause and defend him. Then the Psalmist compares the people to servants and slaves, and says that their whole safety depended on the help of God. But God now declares that he will be no longer their guardian; and when he dismissed them, all kinds of evils, as we have said, would come upon them, even the sword, the pestilence, and the famine.

He at length adds, And I will give you for a commotion to all the kingdoms of the earth The words may mean two things. Some take them as though God threatened that they should become unsettled, and vagrants through all the kingdoms of the world; and others, that they would be for a commotion, for every one either seeing or hearing of their miserable state would tremble. The passage is taken from Deuteronomy 28:25, where we read,

``I will give thee for a commotion.''

The latter meaning is what I mostly approve, --- that the Jews would be for a commotion; for the vengeance which God would take on them would be so dreadful, that all would be greatly moved or affected, according to what is said by Isaiah,

``The, commotion shall be for amazement.'' (Isaiah 28:19)

We then perceive what the Prophet means, --- that God would so severely punish perjury and treachery, that the Jews would become an example to all people; for it would be a sad spectacle for all nations to see the children of Abraham, whom God had adopted, the most miserable of human beings. Their condition, then, would be an object of horror; and this is what the Prophet now declares and threatens. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 34:18-19

18. And I will give the men that have transgressed my covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the part thereof,

18. Et dabo viros qui transgressi sunt foedus meum, qui non stabilierunt sermones foederis, quod inciderunt coram me, vitulo quem conciderunt in duo, et transierunt inter partes ejus,

19. The princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land, which passed between the parts of the calf;

19. Principes Jehudah et principes Jerusalem, proceres (eunuchos) et sacerdotes, et totum populum terrae, qui transierunt inter partes vituli.

He pursues the same subject, --- that perjury would not be unpunished. But here is described the manner of making an oath, even that they cut a calf into two parts, and passed between these parts Now we know that this was the custom in the time of

Abraham, for it is said that he offered a sacrifice to God as a symbol of the covenant, and cut the victim, and passed between the parts. Historians also relate that the Macedonians in mustering an army observed the same ceremony; and it was probably a custom which prevailed among all nations. When the Romans made a covenant, they sacrificed a sow; they did not divide it into parts, but killed it with a stone; and this was the form of execration, --- ``So may Jupiter smite him who will violate this covenant; if I violate this covenant, may Jupiter thus smite me, as I now kill this sow.'' But we see that among the Orientals, the victims were cut in two, and there was another form of execration, even that he might be thus cut asunder, who unjustly and in bad faith violated the given promise or engagement.

It is to this custom the Prophet refers here, and says, I will give the men who have transgressed my covenant, which they made before me by the calf which they cut into two parts, and passed between the parts, etc. But God assigns a reason why he resolved to inflict so dreadful punishment on perjury: he said before, that his name was profaned, and now he adds, that his covenant was violated. He does not speak here of the Law; the covenant of God is called the law for the most part in Scripture; but Jeremiah takes it here in a different sense, even the covenant in which God's name was interposed, or what was sanctioned by an appeal to God, as by way of excellence, marriage is called by Solomon the covenant of God, because it is the principal contract among men. But as the Jews had promised in God's presence that they were ready to obey, when Jeremiah commanded the servants to be made free, and as the agreement was confirmed by a solemn rite, hence the promise given to men is said to be the covenant of God, even on account of the sanction which we have mentioned.

Let us then remember, that whenever we perform not what we have pledged, not only wrong is done to men, but also to God himself, and that it is a sacrilege, and what is much more atrocious than theft, or fraud, or cruelty. Let us, therefore, learn from this passage to act in good faith, especially when the name of God is invoked, when he is appealed to as a witness and judge.

He adds afterwards, that they had transgressed his covenant; and he immediately explains himself, because they have not confirmed the words of the covenant which they had made before him. To confirm or establish the words, was to persevere in what they had promised. For the Jews gave a proof of humanity for a short time; but it was a mere falacious show and pretense. It was for this reason, then, that the Prophet says that they had not confirmed or ratified the words of the covenant which they had made Then follows the outward ceremony, the calf which they had cut into two parts; and they passed between them, in order that this very passing might produce a deep impression on their hearts, and make them dread the violation of their faith. For we know that external signs are intended for this end, --- that men may be kept awake, who would otherwise be tardy and slothful. The same also is the use of sacred symbols, by which God intends to touch and move all our senses. It hence appears how great must have been the insensibility of the people, when they afterwards disregarded that awful protest, for they had passed between the parts, and imprecated such a death on themselves if they failed in what they promised.

They afterwards hesitated not to violate their promise. We hence see that they were under the power of a diabolical madness, when they disregarded God's judgment. [323]

He adds, The princes of Judah and the princes of Jerusalem, etc. He does not here name them as though they were different persons, but he speaks by way of amplifying. He then says that he would punish these chief men, lest they should think themselves to be exempted, because they were superior to others in rank and honor; for we know that those who are elevated in the world are so filled with pride, that they deem themselves as free from all laws. This, then, is the reason why God expressly names the princes and the eunuchs. But he does not mean by the eunuchs those who had been emasculated, as we have stated already in several places. The chief men were called by this name, {סרסים} serasim. [324]

He mentions the princes of Jerusalem, because they were especially proud, on account of their privileges as citizens; for in Jerusalem was the royal residence and the sanctuary of God. But the Prophet declares that their lot would be nothing better than that of the common people, because God would not suffer his holy name to be a mockery and all equity to be violated, and especially the covenant made in his name to be deemed as nothing, and rendered wholly void. At length he names the whole people; whosoever, he says, have passed between the parts of the calf, shall be punished. It follows ---

Jeremiah 34:20

20. I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth.

20. Et dabo illos in manum inimicorum ipsorum, et in manum quaerentium animam ipsorum: et erit cadaver ipsorum in cibum avi (hoc est, avibus) coelorum, (est heterosis numeri) et bestiae (hoc est, bestiis) terrae.

He confirms and explains what he had before said, and expresses how the punishment would be executed, --- that he would deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and he adds, who seek their life, in order to shew that their enemies would not be content with the spoils, or with a moderate punishment, but would be their inveterate enemies, who would not be satisfied until they destroyed them. Now this passage teaches us also that the ungodly are God's scourges, for the punishment he resolved to inflict on the transgressors of his law, he executed through them. Though then the Chaldeans had another object than to be God's ministers in punishing the Jews, yet they performed God's work as though they were his hired servants, subject to his own will and pleasure. Nor is there a doubt but that their minds had been greatly exasperated against the Jews, so that they shed blood indiscriminately

[323] The construction of this verse as to "the calf," is various. Our version is that of Junius and Tremelius. It is difficult to understand the Sept., the Targ., and the Vulg. The Syr. is substantially as follows, — 18. And I will make the men who have transgressed my covenant, Who have not performed the words of the covenant, Which they made before me, like the calf, Which they cut in two and passed between its parts, — 19. The princes of Judah, etc. etc. This is the most literal rendering of the passage: the omission of {,כ like, or as, is not uncommon. --- Ed

[324] It is rendered "{δυνάστας}, rulers," by the Sept., ``eunuchs,'' by the Vulg. and Syr., and ``princes'' by the Targ. They were the attendants on royalty, not necessarily eunuchs, for Potiphar, who had a wife, was so called. (Genesis 39:7.) They may have acted as judges; and hence perhaps it is, that they are named here with ``the priests.'' --- Ed

withoat mercy: for as God often says,

``I will give you favor in the sight of your enemies,''
(Exodus 3:21; 11:3)

so also on the other hand, he declares, that when enemies raged cruelly against them, it was through hls secret influence, he having resolved severely to punish them. This is the reason why he now says, that he would deliver the Jews into the hand of those who sought their life, that is, who were not intent on prey or spoils, and would not be satisfied with moderate punishment, but would be implacable enemies, until they destroyed the people.

Another kind of punishment follows, Their carcases shall be for food to the birds of heaving, and to the beasts of the earth, as though he had said, that God's vengeance on the Jews would be made evident even after death. We said last week, that it would be no loss to us were we to he unburied, for burial brings no advantage to us; but yet it is a sign of God's vengeance. As then famine, and nakedness, and cold, and diseases, and other evils, are evidences of God's wrath against men, so also it is when the body of a dead man is cast forth, and is either torn by wild beasts, or eaten by birds. If any one objects and says, that this has sometimes happened to the best and holiest of God's servants; to this we answer, that temporal punishment happens in common to the good and the bad; but when God by famine and want, by diseases also, or by exile, or by prison, or by any other evils, tries and chastises his servants, all this is to them as a help to their salvation. Yet this special mercy of God towards the faithful, which is a peculiar privilege, is no reason why all miseries should in themselves be deemed evidences of God's wrath, for they are everywhere called curses. And we also know that from the same fountain flow all the evils which men suffer in this life, even from God's judgment, who in this manner executes punishment. It is not then without reason that the Prophet here declares, that so severe and dreadful would be God's judgment towards the Jews, that it would extend beyond death itself, for they would become meat to the birds of heaven and to the beasts of the earth. It follows ---

Jeremiah 34:21

21. And Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life, and into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which are gone up from you.

21. Et Zedechiam regem Jehudah, et principes ejus dabo in manum inimicorum ipsorum, et in manum quaerentium animam eorum, et in manum exercitus regis Babylonii, qui ascenderunt e vobis.

He repeats almost the same words, but yet he comes closer to the subject, for he names the enemies of whom he had spoken indefinitely before. He had indeed said that they would be cruel, and would seek their death, and would not be otherwise satisfied. He repeats again the same for the sake of confirmation; but he afterwards adds, that these enemies would be the soldiers of the king of Babylon, even the Chaldeans. He then shews, as by the finger, to the Jews, their calamity, lest they should, as usual, indulge themselves with the hope of security. He does not then declare generally, that they would be punished, and that enemies would come cruelly

to destroy them; but he points out the army of the king of Babylon, and says that the Chaldeans would come, being armed by God and fighting under his banner, and would take the city, and destroy the whole kingdom.

But as the Chaldeans had departed, the confidence and the security of the Jews had increased, for they thought that they were now freed from danger. The cause of this departure was, that the Egyptians had gathered an army to help the Jews, or rather to provide by anticipation, for their own safety. There was an alliance, we know, at that time between the Jews and the Egyptians; and the object of both was to fortify themselves against the king of Babylon. The Egyptians had no great care for the Jews, but another reason influenced them; for it was well known, that as soon as the Chaldeans finished the Jewish war, they would make an attack on Egypt. Now they thought that it would be an advantage to them to engage with the Babylonian army in connection with the Jews; for they would have had to fight alone, had Nebuchadnezzar gained the victory; nay, the Jews themselves would have been compelled to assist in subduing Egypt. Hence the Egyptians, having well weighed these things, gathered a large army. The Babylonians, having heard the report, went forth to meet them. Thus the siege of the city was left. The Jews exulted as though they had escaped all danger. Hence the Prophet derides their folly in thinking that they would now be in peace and quietness, because the Chaldeans had gone up from them, because they left for a time the city, and went up towards Egypt. Though then, he says, (the particle is to be taken adversatively) they have ascended from you, yet God will deliver you into into their hand.

We now see that Jeremiah spared neither the king nor the princes; and thus we ought to notice the power of the Holy Spirit, which prevailed in the hearts of the Prophets, for they boldly addressed, not only the common people, but also kings and princes. As then we find the Prophet denouncing, with so much courage, the judgment of God on the king and the chief men, let us know, that none are fit to bear rule in the Church, except they be endued with so much firmness as not to fear any, and not to be disheartened by the power of any, so as not to reprove boldly the highest as well as the lowest. It follows ---

Jeremiah 34:22

22. Behold, I will command, saith the LORD, and cause them to return to this city; and they shall fight against it, and take it, and burn it with fire: and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without an inhabitant.

22. Ecce ego praecipio, dicit Jehova, et reducam cos ad urbem hanc, et expugnabunt cam, et capient eam (vel, oppugnabunt eam, et capient eam) et comburent eam igni; et urbes Jehudah ponent vastitatem absque habitatore.

He shews the same thing in other words, but the repetition was not in vain, for what we read here seemed incredible to the Jews. For they raised up their horns when they saw the King Nebuchadnezzar departing from the city. Lest then this vain confidence should deceive them, he again declared to them that God conducted the war, as though he had said, that the Chaldeans had not thoughtlessly taken up arms, but as God had determined, and as he had commanded them. He does not indeed speak of an open command, for it was not the purpose of the Chaldeans

to obey God, or to render service to him; but he speaks of his hidden providence. God is said to command, when the ungodly are guided by his secret impulse, for he can tuae them as he pleases, according to what is said in other places, ``I will hiss for the Egyptians,'' or for the Assyrians, or for the Chaldeans. The same is the meaning here, when he says, Behold, I will command, etc. In short, God commands the wicked, he commands diseases, he commands the sword, he commands the famine and the pestilence; and yet there is no reason or understanding in the sword, in the pestilence, or in the famine: but Scripture thus teaches us that all things are under his control, so that nothing can touch us, except as far as God intends by these to chastise or humble us.

And for the same purpose are these words, Behold, I, {הנני}, enni, etc. God shews that he was present, though the Chaldeans were not now seen in the land of Judah. The manner of his presence he sets forth by saying, I will bring them back to this city, and they shall attack it, and take it, and burn it with fire These things have been elsewhere explained, I shall therefore now pass them by.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we cease not continually to provoke thy wrath against us, --- O grant, that we, being terrified by thy warnings, may obey thy wise counsels, and that thus by anticipating thy vengeance, which would otherwise remain on us, we may labor to be so reconciled to thee, that we may really find thee to be our Father and the guardian of our salvation, until we shall at length, having finished our course here, come to that blessed rest, which thou hast prepared for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Thirty-Ninth

We saw in the last Lecture what the Prophet denounced on the Jews, --- that as they had acted perfidiously towards their servants, God would punish them by making them servants perpetually. When Nebuchadnezzar went forth to meet the Egyptians, there was some appearance of freedom being granted; for the Jews thought that theywere afterwards to be free: but as they had deceived their servants, so the Prophet says, that they were greatly mistaken in thinking that they were to be perpetually free, because Nebuchadnezzar would soon return. So he declares that they were doomed to servitude, so that the liberty in which they gloried would prove illusory. Now follows, ---

Jeremiah 35

CHAPTER 35

Jeremiah 35:1-7

1. The word which came unto Jeremiah from the LORD in the days of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying,

1. Sermo qui factus fuit ad Jeremiam a Jehova diebus Jehoiakim filii Joziae regis Jehudah, dicendo,

2. Go unto the house of the Rechabites, and speak unto them, and bring them into the house of the LORD, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink.

2. Vade ad domum Rechabitarum, et dices illis, (et loquere cum ipsis) et adducas eos in domum Jehovae ad unum cubiculorum, et popina illis vinum.

3. Then I took Jaazaniah the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziniah, and his brethren, and all his sons, and the whole house of the Rechabites;

3. Et sumpsi Jaazaniah filium Jeremiae, filii Habazaniiae, et fratres ejus, (hoc est, cognatos) et omnes filios ejus, totam domum Rechabitarum;

4. And I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which was by the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah the son of Shallum, the keeper of the door:

4. Et adduxi eos in domum Jehovae ad cubiculum filiorum Chanan filii Igdaliae, viri Dei, quod erat juxta cubiculum principum, quod erat e super cubiculo Maassaiae filii Selum custodis thesauri (alii vertunt, liminis, sed sine ratione, ut milhividetur)-

5. And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine, and cups, and I said unto them, Drink ye wine.

5. Et posui in conspectu filiorum domus Rechabitarum (vel, coram filiis domus Rechabitarum) scyphos plenos vino, et calices, et dixi, Bibite vinum.

6. But they said, We will drink no wine: for Jonadab the son of Rechab our father commanded us, saying, Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever:

6. Et dixerunt, Non bibimus vinum, quia Jonadab filius Rechab, pater noster (vel, patris nostri) praecepit nobis, dicendo, Non bibetis vinum, vos et filii vestri, usque in seculum;

7. Neither shall ye build house, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyard, nor have any: but all your days ye shall dwell in tents; that ye may live many days in the land where ye be strangers.

7. Et domos non aedificabitia, et semen non seretis, et vitem non plantabitis, et non erit vobis quicquam, quia (hoc est, quin potius) habitabitis in tabernaculis, cunctis diebus vestris, ut vivatis dies multos in superficie terrae in qua vos peregrini estis.

It must be first observed, that the order of time in which the prophecies were written has not been retained. In history the regular succession of days and years ought to be preserved, but in prophetic writings this is not so necessary, as I have already reminded you. The Prophets, after having been preaching, reduced to a summary what they had spoken; a copy of this was usually affixed to the doors of the Temple, that every one desirous of knowing celestial doctrine might read the copy; and it was afterwards laid up in the archives. From these were formed the books now extant. And what I say may be gathered from certain and known facts. But that we may not now multiply words, this passage shews that the prophecy of Jeremiah inserted here did not follow the last discourse, for he relates what he had been commanded to say and to do in the time of Jehoiakim, that is, fifteen years before the destruction of the city. Hence what I have said is evident, that Jeremiah did not write the book as it exists now, but that his discourses were collected and formed into a volume, without regard to the order of time. The same may be also gathered from the prophecies which we shall hereafter see, from the forty-fifth to the end of the fiftieth chapter.

The power of the kingdom of Judah was not so weakened under King Jehoiakim, but that they were still inflated with pride. As, then, their security kept them from being attentive to the words of the Prophet, it was necessary to set before them a visible sign, in order to make them ashamed. It was, then, God's purpose to shew how inexcusable was their perverseness. This was the design of this prophecy. And the Prophet was expressly commanded to call together the Rechabites, and to offer wine to them, in order that the obstinacy of the people might appear more disgraceful, as they could not be induced to render obedience to God, while the Rechabites were so obedient to their father, a mortal man, and who had been dead for nearly three centuries. The Rechabites derived their origin from Obad and from Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses. There are those indeed who think that Obad and Jethro were the same; but this conjecture seems not to me probable. However this may be, interpreters think that, the Rechabites were the descendants of Obad, who followed Moses and the Israelites. And their opinion seems to be confirmed, because it is said here that they were commanded by Jonadab to live as sojourners in the land. An inheritance was indeed promised them, but as it appears from many parts of Scripture, they were unfaith-fifily dealt with, for they were scattered here and there throughout the tribes. They then did not enjoy an inheritance as it was right and as

they deserved. And we see also that they lived among other nations.

With regard to Jonadab, of whom mention is made, we read in 2 Kings 10:15, that he was a man of great name and influence, for when Jehu began to reign, he had him as his friend, though he was an alien. He must, then, have been in high esteem, and a man of power and wealth among the Israelites. And it is certain that it was the same Jonadab of whom sacred history speaks of there, because he is called the son of Rechab; and yet three hundred years, or nearly so, had elapsed from that time to the reign of Jehoiakim. As to the origin of this family or people, the first was Obad; from him came Rechab, whose son was Jonadab, who lived in the time of King Jehu, and was raised up into his chariot to be, as it were, next to him, when Jehu had not as yet his power firmly established. But they went afterwards to Jerusalem on account of the continual calamities of the land of Israel, for it was exposed to constant plunders, and this we shall hereafter see in the narrative. Then the sons of Rechab did once dwell in the kingdom of Israel; but when various incursions laid waste the land, and final ruin was at hand, having left their tents they went to Jerusalem; for they were not allowed to cultivate either fields or vineyards, as we shall hereafter see. The Rechabites, therefore, dwelt in the city Jerusalem, which protected them from the incursions and violence of enemies; but they still retained their ancient mode of living in abstaining from wine, and in not cultivating either fields or vineyards. They thought it indeed right for them to dwell in buildings, because they could not find a vacant place in the city where they might pitch their tents: but this was done from necessity. In the meantime they obeyed the command of their father Jonadab; and though he had been dead three hundred years, they yet so venerated the memory of their father, that they willingly abstained from wine, and led not only a frugal but an austere life.

The Prophet is now bidden to bring these to the Temple, and to offer them wine to drink I have briefly explained the design of God in this matter, even that he purposed to lay before the Jews the example of the Rechabites, in order to shame them; for that family obeyed their father after he was dead, but the Jews could not be induced to submit to the command of the living God, who was also the only Father of all. The Prophet then was bidden to bring them to the Temple, and to lay before them cups full of wine, that they might drink. He says that they refused to drink, and brought as a reason, that Jenadab their father forbade them to do so. We shall hereafter see how this example was applied; for the whole cannot be explained at the same time.

Let us consider the Prophet's words, he says that the word came to him in the days of Jehoiakim, that is, after he had found out by the trial of many years how untameable the Jews were, and how great was their ferocity. Much labor then had the Prophet undertaken, and yet they were not so subdued as to submit to the yoke of God. When, therefore, they had now for many years given many proofs of their obduracy, God summoned the Rechabites as witnesses, who, by their example, proved that the Jews were inexcusable for being so rebellious and disobedient to the commands of the Prophet.

Go, said he, to the house of Rechab, (we have said that they dwelt then at Jerusalem, and this will appear hereafter) and bring them unto the house of Jeho-

vah But we must inquire why the Prophet was ordered to lay wine before them in the Temple rather than in a private house. The reason, indeed, is evident; for God's purpose was to shew how wicked and perverse the Jews were, for not even the priests abstained from wine except when they were performing their duties. The Law commanded them to abstain then from wine; but the Levites, who took care of the Temple, and also the priests, when not engaged in the discharge of their office, were fully allowed to drink wine. As, then, the priests were permitted to drink wine even in the Temple, that is, in the chambers adjoining the priests' court, what excuse could have been made when the Rechabites, who were yet of the common people, and even aliens among the Jews, refused wine according to the command of their father Jenadab? Had God forbidden the whole people the use of wine, the Law might have appeared too rigid; but God not only permitted the people to drink wine, but also the priests; nay, no religious reverence prevented them from drinking wine close to the Temple when they were not engaged in their duties. We now, then, perceive why the place has been mentioned, that is, that the Prophet relates that he brought the Rechabites into the Temple.

Go, then, and bring them into the house of Jehovah, into one of the chambers, and offer them wine to drink We have said that the chambers were nigh the priests' court; for many of the Levites were always keeping watch, guarding the Temple, and also some of the priests. The priests, while serving their turn, alone abstained from wine; but a permission was given by the Law to the Levites to drink wine, and in those very chambers, which were on both sides a sort of appendages to the Temple.

Now the Prophet adds that he took Jaazaniah, who was a chief man, and as it were the head of the family. And he names his father, even Jeremiah, the son of Habaziniah; and he then says, his whole house It is added, that he brought them into the Temple, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God The Prophet no doubt chose a well-known place, that the report of this might spread through the whole city, and even throughout Judea, and also that the dignity of the place might add credit to the report; for we know that when a thing is done in an obscure corner, it may be regarded as doubtful or fabulous. But the Prophet brought the Rechabites into an honorable place, even into the chamber of the sons of Hanan And he afterwards says, that he was the son of Igdaliah, a man of God Doubtless such was the reverence in which this man was held, that no one dared to call into question what had been done there. Then he adds that the chamber was nigh the chamber of the princes, which was over the chamber of the keeper of the treasury Some render the last word, ``the entrance,'' [325] the word means a vessel; and it signifies here the sacred furniture; and there is a change of number, for this word included all the vessels of the Temple. We hence see that the place was select, superior to other places, so that it might be as a notable theater, and that the prophecy might thus gain more credit among all the Jews.

He says, that he set wine before them and requested them to drink when full cups were placed before them. Then he adds that they refused, We will not drink

[325] So the Sept., the Vulg., and the Syr.; and the word, {,{ף◌ס has commonly this meaning, a porch, an entrance or a threshold. --- Ed

wine, because Jonadab our father commanded us, saying, Drink ye no wine, nor build houses, nor sow seed, nor plant vineyards, nor have any such thing as your own We see that four things were commanded the Rechabites by their father, to drink no wine, to cultivate no fields, and to plant no vineyards, --- these were three; and the fourth was, not to build houses, but to be content with tents. Here is also added a promise, that ye may live long in the land where ye are strangers Then Jonadab promised to his sons and his posterity a long life, if they obeyed his precepts, that is, to live without wine all their life, and not to possess anything, nor build houses. Their saying that they had obeyed their father's precept, shall be hereafter considered, for we cannot take in everything at once.

But let us now see whether Jenadab did what was right in forbidding his posterity to drink wine and to cultivate land. Agriculture is in itself a mode of living not only honest and innocent, but also remote from ambition, fraud, and plunder: in short, it seems to be of all kinds of living the simplest and the most innocent. Then the advice of Jenadab to keep his sons from agriculture might in this instance be blamed and condemned. But the probability is, that when he saw the Jews and the Israelites despising the Law of their God, he thought of the vengeance, which, though it followed not for a long time, yet ought then to have been dreaded. He also saw the sources of vices, even that the Israelites especially gave themselves up to luxuries, and indulged themselves, as it clearly appears from the Prophets, in all manner of excesses. When, therefore, he saw, on the one hand, the corruptions of the land, and that on the other he dreaded punishment, he wished his posterity to accustom themselves to an austere mode of living, so that they might more easily move here and there, and also that they might with more tranquil minds endure any adversity that might happen, being neither rich nor used to delicacies. Jenadab then did not condemn agriculture, nor the use of wine, nor commodious habitations, when he commanded his posterity to be contented with tents and water, and wished them to buy wheat and to follow only a pastoral life; but as we have said, he had another object in view. This, then, is what we are, in the first place, to bear in mind.

But we must observe, at the same time, that the posterity of Jenadab did not live on plunder, nor spend their time in idleness; for they were shepherds, who with great labor and many watchings gained their own living. But it was their father Jonadab's wish that they should in a manner be separated from the common affairs of life, on account of the corruptions which prevailed, and which he saw rampant before his eyes; so that he had no doubt as to what was to be, when the Israelites abandoned themselves more and more to all kinds of excesses, and when all integrity was disregarded. This then was the reason why Jenadab restrained his posterity from following the common way of living.

His counsel is, however, not commended, but the obedience which his sons rendered; and this is here proposed as an example, in order to make the Jews ashamed, because they so perversely rejected the Law of God and the doctrine of the Prophets: and it is an argument from the less to the greater; for if the authority of a mortal man prevailed so much with his posterity as to cause them to abstain from wine, and not only to live frugally, but also to endure cold and want and other hard things,

how much more it behoved the Jews to do what was right and easy, when God commanded them: This is one thing, even a comparison between God and mortal man. And then there is another, --- that this precept continued in force for three hundred years, and kept posterity from neglect; but the Law of God, which continually sounded in the ears of the people, had no power to influence them. Here is another comparison. The third is, that God acted equitably, and did not press too much on the Jews, so as to make the rigor of the law odious and wearisome: as then God used moderation in his Law, so as to require from the people nothing but what was easy to be borne, he says that Jonadab was rigid and austere, for he forbade the use of wine and did not allow his posterity to cultivate fields, nor to dwell in houses.

This threefold comparison ought then to be borne in mind, and these three parts of the contrast ought to be well considered, even that God had not obtained from his people what Jonadab had from his posterity; and also that God, continually admonishing, prevailed nothing, when a regard for a dead man retained posterity in their duty; and further, that the Law of God, which required nothing but what might be easily done, had been perversely rejected by the Jews, when the Rechabites, in honor to their dead father, suffered themselves to be deprived of all luxuries, and dreaded not an austere, rustic, and, as it were, a savage kind of life; for they not only abstained from wine, but also dared not to shelter themselves from cold by dwelling in houses, and were forbidden all the comforts of life.

Now that. the Prophet was ordered to offer them wine, and that they refused, a question here arises, Was their continency in this respect laudable? They seemed thus to prefer Jonadab to God, for they knew that Jeremiah, who offered them wine, was sent by God. But the Rechabites, no doubt, modestly excused themselves, when they said that it was not right for them to drink wine, because they had been forbidden by their father. It was not then their purpose to give more honor to their father than to God or to his Prophet, but they simply answered for the sake of excusing themselves, that they had abstained from wine for three hundred years, that is, that the whole family had done so. This, then, is the solution of the question. But what the Papists do in bringing against us the Rechabites, first to support their tyrannical laws, and secondly, in order to torment miserable consciences at their pleasure, is frivolous in the extreme. As I have already said, the advice of Jonadab is not commended, as though he had rightly forbidden his sons to drink wine; but only his sons are spoken of as having reverently and humbly obeyed the command of their dead father. Then this passage gives no countenance to the Papists, as though the object of it was to bind the consciences of the faithful to their laws; for what is here spoken of is, that the Rechabites proved by their obedience how base and wicked was the obduracy of the people, as they shewed less reverence and honor to God than these did to a man that was dead.

But the Papists, however, dwell much on another point, --- that whatever has been handed down from the fathers ought to be observed; and thus they reason, ``The authority of the whole Church is greater than that of a private man; now the Rechabites are commended for having followed the command of a private individual, much more then ought we to obey the laws of the Church.'' To this I answer, that

we ought to obey the fathers and the whole Church: nor have we a controversy with them on this subject; for we do not simply say, that everything which men have delivered to us ought to be rejected; but we deny that we ought to obey the laws of men, when they bind the conscience without any necessity. When, therefore, a religious act is enjoined on us, men arrogate to themselves what is peculiar to God alone; thus the authority of God is violated, when men claim so much for themselves as to bind consciences by their own laws. We must then distinguish between civil laws, such as are introduced to preserve order, or for some other end, and spiritual laws, such as are introduced into God's worship, and by which religion is enjoined, and necessity is laid on consciences. --- But I cannot now finish, for I see that the hour has already passed.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast been pleased to adopt us for thy children, and also to shew to us what pleases thee, --- O grant, that we may in all things be obedient to thee, and never turn aside either to the right hand or to the left; and as thou exhortest us also continually, and stirrest us onward, grant that we may, in quiet meekness of spirit, so surrender ourselves to be ruled by thee, as to prove ourselves to be thy children, and to glorify thee as our Father, until we shall enjoy that eternal inheritance, which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fortieth

We said in the last Lecture that the example of the Rechabites is brought forward, not for the purpose of commending their obedience, as though it were some great virtue, but only that the Prophet might reprove the Jews for rendering less honor to the living God, than the Rechabites did to their dead father. And, doubtless, this comparison must have exhibited the Jews as acting very disgracefully, for they could not be induced to render obedience, though they had before their eyes the Rechabites as an example. We have also said, that Jenadab did not forbid his posterity to drink wine, to sow fields, and to plant vineyards, in order to set up something new in God's worship; but that he did so, because he deemed it good for his posterity thus to sojourn in the land, so that they might not become attached to their possessions, and that amidst various changes they might be less anxious, and be prepared, as it were, to move elsewhere. We have hence shewn that the Papists ignorantly pervert this passage in order to support their tyrannical laws, in which they pretend to include the spiritual worship of God, and by which they also distress miserable souls; for there is no likeness nor affinity between the command of Jenadab and those laws which are introduced for the purpose of establishing the spiritual worship of God.

For it was not primarily the object of Jonadab's precept to demand from his posterity an abstinence from wine as a necessary thing, but it had a regard to what was quite different. Now, what is commanded for another end, as it is not necessary, so it is not opposed to the word of God; for their liberty of conscience is not taken away: nor was it Jonadab's design to claim for himself the right and authority of God, as though he were a spiritual lawgiver; but his precept only referred to what was civil or social. It hence appears how unlike was his command to the tyrannical laws by

which liberty is destroyed under the Papacy. Were it allowable to speak jocosely, we might say, that it is a wonder that the Papists make so much of this example, which yet none of them follow; for though the monks have among them rigid and severe laws, as to eating and drinking, yet the most holy among them have never observed them; and there has not been a Carthusian or a Celestian, who submitted to the obligation of abstaining from wine. If then this virtue of the Rechabites pleases them so much, why do they not discontinue the use of wine? But this I have not said seriously.

With regard to the subject itself, the solution is certain and easy, --- that the Rechabites are not commended as though they had obeyed their father as God, but that they obediently received what their father had commanded them, because it was only a civil precept: he therefore had in view an ulterior object; and he did not require abstinence from wine and other things for its own sake. And Paul, even by one sentence, has settled this controversy; for when he exhorts children to obey their parents, he modifies his exhortation by saying,

``In the Lord.'' (Ephesians 6:1)

We then see that Paul commands children to obey their parents, not in everything, or without limitation, but so that God, who is the Sovereign and the only Father of all, may still retain his authority, and that earthly parents may not claim for themselves so much authority as to ascend the throne of God, as though they were lawgivers to souls. Let us now proceed ---

Jeremiah 35:8-10

8. Thus have we obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab our father in all that he hath charged us, to drink no wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, nor our daughters;

8. Et audivimus in voce (hoc est, obedivimus voci) Jenadab, filii Rechab, patris nostri, secundum omnia qute mandavit nobis, ne biberemus vinum cunctus diebus nostris, nos, uxores nostrae, filii nostri, et filiae nostrae;

9. Nor to build houses for us to dwell in: neither have we vineyard, nor field, nor seed:

9. Et ne, aedificaremus domes in quibus habitaremus, et ne vitis vel ager vel semen nobis esset (ad verbum, et vitis et ager et semen non erunt nobis)

10. But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us.

10. Et habitavimus (quin potius, est enim copula resolvenda in adversativam particulam, quin potius habitavimus) in tabernaculis, et obedivimus, et fecimus secundum omnia quae praecepit nobis Jonadab pater noster.

Jeremiah explains at large what might have been expressed in few words, in order to amplify the constancy of the Rechabites. For one may obey his father, and yet be not so fixed in his purpose, but that he might on some slight occasion fail in his duty. Jeremiah here shews that such was the prompt perseverance of the Rechabites, that they could not be enticed by having wine set before them; but that as though no temptation had been presented to them, they kept the commandment of their father, who, at the same time, had been dead, as it has already appeared, some

ages before.

They then said, that they hearkened to the voice of Jonabab the son of Rechab, their father; and also added, according to all the things which he has commanded us tle again relates what Jonadab had commanded, and to this belongs the sentence, According to all things, etc. For had he ordered them only to be abstemious, to obey would not have been difficult or hard; he designed to bind them to a wandering life, that they might be covered only by tents, and that they might not possess anything. As then Jonadab did not in one thing only try the obedience of his family, it appears more clearly how great was their promptitude and perseverance in obeying.

They then said, first, that they were not to drink wine; and also added, all their days We indeed know that the Nazarites were forbidden to drink wine, but it was only for a time, until they had performed their vow; we also know, that when the priest was discharging his duty, he was not allowed, for that time, to take wine. But afterwards the priests as well as the Nazarites, resumed their common mode of living. But to taste no wine throughout life was a thing far more difficult. The Prophet, no doubt, detailed these particulars, that he might load the Jews with greater disgrace, who, in a matter the most just, and by no means hard, were not, as we shall see, obedient to God. They said, We, our wives, our sons, our daughters, as though they had said, ``This precept has ever been observed in our family; and what has been delivered to us, by our fathers, we have followed to this day, as also our fathers, who obeyed the command of a dead man, because his will had been explained to them.''

They added, that they were not to build houses, literally, to inhabit them, that is, to dwell in them. It was then lawful for the Rechabites to construct houses, that is, to build them for others; but they were to be contented with tents, and to live in them. They might then assist others in building splendid palaces, and thus by their labor gain a livelihood; but they were not allowed to inhabit them, as this was one of their precepts. They farther added, And a vineyard and a field and a seed we have not If we duly consider how hard was their condition, we shall see reason to commend the constancy of the Rechabites, for they were not frightened from their purpose when they saw that they were brought into miserable straits. But, however, we ought especially to attend to the object the Prophet had in view, even to shew how shameful was the perverseness of the Jews, who dared to despise and regard as nothing the precepts of God, when yet the authority of a mortal man, and one that was dead, was so great with his posterity. They then said, that they dwelt in tents, and did according to all the things which Jonadab their father had commanded them It follows ---

Jeremiah 35:11

11. But it came to pass, when Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came up into the land, that we said, Come, and let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem.

11. Et factum est cum ascendit Nebuchadnezer rex Babylonis in terram, tunc diximus, Venite, ingrediamur Jerusalem a facie excreitus Chaldaeorum, eta facie excreitus Assyriorum (alii vertunt, Syriae, sed {ארם} quamvis aliquando restringatur ad Syriae, comprehendit tamem Mesopotamiam et alias regiones) et habitavimus

Jerusalem.

It hence appears that it proved advantageous to the Rechabites to observe what their father had commanded them: for had they been fixed to their possessions, they must have been driven into exile with the rest when the kingdom of Israel was destroyed; what happened to the ten tribes nmst have happened to the Rechabites. But as they had nothing as their own, they were freer to move elsewhere; nor had they the trial of leaving possessions, for they had none. We know that many are so tied to their own houses, fields, vineyards, and meadows, that they would rather be killed a hundred times than to be torn away from them. Then Jenadab consulted well the benefit of his posterity, when he ordered them to dwell in tents; for thus they could collect together in one day all that they had, according to the known saying of Bias. Hence poverty was a great advantage to them: their austerity of life was also a benefit to them; they could without difficulty dwell at Jerusalem, for they had no need of many luxuries. Had they been accustomed to wine and to other delicacies, they might have discussed the point, whether it would have been better for them at once to die than to suffer want in a besieged city. Moreover, as they had lived frugally and had also been accustomed to an austere life, no anxiety prevented them to come with confidence to Jerusalem; for they thought that they could gain a sparing and sordid subsistence by their own labor.

It hence then appears what Jenadab had in view, when he forbade his posterity the use of wine as well as the possession of fields and vineyards; for he could then foresee what dreadful revolutions were at hand. It was therefore his purpose thus to train up his posterity, that when difficulties came they might not succumb under the burden, but patiently bear want or any other inconvenience, which to others would be intolerable, whenever their former delicacies came to mind. We they said, Come, and let us enter into Jerusalem from the face of both armies. When therefore the Israelites were detained by their fields and domestic possessions, the Rechabites went to Jerusalem, and thus were freed from danger. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 35:12-15

12. Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah, saying,

12. Et fuit serum Jehovae ad Jeremiam, dicendo,

13. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the LORD.

13. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Vade et dic viro Jehudah et incolis Jerusalem, Annon recipietis disciplinam (vel, correctionum) ad obediendum sermonibus meis, dicit Jehova?

14. The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me.

14, Stabiliti sunt sermones Jonadab filii Rechab, quos mandavit filiis suis, ne biberent vinum, et non biberunt usque ad hunc diem; quia obedierunt mandato patris sui; ego autem loquutus sum ad vos, mane surgens (vel, mane surgendo) et loquendo,

et non obtemperastis mihi:

15. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me.

15. Et misi ad vos omnes servos meos Prophetas, mane surgendo et mitttendo (mane surgens et mittens) dicendo, Convertimini agedum quisque a via sua mala, et bonas facite actiones vestras, et ne ambuletis post deos alienos ad serviendum ipsis (ut serviatis ipsis) et habitabitis in terra quam dedi vobis et patribus vestris, et non inclinastis aurem vestram, et non obedivistis mihi.

Here Jeremiah applies the example which he had related; for subjoined is God's complaint, --- that he was less regarded by his people than Jonadab was by his posterity. He then says, Go and speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants ofJerusalem To make the reproof the more effectual, the Prophet introduces God as the speaker. It was therefore God's purpose to convey the reproof to the Jews in his own name, and as it were in his own person. Will ye not receive instruction, he says, so as to obey me? The word {מוסר} musar, means sometimes ruling or governing, and sometimes correction. But God here no doubt reprehends that madness of the Jews in which they had long hardened themselves, as though he had said, ``You never think it right to return to a sound mind.'' Since, then, they had been for a long time incorrigible and wandered after their own lusts like unbridled wild beasts, a reproof is here given, as though he had said, ``Will this people be always ungovernably wanton so as never to submit to the yoke?'' And he says, so as to obey me God shews that he required nothing unjust from the Jews, so that a true excuse could be pretended, as though he was too rigid: ``I require only,'' he says, ``that ye obey me: this is all my severity, for lovely is the rule of meekness which I use towards you. Since, then, I demand nothing but what children ought willingly to render to their fathers without being admonished, how is it that this mederation is so displeasing to you, and can by no means be approved by you?''

It is then added, confirmed have been the words of Jonadab by his children; but my people do not obey me. But as we have said in the last lecture, the Prophet touches particularly on this circumstance, --- that the Rechabites obeyed the command of their father in not drinking wine: this was hard; they did not drink even to that day But what did God require from his children? only to receive his Law, and not to go astray, as it is here added, after alien gods. There is, then, a contrast between the hard precept of Jonadab and the equity of the Law; for God required nothing from his people except to render him pure worship, he says, They have drunk no wine to this day --- and why? because they obeyed; that is, there was no scruple of conscience to prevent them, but the authority of a man who was dead so far prevailed witIt them, that they willingly gave up the use of wine. ``As then simple obedience, that is, piety or respect for their father, produced such influence on the Rechabites, how is it that I am not heard? for I have spoken,'' he says, ``so that the sin of the people is not excusable on the ground of ignorance.''

Then he adds, Early rising and speaking Here assiduity and diligence are mentioned. Jonadab only once gave his command to his children; that command, which might have been forgotten, remained perpetually in the hearts of his sons, so that they taught the same to his grandsons. But God commanded what was right not only once, but rose up early, that is, he sedulously anticipated them; for by this metaphor he intimates that he did not wait until after a continued licentiousness they became more addicted to their vices; for we know that those who have for many years been without restraint, are not easily brought into order, but they become habitually refractory. And hence, also, it comes to be necessary to form those from infancy who are to be ruled by us; for if they be allowed to act as they please, their wantonness cannot afterwards be restrained by any laws. God then says, that he rose up early, that is, that he anticipated the Jews, so that together with their milk they might imbibe religion.

He afterwards adds, that he was assiduous in teaching them, rising early and speaking By speaking, he intimates that he had daily repeated the same things, so that forgetfulness might not be pleaded by the Jews as an excuse: I have spoken to you, rising up early and speaking, and ye obeyed me not Then follows an explanation, wthat God had sent the Prophets: the Jews would have otherwise been ready to object and say, that God had never appeared to them. Hence he says, that he had spoken to them by his Prophets. I have sent, he says, and indeed many --- I have sent all my servants, etc.; for if Moses only had commanded the Jews what was right, they might have pretended that the Law was buried and forgotten, and that they had no recollection of what Moses had taught. Hence to meet such evasions, he says shortly, that he had sent all his servants, that is, that he had sent many Prophets, and so many, that he continually proclaimed in their hearing the doctrine of the Law. He again repeats the words, rising early and sending, so that he never ceased to warn and exhort them. Now they who are otherwise tardy and also refractory, yet become gentle when they are recalled to their duty every day and hour. Since God then thus urged them by his Prophets, their mad obstinacy became more evident when they still refused to obey.

Now follows that easy requirement, which still more aggravated their sin, Turn ye now, every one from his evil way, and make right your doings, (literally, make good) Here God shews the difference between his Law and the precepts of Jonadab; for he simply required of the Jews what they ought willingly to have done; for had no Law been written, natural light was sufficient to teach the Jews that it was their duty to obey God; for the law of obedience is so written on our hearts, as a testimony, that no one can justly plead ignorance as an excuse. God then here declares that he required nothing but what nature itself dictated, even that the Jews should repent and form their life according to the rule of obedience; though no Prophet were among them, yet every one ought to have been in this respect his own teacher.

It follows, And walk not after alien gods to serve them This admonition still more clearly proves how moderate was what God required; for he souhlt nothing more than to retain the Jews under his authority and protection, that he might be a Father to them. Jonadab might have demanded obedience from his posterity, and yet have

allowed them the free use of wine, and also the possession of fields and vineyards; but he wished to cut them off as it were from mankind, so that their condition became worse than that of all the nations and people among whom they dwelt; for they became, no doubt, objects of ridicule to their neighbors, endured many reproaches, and were grievously harassed. God shews that he had abstained from exercising rigid authority, and from requiring unbearable servitude, and demanded nothing from his people, but that he might be acknowledged by them as a Father. As, then, he did not tyrannically force the Jews to render him service, and his Law was moderate in its demands, it hence appears still more clear, as I have said, how incorrigible was the wickedness and depravity of that people.

He further adds a promise, which ought by its sweetness to have allured them, so as to become more disposed and prompt to obey. Though he might by authority have commanded, ``Turn ye from your superstitions, and faithfully serve me,'' it would yet have been a command just and equitable; but when he is pleased to add a promise, which ought to have disposed the Jews to obedience, and yet gains nothing from them, their wickedness is rendered again by this circumstance still more detestable. We hence see that there is something important in every clause, and that it is not without meaning that he here adds, Ye shall dwell in the land which I gave to you and to your fathers God here sets forfth his own bounty, and then promises a perpetual fruition of it, provided the Jews obeyed. He says that he gave that land to them, and before to their fathers, had they never partaken of God's bounty, yet the promise alone ought to have induced them to submit to his authority. But God had been already liberal to them. Then experience ought to have convinced them, for they knew that they had obtained the promised land by no other right than by a promise made by God; they knew that the nations, into whose place they had entered, had been cast out by God's mighty hand. As, then, they had by experience found God to be bountiful, and as he had promised to be in future the same, how great and how monstrous nmst have been their madness when they would not turn to obedience? Then it is also a circumstance of weighty importance, when God reminded them that it was he who gave the land to them and to their fathers.

He adds, Ye have not inclined your ear, nor obeyed me We have stated elsewhere the import of these words, ``Not to incline the ear:'' they removed the plea of ignorance or of the want of knowledge. God, then, charges the Jews here with deliberate wickedness; for they had obstinately rejected the doctrine of the Law, and all the warnings given by the Prophets; for when doctrine is set before any people, and God is pleased familiarly to teach them, and nothing is effected, their perverseness is thus more fully made known. God then intimates here that the Jews had not gone astray through ignorance, for they sufficiently understood what was right. Whence, then, was there so great a hardness? even because they had designedly closed their ears, that is, they had wickedly denied obedience to God, and had been refractory, as it were, through a long-cherished resolution, so that they could never be brought to a sound mind. It afterwards follows again, ---

Jeremiah 35:16

16. Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the com-

mandment of their father, which he commanded them; but this people hath not hearkened unto me:

16. Quoniam stabilierunt filii Jonadab, filii Rechab, mandatum patris sui, qued mandaverat ipsis, populus antera hic non audierunt ad me, (hoc est, non obediverunt mihi)

The Prophet says nothing new here, but confirms what has been said before; and this he did, that the indignity of the people's conduct might more fully appear, inasmuch as, on one hand, a mortal man, and he now dead, retained authority over his posterity, having once laid on them a restraint in a matter hard and difficult; while God, on the other hand, effected nothing, though he had constantly addressed and exhorted his people, had sent prophets, and ceased not to invite them to himself, and had not only invited them, but also kindly allured them by setting before them his favors, and gave them hope as to the time to come. Since God, then, had tried all means, but without any success, the hopeless depravity of the people became hence evident. This is the import of the whole.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast made known to us by thy servants, not only once, and even often, the way of salvation, but hast sent also thine only-begotten Son to be to us a teacher of perfect wisdom, --- O grant, that we may so submit to thee and so consecrate to thee our whole life, that he who died for our salvation and rose again, may peaceably rule us by the doctrine of his gospel; and that we may strive to glorify thee in this world, so that we may at last be made partakers of that celestial glory which the same thy Son our Lord has obtained for us. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Forty-First

Jeremiah 35:17

17. Therefore thus saith the LORD God of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon Judah and upon all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the evil that I have pronounced against them: because I have spoken unto them, but they have not heard; and I have called unto them, but they have not answered.

17. Propterea sic dicit Jehova, Deus exercituum, Deus Israel, Ecce ego adducam super Jehudah, et super incolas Jerusalem omne malum quod pronuntiavi contra cos; quia loquutus sum ad eos, et non audierunt; et vocavi eos et non responderunt.

The Prophet, after having shewn that the Jews were so condemned by the example of the Rechabites, that there was no defense for them, now adds, --- that as the word of God had been to them useless, it would now be efficacious against them. This is the purport of the verse.

I have spoken to them, says God; I will now speak to them no more, but I will speak against them, that is, I will command the Chaldeans, and they shall be my ministers and the executioners of my vengeance. We hence see the order which the Prophet has observed: he did not bring forward this final sentence, which is like a thunderbolt, until he had proved the Jews guilty. For this purpose was the comparison he made, when he said that the Rechabites had obeyed their father, and that the Jews had disregarded God's Law and all the warnings given by the Prophets. I will

bring, he says, upon Judah, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the evil which I have spoken against them; for I have spoken to them, and they heard not

Here the Prophet distinguishes between two sorts of speaking. For God had spoken to the Jews, but he had also spoken against them. Here are two prepositions, not very unlike, the one begins with an {א} aleph, and the other with {ע}, oin. By the one the Prophet denotes doctrine, exhortations, and whatever may lead to repentance, so that men may either be recalled to their duty or retained in it. This, then, is one mode of speaking, that is, when God addresses us and invites us to himself. The other mode is that which refers to threatenings, that is, when God, after having found that he can do nothing by teaching, has recourse to threatenings, and shews what vengeance awaits us. This passage, then, is especially worthy of observation, because we hence learn, that when men reject the word of teaching, they cannot escape the other word, which denounces the judgment of God. Teaching appears useless when not received by men; but whosoever despises his word, will find at last, to his own ruin, that the denunciations by which God confirms and ratifies the authority of his word, cannot possibly be made void: as, then, they heard not the word which I had spoken to them, come upon them shall all the evils which I have pronounced against them

By adding, I have called and they answered not, he amplifies the atrocity of their sin; for God had not simply shewn what was necessary for their salvation, but had also called them to himself, and had even loudly called them; but he spoke to the deaf, for they answered not. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 35:18-19

18. And Jeremiah said unto the house of the Rechabites, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Because ye have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts, and done according unto all that he hath commanded you:

18. Domui autem Rechabitarum dixit Jeremias, sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Propterea quod audistis (vel, obedivistis) mandato Jonadab patris vestri, et servastis omnia ejus mandata, et fecistis secundum omnia quae praeceperat vobis,

19. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.

19. Propterea sic dick Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Non excidetur vir ex Jonadab filio Rechab, quin stet coram facie mea cunctis diebus.

Here the Prophet, that he might affect the Jews more deeply, promises a reward to the sons of Jonadab, because they obeyed their father; and he promises them a blessing from God. Nor is it to be wondered at, for this commandment, as Paul says, is the first to which a promise is annexed. (Ephesians 6:2) God promises generally a reward to all who keep the Law, for every command has in general connected with it the hope of reward; but this is in a special manner added to the Fifth Commandment: ``Honor thy father and thy mother, that thou mayest prolong thy life,'' etc. It is, then, nothing strange that God promised a reward to the Rechabites, because they followed the command of their father, for he had promised that in the Law.

But what the Papists allege, that the obedience rendered to the Church is on

the same account pleasing to God, may, as we have said, be easily confuted; for if the Rechabites had followed the command of their father in a thing unlawfill, they would have been worthy of punishment; but as this precept, as we have shewn, was not inconsistent with God's Law, God approved of their obedience. But the laws which are made for the purpose of setting up fictitious modes of worship are altogether impious, for they introduce idolatry. God has prescribed how he would have us to worship him; whatever, therefore, men bring in of themselves is wholly impious, for it adulterates the pure worship of God; and further, when necessity is laid on consciences, it is, as we have said, a tyrannical bondage. Such was not the object of Jonadab; for what he commanded his posterity was useful, and referred only to things of this life; and it did not bind their consciences; for when it was necessary they moved to Jerusalem and dwelt as others in houses; for they did not erect tents at Jerusalem, but lived in hired dwellings; and yet they obeyed their father's command, for his purpose in ordering them to dwell in tents, was, that they might remain unincumbered, so that they might be always ready to move. We hence see how foolishly the Papists pervert this passage in order to support their tyrannical laws.

And thus this truth may stand, that the obedience of the Rechabites pleased God, because nature itself requires that children should obey their parents; and we also know that God often rewards the shadows of virtues in order to shew that virtues themselves are pleasing to him. [326] But there is no doubt but that this promise, as I have before said, was designedly given, in order to stimulate the Jews, according to what is said in the Song of Moses,

``I will provoke them by a foolish nation, because they have provoked me by those who are no gods; and I will take vengeance on them, for I will bring forth nations which were not before.'' (Deuteronomy 32:21)

So then God now, in order to excite and rouse the Jews, promises to bless the Rechabites, because they had been obedient to their father, There shall not be cut off a man from Jonadab, that is, from the offspring of Jonadab, standing (literally) before my face; but as the conciseness of the verse renders it obscure and ambiguous, I have introduced an addition, --- but that he may stand before my face And he says that they would stand before his face, not that they were to be priests or Levites, as some of the Rabbins have said, who have applied this passage to the priesthood, because it is often said in Scripture both of the Levites and the priests, that they stood before the face of God. They, therefore, think that the same thing is meant here when spoken of the Rechabites. But this is a strained meaning. God simply intimates, that some of Jonadab's offspring would be always living, and that through his special favor, that their obedience might not appear to be without its just reward. This is the meaning. Now follows, ---

[326] We see an instance of this in Ahab, 1 Kings 21:27-29. — Ed.

Jeremiah 36

CHAPTER 36

Jeremiah 36:1-2

1. And it came to pass in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, that this word came unto Jeremiah from the LORD, saying,

1. Et fuit anno quarto Joakim filii Josiae regis Jehudah (fuit inquam) sermo hic ad Jeremiam a Jehova, dicendo,

2. Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee against Israel, and against Judah, and against all the nations, from the day I spake unto thee, from the days of Josiah, even unto this day.

2. Sume tibi volumen libri, et scribe in eo cunctos sermones quos loquutus sum ad to contra Israel et contra Jehudah, et contra eunctos gentes a die quo loquutus sum ad to, a diebus scilicet Josiae usque ad hunc diem.

The Prophet relates in this chapter a history worthy of being remembered, and very useful to us; for he says that he wrote down by God's command what he had previously taught in the Temple, and also that he sent that summary by Baruch to be recited in the Temple, that the report of this spread, and that the king's counsellors called to them Baruch, and that when they heard what was written in the volume, they brought word to the king, having, however, first admonished Baruch to conceal himself, together with Jeremiah, lest the king should be exasperated against them. And so it happened, for the king, being instantly filled with indignation, ordered Jeremiah and Baruch to be taken, that they might be put to death; but they were hidden and protected through God's favor. We shall hereafter see what the king by his obduracy had effected, even to cause the Prophet to speak more boldly against him.

The Prophet then says at the beginning, that the word of Jehovah came, by which he was ordered to write in a volume of a book whatever he had previously spoken By the volume of a book he means the volume in which he was to write; for {ספר}

sepher, does not here mean a written book, for the volume was without any writing. Then the Prophet must have dictated to his servant Baruch. And this mode of speaking occurs also elsewhere, as in Psalm 40:7. But the Hebrews, according to an ancient custom, called a volume {מגלה}, megele; for they had no books in a compact form, such as we have in the present day, but had volumes or rolls; and the same word, volume, is also used in Latin. For as the Hebrews called what is folded up {מגלה}, megele, which comes from {גלל}, gelal, to fold up, or to roll; so the Latins also have derived it from a verb (volvo) which means to roll, and we call it rolle; and in Gaul they used the same form of writing; for all ancient documents and also judicial proceedings were wont formerly to be written on rolls, and in the old archieves there is nothing found but what is so written. God then ordered his Prophet to take a roll, and then he commanded him to write all the words which he had heard from the mouth of God, and which he had pronounced against Israel, and against Judah, and against all other nations.

We see here, in the first place, what is the benefit of having the Scripture, even that what would otherwise vanish away or escape the memory of man, may remain and be handed down from one to another, and also that it may be read; for what is written can be better weighed during leisure time. When one speaks only, every one takes in something according to his capacity and his attention; but as words from man's mouth glide away, the utility of Scripture does hence appear more evident; for when what is not immediately understood is repeated, it brings more light, and then what one reads to-day he may read tomorrow, and next year, and many years after. As then God saw that he had been, as it were, beating the air when he had spoken by his Prophet, his purpose was that those things which Jeremiah had in vain spoken, should be written down. In this manner he, no doubt, intended to condemn both the king and his counsellors, and also the whole people, not only for their idleness, but also for their insensibility, even because all his teaching had been without fruit, though Jeremiah had labored much among them, and had been assiduous and faithful in the discharge of his office as a teacher.

We now perceive the design of God in saying, Take a volume and write in it; and he says, all the words which I have spoken to thee This was said in order that the Jews might understand that Jeremiah did not bring forward his own fictions, but faithfully delivered what he had heard from God's mouth. He adds, against Israel and affainst Judah For Jeremiah at the beginning had prophesied against the ten tribes; but after the kingdom of Israel was cut off, he performed his office only towards the remaining people, so that his doctrine referred especially to the Jews. It is added, against all nations; and this we shall presently see; and it hence appears that his prophecies were not written according to the order of time, as I have before reminded you, but that the volume was written without regard to order. It was yet so far preserved that this book contains a summary of all the doctrine taught by Jeremiah during the whole course of his ministry. He says, from the day in which he began to speak, even from the days of Josiah, he says, to this day And the Prophet had been performing his duty as a teacher, not for ten, or twenty, or thirty, but for forty years. It follows,

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Jeremiah 36:3

3. It may be that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.

3. Si forte audiant domus Jehudah omne malum quod ego cogito ad faciendum (hoc est, facere) ipsis, ut revertantur quisque a via sua mala; et propitius sim iniquitati eorum et peccato eorum.

Here God explains the object he had in view, even to make another trial whether the Jews were healable, so that the teaching of the Prophet might be conducive to their salvation. But he uses the particle {אולי} auli, ``it may be,'' which implies a doubt; because they had so often, and for so long a time, and in such various ways, shewed themselves to be so obstinate that hardly a hope could be entertained of their repentance. God, however, shews that he was not wearied, provided there remained in them still the smallest particle of religion. It may be then, he says, that the house of Judah will hear all the evil, etc.

We have seen how the Prophet labored, not only to terrify his own nation by threatenings, but also sweetly to allure them to the service of God; but God speaks here of them as of perverse men, who were almost intractable, according to what is said in Psalm 18:26, that God would be severe towards the perverse; for God deals with men according to their disposition. As the Jews then were unworthy that God should, according to his gentleness, teach them as children, this only remained for them, to repent under the influence of fear. It may be, he says, that they will bear all the evil, etc. We now see why God touches only on threatenings, for this alone remained for men so obstinate.

He says, The evil which I think to do, etc. God here transfers to himself what belongs to men; for he does not think or deliberate with himself; but as we cannot comprehend his incomprehensible counsel, he sometimes assumes the person of man; and this is what is common in Scripture. But he says, that he thinks of what he pronounces in his word; for as long as God exhorts men to repent, he holds, as it were, his hand suspended, and allows an opportunity to repent. He then says, that he is, as it were, in the midst of his deliberations: as when one wants to know whether an offender will submit, so God transforms himself, in a manner, into what man is, when he says, I think; that is, let them know that vengeance is not in vain denounced in my word; for I will perform whatever I now threaten, except they repent.

He says, That they may turn every one from his evil way This is to hear, previously mentioned, even when men become seriously touched, so as to be displeased with their vices, and to desire from the heart to surrender themselves to God. He joins a promise, for without the hope of pardon it cannot be, that men will repent, as it has been often said; but it must be repeated, because few understand that faith cannot be separated from repentance; and a sinner can never be induced to return truly to God, unless he entertains a hope of pardon, for this is a main truth, according to what is said in Psalm 130:4,

``With thee is mercy, that thou mayest be feared.''

Then, according to what is commonly done, the Prophet says, that if the Jews

turned to God, he would be propitious to them, as though he had said, that men would not be disappointed, if they repent, because God would readily meet them, and be reconciled to them: for this one thing alone, as I have said, is what can encourage us to repent, that is, when we are convinced that God is ready to give us pardon. He mentions iniquity and sin. The Prophet, no doubt, referred to these two words, in order to shew that we ought by no means to despair, though sins be heaped on sins. It follows ---

Jeremiah 36:4-6

4. Then Jeremiah called Baruch the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the LORD, which he had spoken unto him, upon a roll of a book.

4. Et vocavit Jeremias Baruch fillium Neriae; et scripsit Baruch ex ore Jeremiae cunctos sermones Jehovae, quos loquutus est ad ipsum, in volumine libri.

5. And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I am shut up; I cannot go into the house of the LORD:

5. Et praecepit Jeremias ipsi Baruch, dicendo, Ego detineor (vel, sum conclusus) non potero venire in domum Jehovae (hoc est, in Templum:)

6. Therefore go thou, and read in the roll, which thou hast written from my mouth, the words of the LORD in the ears of the people, in the LORD'S house upon the fasting-day: and also thou shalt read them in the ears of all Judah that come out of their cities.

6. Tu autem vade, et lege in volumine quod scripseris ex ore meo, sermones Jehovae in auribus populi, in domo Jehovae, in die jejunii, atque etiam in auribus totius Jehudab, qui venerint (hoc est, omnium Judaeorum qui venerint) ex urbibus suis, tu leges ipsis.

Here the Prophet declares that he dictated to Baruch, a servant of God, whatever he had previously taught. But there is no doubt but that God suggested to the Prophet at the time what might have been erazed from his memory; for all the things which we have some time ago said, do not always occur to us. Therefore the greater part of so many words must have escaped the Prophet, had not God dictated them again to him. Jeremiah then stood, as it were, between God and Baruch; for God, by his Spirit, presided over and guided the mind and tongue of the Prophet. Now the Prophet, the Spirit being his guide and teacher, recited what God had commanded; and Baruch wrote down, and then proclaimed the whole summary of what the Prophet had taught.

He therefore says, that he called to him Baruch the son of Neria, who wrote from his mouth, and he wrote all the words of Jehovah Jeremiah repeats again that nothing came from himself. We hence see that he did not dictate, according to his own will, what came to his mind, but that God suggested whatever he wished to be written by Baruch. It is added, that he commanded Baruch to recite in the Temple what he had written, because he himself was detained. Some think that he was shut up in prison; and he used the same word before, when he told us that he was cast into prison by Zedekiah. But as sacred history does not say that he suffered any such thing under Jehoiakim, I am inclined to think that he was prevented by God; I do not,

however, ascribe it to a divine oracle; for it might have happened either through God's command, or through some human impediments. [327] If we believe the Prophet to have been in prison, and that he might have gone out, he yet abstained; for the more liberty was given him, the more bound he felt himself to continue in prison, lest he should violate public authority. But the other supposition is more probable, that he was detained by God's hand. However this may have been, he says that he could not go forth; and he mentioned this, lest it should appear that he was only careful as to himself, and that through fear of danger, he devolved this duty on Baruch. He then shews that he did not shun his office, because it exposed him to hatred, but that he was not at liberty to go forth.

Go thou, then, he says, and read in the volume The Prophet, in this case, was ready to incur any odium which might be, for he did not bid Baruch to relate by memory what he had heard from him, but ordered him to take the volume, and to read, as we shall hereafter see, what he had written. The Prophet then did not, in this instance, avoid danger, and put Baruch in his own place, but he expressly told him to read from the volume: What thou hast written, he says, from my mouth, and, what Jehovah has spoken, these things read thou to the people in the Temple, on a fasting day This day was chosen, first, because there was then a greater concourse of people, according to what immediately follows, for he was to read these things in the ears not only of the citizens, but also of the whole people; and on fast-days they were wont, as it is well known, to come in great numbers to the city for the purpose of sacrificing. It was then God's purpose that these threatenings should be proclaimed, not only to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but also to all other Jews, that the report of them might spread to every part of the land. In the second place, such a day was much more suitable to the message conveyed; for why was a fast enjoined, except humbly to supplicate God's mercy, and to deprecate his wrath? As then this was the design of a fast, the Jews ought to have been then, as it were, in a submissive state of mind, prepared calmly to receive these threatenings, and to profit by them.

We then see that there were two reasons why the Prophet, by God's command, fixed on this day, --- first, because there was a larger number of people, --- and, secondly, because a fast ought to have rendered them teachable, so that they might more readily submit to God, acknowledge their sins, and, being terrified, might also flee to God's mercy, and thus loathe themselves on account of their sins. The rest tomorrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we cease not continually to provoke thine anger against us, we may at length return to thee, and that every one may so examine his life, that being prostrate under a sense of thy wrath, we may betake ourselves to the only true remedy, even to implore thee, and to seek forgiveness; and do thou also so graciously meet us, that we may in sure faith call on thee, and, in the meantime, find really, by experience, that our prayers are not in vain, until we shall at length have a perfect enjoyment of thy mercy, in thy celestial kingdom. --- Amen.

[327] Blaney's suggestion is not improbable, that the Prophet, having been before tried before the princes, (Jeremiah 26) was put under some restraint, probably forbidden to enter the precincts of the Temple. — Ed.

Lecture One Hundred and Forty-Second

Jeremiah 36:7

7. It may be they will present their supplication before the LORD, and will return every one from his evil way: for great is the anger and the fury that the LORD hath pronounced against this people.

7. Si forte cadat precatio ipsorum coram facie Jehovae, et convertantur quisque a via sua mala; quia magna est excandescentia et magna iracundia quam locutus est Jehova contra populum hunc.

Jeremiah, after having dictated to the scribe Baruch what he had before preached to the people, repeats what the object was, which we have previously observed; for it was God's will to make the trial, whether the people could by any means be restored to a sound mind. This had, indeed, been in vain attempted for a long time; but God was yet willing to proceed to the utmost extent in his mercy. Hence Jeremiah now declares the purpose for which he wished the book to be read to the people. Nor is there a doubt but that Baruch had been thus admonished, that he might exhort the people to repentance as it were from the mouth of Jeremiah.

Now, there are two things mentioned as necessary in order to obtain pardon, --- prayer, and turning or conversion. For if any one only in words seeks to be reconciled to God, he will not succeed. Turning or conversion cannot be separated from prayer. But then were a sinner to repent a thousand times, he would still remain exposed to God's judgment; for reconciliation, by which we are absolved, does not depend on repentance, but on the gratuitous favor of God; for God does not receive us into favor because he sees that we are changed to a better mind, as though conversion were the cause of pardon; but he embraces us according to his gratuitous mercy. This, then, is the reason why Jeremiah joins together these two things --- prayer, and conversion or repentance; for as I have said, hypocrites confess in words their sins and seek pardon, but it is with a feigned or a double heart. Hence that prayer may be genuine, repentance must be added, by which men shew that they loathe themselves. And then, ou the other hand, it is not enough for us to turn or repent, except the sinner flees to the mercy of God, for pardon flows from that fountain; for God, as it has been said, does not forgive us for any merit in us, but because it seemeth him good to bury our sins. The sum of the whole is, that God would have the prophecies of Jeremiah to be recited before the whole people, as they were conducive to their safety and salvation. The manner is described, --- that the people were humbly to pray and also really to repent.

As to the expression, It may be, a prayer will fall, [328] we have elsewhere explained its meaning. The Scripture speaks of prayer, that it rises and that it falls. Both expressions are suitable, though to be understood in a different way; for prayer cannot be rightly offered except man ascends and falls. These two things seem contrary, but they well agree together; nay, they cannot be separated. For in prayer two things are necessary --- faith and humility: by faith we rise up to God, and by humility we lie prostrate on the ground. This is the reason why Scripture often says

[328] So the verb is rendered in the Sept. and Vulg.; but "accepted" by the Syr. and Targ. Our version is a paraphrase; to convey fully the meaning the word "humbly" ought to have been introduced," It may be, they will humbly present their supplication," etc. — Ed.

that prayer ascends, for we cannot pray as we ought unless we raise upwards our minds; and faith, sustained by promises, elevates us above all the world. Thus then prayer is raised upwards by faith; but by humility it falls down on the earth; for fear ought to be connected with faith. And as faith in our hearts produces alacrity by confidence, so also conscience casts us down and lays us prostrate. We now understand the meaning of the expression.

He adds, Because great is the wrath and indignation which Jehovah hath pronounced, or hath spoken, against this people. By wrath and indignation we are to understand God's vengeance, the cause being put for the effect. But the Prophet intimates, that except men are wholly blinded, and as it were estranged in mind, they ought to be very deeply touched, when God sets before them some dreadful judgment. When God chastises some slight fault, and when he does not so very grievously threaten us, we ought to feel alarmed; but when God shews his wrath to be so kindled that final ruin ought to be dreaded, we must be stupid indeed, if such a threatening does not terrify us. Then the Prophet says that there was no hope of relaxation, for God had pronounced no light or common judgment on the people; but he shews that he was prepared to destroy the whole nation, as the Jews had deserved extreme punishment.

Jeremiah 36:8

8. And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, reading in the book the words of the LORD in the LORD'S house.

8. Et fecit Baruch filius Neriae secundum omnia quae praeceperat ei Jeremias Propheta, legendo in libro sermones Jehovae in domo Jehovae.

Here the promptitude of Baruch is commended, for he did not disobey God's Prophet, but willingly undertook the office deputed to him. His office, as we have said, was not without danger. As then his message was by no means popular, but on the contrary very disagreeable, hence is seen the devotedness of Baruch. He made no refusal, for he knew that this burden was laid on him for some purpose. Jeremiah then says, that he did as he had been commanded, and read in the Temple the words of Jehovah [329] He calls them a little farther on the words of Jeremiah, but the same thing is meant; for as God is, as it were, represented by his ministers, so he often transfers to them what belongs peculiarly to himself. (Romans 2:16; 16:25; 2 Timothy 2:8) That is called the doctrine of Jeremiah, which yet, properly speaking, has no other author but God. So Paul called that Gospel, of which he was the preacher and witness, his Gospel; and yet he himself had not devised the Gospel, but had received it from Christ, and faithfully delivered it as from his hand.

We ought, therefore, to notice this mode of speaking, which occurs everywhere in Scripture, --- the same thing is ascribed to God and to his servants. Thus we find what may seem strange, --- the Apostles are said to forgive sins, they are spoken of as bringing salvation; but the reason is, because they were ministers of God's grace,

[329] I render this verse as follows, — 8. And Baruch, the son of Neriah, did according to all that Jeremiah the prophet commanded him, in order to read in the book the words of Jehovah in the house of Jehovah. What Jeremiah had commanded Baruch was to take a roll and to write the words from his mouth: this Baruch did, and for this purpose, that he might read the words (as the Targum has it) in the Lord's house. — Ed.

and exhorted men in Christ's name to be reconciled to God. They then absolved, because they were the testifiers of absolution. So also the words which God dictated to his servant were called the words of Jeremiah; yet, properly speaking, they were not the words of man, for they did not proceed from a mortal man, but from the only true God. It follows ---

Jeremiah 36:9-10

9. And it came to pass in the fifth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, in the ninth month, that they proclaimed a fast before the LORD to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem.

9. Et fuit anno quinto Jehoiakim filii Josiae regis Jehudah, mense nono, indixerunt jejunium coram Jehova toti populo (qui erat, subaudiendum est) Jerosolymae, et toti populo qui venerunt ex urbibus Jehudah Jerosolymam:

10. Then read Baruch in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of the LORD, in the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the LORD'S house, in the ears of all the people.

10. Et legit Baruch in libro sermones Jeremiae in domo Jehovae (hoc est, in Templo) in cubiculo Gamarliae filii Saphan scribae, in atrio superiori, in introitu (vel, ingressu) portae novae domus Jehovae (portae novae Templi) in auribus totius populi.

Here is added a fuller explanation; for the Prophet relates nothing new, but according to what is common in Hebrew he expresses at large what he had before briefly stated: for he had said, that Baruch read in the Temple the words of God as he had been commanded; but he now relates when and how this was done, even in the fifth year of Jehoiakim, and when a fast was proclaimed in the ninth month [330] We now then see the design of this repetition, even to point out more clearly the time. He then says that the book was read and recited when a fast was proclaimed in the fifth year of Jehoiakim. The Jews, no doubt, knew that some grievous calamity was at hand, for this proclamation was extraordinary. And we know that when some calamity was apprehended, they usually betook themselves to this remedy, not that fasting in itself was pleasing to God, but because it was a symbol of humiliation, and it also prepared men for prayer. This custom did not creep in without reason, but God designed thus to habituate his people to repentance. When, therefore, God manifested some tokens of his displeasure, the Jews then thought it necessary, not only to seek forgiveness, but also to add fasting to their prayers, according to what we find in the second chapter of Joel as well as in other places. It was then a solemn confession of sin and guilt; for by fasting they acknowledged themselves to be exposed to God's judgment, and also by sackcloth and ashes; for they were wont to throw aside their fine garments and to put on sackcloth, and also to scatter ashes on their heads, or to lie on the ground: and these were the filth as it were of the guilty: and in this state of debasement they sought pardon of God, thus acknowledging in the first place their own filthiness by these external symbols, and secondly, confessing

[330] The latter part of the verse is differently rendered in the Sept., Syr., and the Targ., and more consistently with the Hebrew, — — proclaim a fast before Jehovah did all the people in Jerusalem, and all the people that came from the cities into Jerusalem. It was a fast that the people proclaimed, and not the king, who was a very ungodly one. His conduct on this occasion proved his great impiety. — Ed.

before God and angels that they were worthy of death, and that no hope remained for them except God forgave them.

As, then, Jeremiah writes here that there was a fast proclaimed, there is not the least doubt but that some tokens of God's vengeance then appeared. And though Jehoiakim had provoked the King Nebuchadnezzar by refusing to pay tribute, yet the idea prevailed always among the Jews that nothing happened except through the just vengeance of God. As, then, they knew that they had to do with God, they thought that it behoved them to pacify him.

He afterwards adds, that a fast before Jehovah was proclaimed; not that it was meritorious, or that an expiation would thereby be done, as the Papists imagine, who think that they can redeem their sins by fastings, and hence they call them satisfactions; but the Prophet says that the fast was proclaimed before Jehovah, as an addition to prayer. As, then, it was a solemn meeting for prayer, fasting was, as it were, a part added to it, that they might by this external symbol more fully humble themselves before God, and at the same time testify their repentance. And he says that it was proclaimed to all the people who were at Jerusalem, and to the other Jews who came from other cities to the Temple to pray. And we hence conclude that fasting in itself is of no moment, but that it was an evidence of repentance, and therefore added to prayer. And Christ, having mentioned prayer, added fasting, (Matthew 17:21) not that fasting ought not to be separated from daily prayers; for we ought always to pray; but we are not to fast morning and evening; nay, we pray when our table is prepared for us and meat are set before us; and then when we dine and sup, we pray to God. But this is to be understood of more serious prayers, when, as we have said, God summons us, as it were, before his tribunal, and shews manifest tokens of his displeasure. And for this reason also, Paul, in 1 Corinthians 7:5, when bidding husbands to dwell with their wives, adds this,

``Except it may be for a time''

--- for what purpose? even that they might give themselves wholly to prayer and fasting. We hence see that fasting was not an ordinary thing, but when required by some urgent necessity.

Then, this also is to be noticed, that the fast was proclaimed to the other Jews who had come to Jerusalem; for why was it necessary for them to come to Jerusalem, except humbly to supplicate God's favor.

He says that the roll was then read in the Temple, in the chamber of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan the scribe The chambers, as we have before said, were annexed to the court of the priests; for the Levites were the guardians of the Temple; and every priest also, while performing his duty, remained in the Temple. As to Shaphan, he is called a scribe, not the king's chancellor, who is afterwards called by the same name; for I regard him as being an actuary. For they called the scribes {ספרים}, sepharim; but sometimes by this name are meant the interpreters of the Law, and sometimes the actuaries, whose office it was to collect the prophecies, or who were engaged in collecting public acts. Then Gemariah, the son of Shaphan the scribe, had his chamber in the Temple; and he says, in the higher court Hence we conclude, according to what I have already said, that these chambers were parts of the court.

And he adds, In the entrance of the new gate of the Temple Some think that this was the eastern gate, and that the greatest concourse of people was usually there. We hence see that Baruch boldly performed his duty in reading the roll, though the reading of it must have greatly exasperated the minds of the whole people. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 36:11-13

11. When Michaiah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, had heard out of the book all the words of the LORD,

11. Et audivit Michas filius Gamariae filii Saphan onmes sermones Jehovae de super libre (hoc est, ut recitabantur ex libre)

12. Then he went down into the king's house, into the scribe's chamber: and, lo, all the princes sat there, even Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes.

12. Et descendit in domum regis ad cubiculum scribae; et ecce illic omnes principes sedentes (hoc est, sedebant) Elisama scriba, et Dalaiah filius Semaiah, et Elnathan filius Achobor, et Gamarias filius Saphan, et Zedechias filius Chananiae, et omnes proceres;

13. Then Michaiah declared unto them all the words that he had heard, when Baruch read the book in the ears of the people.

13. Et nuntiavit (indicavit) ipsis Michas omnes sermones quos audierat cum legeret Baruch in libre (hoc est, recitaret ex libre) in auribus populi.

It is not known with what design this Michaiah came to the princes and the king's counsellors, he may have been an informer, who intended to create ill-will to the Prophet, and to ingratiate himself with the princes, as courtiers usually do. If this was the case, we may learn from this example, that not all who hear are so teachable and ready to obey as to make proficiency in the knowledge of good and holy doctrine: we see that many patiently hear and give some evidence of docility, and yet cherish perverseness in their hearts, and afterwards calumniate what they have heard. Such may have been the character of Michaiah, spoken of here. But his case may have been different, --- that being filled with wonder, he conveyed to the king's counsellors what he deemed new and, as it were, incredible. I leave this without offering an opinion, for we have nothing certain on the subject.

It is said that he came into the king's palace, where all the princes sat, and into the chamber of the scribe It is probable that this scribe was the king's chancellor, with whom were all the princes of the court. Some he names, and then says, that they were all there, and that Michaiah read to them the words which he had heard from the mouth of Baruch when he read to the whole people.

Now it was not without the wonderful purpose of God that the king at length came to know what had passed in the Temple, in order that his perverseness against God might be detected, as we shall hereafter see. This messenger, indeed, was the means of bringing danger to Jeremiah as well as to his servant Baruch; but the Lord protected them. However, the impiety and the obstinacy of the king were discovered; for when they were all terrified, he despised God and became enraged against

his Prophet. He burnt the book, and wished also to destroy its author. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 36:14

14. Therefore all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, unto Baruch, saying, Take in thine hand the roll wherein thou hast read in the ears of the people, and come. So Baruch the son of Neriah took the roll in his hand, and came unto them.

14. Et miserunt omnes proceres ad Baruch, Jehudi fillium Nathaniae, filii Selemiae, filii Cussi, dicendo, Volumen in quo legisti in auribus populi sume in manum tuam, et veni. Et sumpsit Baruch filius Neriae volumen in manum suam, et yenit ad ipsos.

They ought indeed to have gone up immediately into the Temple; but though they were not wholly irreligious, yet they shewed some pride, as they commonly do who are surrounded with splendor, being not disposed to humble themselves. We see that all courtiers are so inflated with pride, that they think it a disgrace to mingle with the common people. They wish some special honor to be reserved for themselves. This was the reason that they did not go up into the Temple that they might learn the message, but sent for Baruch to come to them. Now it was this that prevented them from the heart to repent.

We shall indeed see that they were smitten with fear, and filled with amazement; and we shall also see that they brought the matter before the king, and yet wished to provide for the safety of the Prophet and his servant; but they ought to have gone farther, even to join the people in the Temple, and make a public confession of their repentance. Why they did not we have explained: pride, vanity, and ambition always accompany wealth and power.

Baruch was then sent for, but in an honorable manner; for they did not send an obscure man; and hence his genealogy is given, and not only the name of his father is mentioned, but that of his grandfather and of his great-grand-father; and hence we conclude that he was a man of some eminence. They commanded him to come, and it is added, that having taken the roll he came to them; by which he manifested his firmness. His promptitude previously was commendable, that he ventured to go forth to the Temple and publicly to recite what tended to kindle the rage of the whole people. As in the beginning, he promptly undertook the office deputed to him, so now he persevered in the same course. He came to the princes; and he did not hide the roll, though he might have been carrying with him his own death, but he boldly went forth to them, for he knew that the whole business was under the direction of God. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 36:15-16

15. And they said unto him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch read it in their ears.

15. Et dixerunt, sede agedum, et lege ipsum (volumen) in auribus nostris; et legit Baruch in auribus ipsorum.

16. Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words.

16. Et factum est cum audirent cunctos sermones, expaverunt quisque ad propinquum suum, et dixerunt ipsi Baruch,Indicando indicabimus Regi omnes hos sermones.

We see that there was some regard for religion in the princes, for they submitted to hear, and respectfully received the Prophet's servant. Had Jeremiah himself come, he would, no doubt, have been received as God's Prophet, as such honor was given to his servant, that the princes ordered him to be seated, which was certainly a favor. It hence appears that they were not profane despisers of God. Then follows another thing, --- that they were moved with fear Then as to the king's counsellors, we see that they were in such a state of mind, that they readily listened to, and dreaded the threatenings of God. But it was a fear that no doubt soon vanished; and what he says, that they feared each as to his neighbor, was a sign of a change; for he who fears as he ought, thinks of himself, and examines himself before God; but when the mind wavers, eyery one looks to another. It was then a sign of repentance not real and genuine, so to fear as to look to one another, for they ought, each of them, to look to God, that they might from an inward consciousness acknowledge their sins, and thus flee to the true remedy.

It follows, that they said, Declaring we shall declare to the king, etc. We hence learn, that their fear was such, that they did not yet wish to offend the king. They then referred the matter to him, being anxious to gratify him. This is the religion of the court, even so to fear God as not to lose favor, but on the contrary, so to perform one's duty, as not to be liable to the charge of not being sufficiently attentive and devoted to the king's interest. In short, the Prophet thus represents to us, as in a glass, the religion of the king's counsellors, and shews to us at the same time that their minds were corrupted by ambition, and that ambition so prevailed, that they paid more regard to a mortal king than to the only true King of heaven.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou art pleased to invite us daily to thyself, we may respond to thy call in the spirit of meekness and obedience; and do thou also so seriously impress our minds, that we may not only confess our sins, but also so loathe ourselves on account of them, that we may without delay seek the true remedy, and, relying on thy mercy, may so repent, that thy name may hereafter be glorified in us, until we shall at length become partakers of that glory, which thy Son has obtained for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Forty-Third

Jeremiah 36:17-18

17. And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth?

17. Baruch autem interrogarunt, dicendo, Indica agedum nobis quomodo scripseris cunctos sermones istos ex ore ejus?

18. Then Baruch answered them, he pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book.

18. Et dixit illis Baruch, Ex ore suo pronuntiavit mihi cunctos sermones istos, et ego scripsi super librum cum atramento.

The king's counsellors were, no doubt, so astonished when they heard that these threatenings had been written as the Prophet had dictated them, that they were agitated by different thoughts, as the unbelieving are wont to be; and not receiving as they ought to have done, the heavenly doctrine, they vacillated, and could not pursue a uniform course. Such, then, was the uncertainty that possessed the minds of the princes; for they could hardly believe that these words had been delivered by memory, but had suspicion of some trickery, as the unbelieving imagine many such things respecting God's servants; and they seem to act thus designedly, that they may obscure God's favor, which appears before their eyes. For this purpose, then, they are said to ask Baruch how he took the words from the mouth of Jeremiah [331]

He simply answered, that Jeremiah had pronounced these words to him. They might hence have concluded, that Jeremiah had no roll laid before him, and that he had been not long meditating on what he communicated to his scribe Baruch. And though he seems to have said no more than what might satisfy the princes, yet the purport of the whole is, that Jeremiah did not produce the roll from a recess or his desk, but promptly gave utterance to what God's Spirit suggested to him. Their astonishment, then, must have increased, when the king's counsellors knew that these commands did not proceed from a mortal man, but that, on the contrary, God spoke them by the mouth of Jeremiah, and by the hand of Baruch. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 36:19

19. Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah; and let no man know where ye be.

19. Et dixerunt principes ipsi Baruch, Vade et absconde to, tu et Jeremias, et vir nesciat (hoc est, nesciat quisqaam) ubinam sitis.

We see that these courtly princes changed, when they perceived that it was indeed God's hand, and yet they remained in a state of insensibility. God often thus terrifies profane men, and yet they return to their own indifference. They seemed, indeed, to be for a moment awakened, and seriously to acknowledge God's judgment; but these thoughts presently vanished away. It thus happened, that they allowed that God had spoken, but it was, as it were, to the deaf, for it was in vain, as we shall shortly see.

Then the king's counsellors derived no benefit; but they were not cruel, for they wished the Prophet to be hidden, lest the king should deal severely with him. We see many such men at this day who are not influenced by divine truth. They nod, indeed, as asses who move their ears; for they confess with their mouths that what is propounded to them is true and right; but as I have said, they either close their eyes, or at least do not attend, so as to know that it is God who speaks. It appears that such were the king's counsellors, of whom the Spirit of God has declared what we shall presently see. They then counselled Baruch to hide himself, and also Jeremiah to do the same; for they saw that there was danger to them, except they took themselves

[331] Some have made two questions here, — "How didst thou write all these words? from his mouth?" The answer seems to favor this construction; as usual in Scripture, the last question is answered first, and then the first: Baruch said, "From his mouth he pronounced to me all these words;" and then he adds, answering the first question, "and I wrote on the book with ink." — Ed.

to flight. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 36:20-21

20. And they went in to the king into the court, but they laid up the roll in the chamber of Elishama the scribe, and told all the words in the ears of the king.

20. Et venerunt ad regem in atrium, et volumen deposuerunt in cubiculo Elisamae scribae, et nuntiarunt in auribus regis omnes sermones.

21. So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll: and he took it out of Elishama the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king.

21. Et misit Rex Jehudi ad tollendum volumen, et accepit ex cubiculo Elisama scribae, et legit illud Jehudi in auribus regis et in auribus cunctorum principum, qui stabant a conspectu regis.

The Prophet now relates that the princes went to the king, after having first deposited the roll with Elishama the scribe; for as the king's ears were tender, they were unwilling to perform at once so odious an office. And thus they who are with kings, and engage their attention, fascinate them with their flatteries; for there is in courts no independence, for the greatest flatterer is the highest in favor. As, then, all courtiers seek eagerly to find out how they may please kings, so they carefully beware lest they should offend them. This was the reason why the princes deposited the roll with Elishama. We hence learn that their regard for God was small and frigid; for if they believed that Jeremiah had dictated to his scribe what he had received from the Spirit of God, the offending of the king ought not certainly to have been deemed by them of so much moment. Why, then, did they not venture immediately to bring forward the roll, and to exhort the king to hear, except that adulation, as I have said, is always timid. Hence then it was that they ventured not to shew the roll to the king, but only told him that they had read some dreadful things, so that the king did not find fault with them, as they had not too boldly brought before him what he was unwilling to hear. This, then, is one thing.

It now follows, that the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll from the chamber of Elishama the scribe In the person of Jehoiakim we see how the unbelieving shun and seek God at the same time, but with a confused mind, as they know not what they seek. The king might have heedlessly despised what had been related to him, for if he wished to be free from all trouble, why did he order the roll to be brought to him, and a part of it to be read? We hence see that the unbelieving, though they wish to go as far as possible from God, yet run to him in a sort of blind manner; but this they do not of their own accord; for God by his secret impulse draws them to himself, so as to render them more inexcusable. Hence it comes, that curiosity leads many to hear the truth, and some madly ask, what is the truth to them? like wild beasts when they run against swords. Such was the disposition of Jehoiakim, for he wished all the prophecies of Jeremiah to be buried; and yet he could not restrain himself, but would know the substance or some part of them. He therefore sent Jehudi to fetch the roll

It is then added, that Jehudi read the roll before the king and before his counsellors. Hence it was that his impiety became more evident, as he was not moved by the predictions read to him. He could not indeed endure the recitation, but after

some chapters had been finished, he became so enraged, as we shall see, that he threw the roll into the fire and burnt it. It was, however, God's purpose to take away from the king as well as from his counsellors every pretext, that they might not afterwards allege that they had fallen through ignorance, for after the roll had been presented to them, it was their own fault if they were not restored to that state of safety from which they had fallen. He now adds ---

Jeremiah 36:22-23

22. Now the king sat in the winterhouse in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him.

22. Rex autem sedebat in domo hyemali, mense nono; et focus coram facie ejus accensus (vel, ardebat)

23. And it came to pass, that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth.

23. Et factum est, cum legisset Jehudi tres paginas et quatuor (hoc est, tres vel quatuor) scidit cultello scribae (vel, graphio) et projecit in ignem qui crat in foco, usque dum consumeret volumen totum super ignem qui erat in foco.

Here Jeremiah shews how little he had effected; for the king not only cast aside but tore the roll into pieces, and after having torn it, he wished its memory to perish, for he cast it into the fire. This trial must have grievously affected the mind of the Prophet; he had dictated that roll by God's command; he saw now that all his labor had been in vain. He might then have complained to God that so much labor had been spent without fruit. For why had God bidden the roll to be written, except for the purpose of leading the king and his counsellors to repentance. As to the people, the Prophet could not know whether it had answered the end for which he sent his scribe Baruch to them, for no account is given as to the attention paid by them. But Baruch was led to the king's palace, so the minds of all were kept in suspense: what was now the issue? The king burnt the roll. There is no doubt then but that the mind of the Prophet was much affected. But God thus exercises his servants when he bids them to speak to the deaf or to bring light to the blind.

Let us then learn simply to obey God, though the labor he requires from us may seem to be useless. And hence Paul rises above all the ingratitude of the world and says, that the ministers of the Gospel are a sweet odor to God, whether for death or for life, (2 Corinthians 2:15, 16) for though the greater part are rendered worse by hearing the Gospel, yet the obedience rendered to God by ministers is acceptable to him, nor is the event to be looked to. Jeremiah then saw that the king's mind was exasperated, but he did not on that account repent of his obedience, for he knew that the event was to be left with God and to his will. The duty of men is to execute whatever God commands, though no fruit may appear to proceed from their labors. This then is one thing.

Now as to the king, we see in him as in a glass how monstrous is their blindness who are the slaves of Satan. Surely the king, when God so thundered in his ears, ought to have been terrified. He could not indeed treat the word with ridicule, but he became enraged, and acted violently like a rabid wild beast, and vented his rage

against the roll itself! If he thought Jeremiah to have been the author, why did he not disregard him as a man of no authority in public affairs? for Jeremiah could not have lessened his character as a king. There is then no doubt but that he perceived, though unwillingly, that he had to do with God; why then did he become thus enraged? what could he hope to gain by such madness towards God? But this, as I have said, was that dreadful blindness which is found in all the reprobate, whose minds the devil has fascinated; for on the one hand they perceive, willing or unwilling, that God is present, and that they are in a manner summoned to his tribunal; and on the other, as though they were forgetful of God, they rage madly against him.

It is then said of King Jehoiakim, that while he was in his winter-house and sitting before the fire, [332] when three or four pages had been read, he cut the roll with an iron pen, or with the small knife of a scribe. The word {תער} tor, means often a razor, but is to be taken here for the knife used by scribes, un canivet. The king, in the first place, did not wait until Jehudi finished the roll; after he had heard three or four leaves, or pages, as we call them, he seized the roll and cut it; and in the second place, being not content with this sacrilege he burnt the roll, as though he could abolish God's judgment together with the book. But we shall hereafter see what he gained by this intemperate spirit in burning the roll until the whole was consumed in the fire It now follows ---

Jeremiah 36:24

24. Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words.

24. Et non timuerunt et non sciderunt vestes suas rex et cuncti servi ejus, cum audissent cunctos sermones istos.

The Prophet now connects doctrine with the narrative, for what we have hitherto seen would be frigid were no instruction added. The Prophet then shews why he had related what we have read of the king's impious obstinacy. But there is more force in a simple statement than if the Prophet in high-sounding words inveighed against the king and his counsellors; for he speaks here as one astonished; They rent not, he says, their garments, nor feared when they heard threatenings so dreadful. And doubtless it may be justly deemed as the most monstrous of things, that miserable men should with such contempt disregard the threatenings of God, which yet they ought to have dreaded no less than instant destruction. That mortals then should not be moved when God fulminates by his threatenings against them, but on the contrary become more hardened --- this is an evidence of a diabolical madness. It is hence not without reason that the Prophet says, as one astonished, that neither the king nor his counsellors feared nor rent their garments.

Now, we are taught in this passage that it is a sign of reprobation when we are not terrified when God threatens and declares that he will become our judge, and when he brings forward our sins, and also shews what we deserve. When, therefore, all those things produce no effect on us, it is a sure sign of hopeless madness. This

[332] There were no chimneys, and therefore no "hearths" in the East. The word rendered "hearth" here means properly a brasier, and {{את before it is a preposition. The verse may be thus rendered, --- And the king was sitting in the winter-house, in the ninth month, and at the brasier burning (or, which was burning) before him. It is ``a small altar, arula,'' in the Vulg.; ``fire'' in the Syr. and Targ.; but ``hearth'' in the Sept. --- Ed.

is what the Prophet means when he says, they feared not, for his object was to shew that all, as well as himself, ought to stand amazed, that the king and his counsellors could thus fearlessly withstand the threatenings of God.

As to the garments, the sign is put for the thing itself; and then a statement of a part is made for the whole: in the first place, to rend the garments is of no great moment, unless the heart be first rent, as Joel says in the second chapter; but though hypocrites make a shew of repentance by fallacious signs, yet when true and sincere repentance is treated of, the sign is put in the place of the thing signified, as in this passage, they rent not their garments, that is, they manifested no fear. And as the rending of garments was usually done, he says that they rent not their garments, when God by the mouth of Jeremiah and by the hand of Baruch fulminated against them. There is, in the second place, a part stated for the whole, because they were wont to put on sackcloth, and to sprinkle ashes on their heads. There is here a mention made only of garments; but other signs were also included.

He says, When they heard all these words; not that the king heard the whole volume, but three or four chapters were sufficient to condenm him; for there is no doubt but that he was abundantly convicted, and that he threw himself into such a rage as to cut the roll and not to rend his garments, because he dreaded God's judgment. And there is a striking alliteration in the words {קרע} koro, to cut, and {קרא} kora, to read, the first ending with {ע}, oin, and the other with {א}, aleph,. He had previously said, that when Jehudah read a part of the roll, the king cut it; the one read and the other cut; and he says here, that the king did not cut (it is the same word) or rend his garments. The king had before cut the roll and torn it in pieces, when, on the contrary, he and the rest ought to have cut or torn their garments, and were it lawful, even themselves, when God terrified them with such dreadful threatenings. It follows ---

Jeremiah 36:25

25. Nevertheless Elnathan and Delaiah and Gemariah had made intercession to the king that he would not burn the roll: but he would not hear them.

25. Quinetiam Elnathan et Dalaia et Gainaria, intercesserunt regi (vel, prohibuerunt regem, vel rogarunt; ham {ענפ} omnia hcec significat, occurrere, vel deprecari, vel prohibere, et se interponere; illi ergo conati sunt regi occurrere) ne combureret volumen, et non audivit ipsos.

The Prophet aggravates the wickedness of the king by this circumstance, that three men opposed him, though they thereby subjected themselves to great danger. They saw that the king was carried away by the violence of his temper; and when he resisted God in a manner so insolent, what would he not have dared to do to them? That they notwithstanding hesitated not to intercede with him, was an instance of great courage. But it hence appears, that as the king did not attend to their counsel, his impiety was extreme.

The particle {וגם} ugam, is to be rendered nevertheless Many interpreters have not attended here to what is emphatical, and have therefore perverted the meaning of the Prophet, or at least have extenuated it so as not to represent faithfully the object of the Prophet; for there is, as I have said, a very emphatic exaggeration in

the word Nevertheless And let us learn from this passage, that when God draws us back from wicked designs, we are less excusable if we persevere in executing what he clearly shews ought not to be done. Conscience will indeed always be to us in the place of thousand witnesses; and though no one be present as a witness or an adviser or a monitor, yet we shall in vain try to escape before God by pretending ignorance or mistake or want of thought: but when the Lord by the instrumentality of men calls us back, so that we may not go on in evil ways, if we are not persuaded to desist, then discovered more fully is our incorrigible perverseness, according to what the Prophet intimates here. In short, let us know that any one sins the more grievously, the more means God employs to draw him back from his evil course.

Since, then, we see how obstinate Jehoiakim was, there is no reason for us to wonder, that many at this day go on presumptuously in their course, though God as it were checks them, or at least sends men to restrain them. Let us, then, know that it is an old evil, so that we may not be disturbed by such a presumptuous contempt of the ungodly.

Let us also notice the example given here of a bold admonition: for it is something like a miracle to find those at this day in the courts of princes, who are bold enough to remonstrate when there is much danger; for, as it has been before stated, every one is ingenious in devising means to flatter; and as this is the best and shortest way to elevation, all apply themselves assiduously to this art. The Prophet had indeed said that the king and his counsellors did not rend their garments, and yet he tells us now of three who openly professed that they feared God: but when he spoke before of all the princes, we must understand him as speaking of them as a body. Then the three, mentioned now, must be excepted; nor is there a doubt but that they incurred the displeasure of all the courtiers, as they had them opposed to them, since they must have been ashamed of their own negligence; but they dared to draw on themselves the displeasure both of the king and of all the rest, for they saw that it was God's cause. It follows ---

Jeremiah 36:26

26. But the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe, and Jeremiah the prophet: but the LORD hid them.

26. Et praecepit rex Jerameel filio Hamelek (vel, regis, sed existimant esse nomen proprium, et est probabile) et Seraiae filio Abdeel, et Selemiae filio Abdeel, ut acciperent Baruch seribam et Jeremiam Prophetam; sed abscondit eos Jehova.

Here is described the madness of the king, which was so great, that he vented his rage against the Prophet and his scribe; and he chose no doubt those whom he thought to be most ready to obey him. He would have never taken such ministers as Elnathan or Delaiah or Gemariah, for he knew how much they abhorred such a nefarious deed; but he sent those whom he thought most adapted for such a service as that of killing Jeremiah and Baruch.

It is not improperly conjectured from this passage and a previous one, that Jeremiah was not detained in prison, but that he had been restrained by God from proclaiming his prophecies to the king and from reading thmn to the people. But

as the word {עצור}, otsur, is taken elsewhere for a captive or one bound, we may indeed draw a different conclusion. However, I will not contend on such a point. I have already explained what I most approve, --- that Jeremiah was prohibited by a secret revelation, as Paul was forbidden to go to Bithynia. (Acts 16:7) It is certainly not probable that he could escape from the king's prison, except it be said, that he was not so confined but that he thought himself free to escape when he saw that it was God's will, or that though Jeremiah would not have departed from prison, he yet privately escaped from the present rage of the king, because he was forced.

However this may have been, we ought to notice the words, that God hid them Jeremiah no doubt accepted the counsel given to him, to take care of his life; he however now acknowledges that he had been preserved by God's kindness, as though he had said, that though there may be many ways by which we may escape from our present dangers, yet our life is in God's hand, so that he hides and conceals us; for we ourselves would run headlong unto death, were we not covered by the shadow of his hand. But the rest to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou dost daily invite us kindly to thyself, and dost also terrify us in order to correct our tardiness and sloth, --- O grant, that we may not obstinately resist thee and thy word, but be so allured by thy condescension and subdued by thy threatenings, that in real fear we may flee to thy mercy, and never hope for any other remedy, except we obtain salvation through being reconciled to thee, and that we may so seek thee in true penitence and by true faith, that thou mayest come to our aid, and be propitious to us through thine only-begotten Son our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and forty-Fourth

Jeremiah 36:27-28

27. Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah, saying,

27. Et fuit sermo Jehovae ad Jeremiam postquam combusserat rex librum et sermones quos scripserat Baruch ex ore Jeremiae, dicendo,

28. Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah hath burned.

28. Conversus accipe tibi volumen aliud, et scribe in ipso cunctos sermones prioris, qui fuerunt in volumine priori, et quod combussit Joiakim rex Jehudah.

By these words the Prophet shews what the ungodly gain by contending against God; for however hard and refractory, they must necessarily be broken down by God's power. This happened to King Jehoiakim. We saw in yesterday's Lecture how furious he was when he cut and burned the volume, and also ordered the Prophet to be slain. But it now follows, that another volume was written.

Now God deals in different ways with the rebellious. For at one time he passes by or leaves timre, when he sees that he spends in vain his labor in admonishing them. He then sends no more his Prophets to reprove or threaten, but silently executes his judgments. And for this reason it is said,

``My Spirit shall no more contend with man, because he is flesh.'' (Genesis 6:3)

And similar examples everywhere occur, that is, that when God saw that the prophetic doctrine was despised, he raised his hand against the ungodly, and at the same time ceased to speak to them. But here he purposed in a different way to break down the violence of Jehoiakim, for he caused another volume to be written He foolishly thought that God's power was in a manner cut off, or extinguished by fire, because the book was reduced to ashes. But God shews that his word cannot be bound or restrained. Then he begins anew to threaten, not because he hoped for any benefit from this repetition, but because it was necessary to expose to ridicule the madness of the king, who had so presumptuously dared to despise both God and his holy Prophet.

The first thing then is, that the Prophet was bidden to write another roll, after the King Jehoiakim vented his rage against the roll read before him; and hence he carefully repeats the words, Take to thee another roll, and write in it the same words which were in the first book; as though he had said, ``Let not a syllable be omitted, but let that which I once proclaimed by thy mouth, remain unchanged; and let thus all the ungodly know that thou hast faithfully delivered what thou didst receive from my mouth.'' It follows ---

Jeremiah 36:29-30

29. And thou shalt say to Jehoiakim king of Judah, Thus saith the LORD; Thou hast burned this roll, saying, Why hast thou written therein, saying, The king of Babylon shall certainly come and destroy this land, and shall cause to cease from thence man and beast?

29. Et ad Joiakim regem Jehudah dices, Sic dicit Jehova, Tu combussisti librum hunc, dicendo, Quare scripsisti in ipso, dicendo, Veniendo veniet rex Babel (Babylonis) et perdet ex ea hominem et animal (vel, bestiam?)

30. Therefore thus saith the LORD of Jehoiakim king of Judah, He shall have none to sit upon the throne of David: and his dead body shall be cast out in the day to the heat, and in the night to the frost.

30. Propterea sic dixit Jehova ad Joiakim (vel, de Joiakim) regent Jehudah, Non erit ei qui succedat super solium Davidis, et cadaver ejus projectum erit in aestum per diem et in gelu per noctem.

We now see what reward Jehoiakim brought on himself, by his impiety and perverseness. But there are two clauses; in the first, God reproves him for having insolently dared to impose silence on the Prophet; and in the second, he adds a punishment.

Thou shalt say to Jeholakim We are to take {על} ol, here for {אל}, al, as it appears from the context; it indeed properly means concerning, or upon, as in the next verse, God thus speaks of Jehoiakim. But as the Prophet is here bidden in the second person to address him, the other meaning, to, is better, even that he was bidden to address the king, and to address him by name: Then it is, ``Thou shalt speak to Jehoiakim, the king of Judah.'' The word king, is mentioned not so much for honor's sake, as to shew that he in vain gloried in honor, or in a title of dignity; for as we have elsewhere seen, the Prophet had been sent to reprove mountains and hills, and not to spare kings or kingdoms. (Micah 6:1; Jeremiah 1:10) It had then been said to him,

``I have set thee over nations and kingdoms.''

As then Jehoiakim could not be so filled with pride as to think that everything was lawful to him, God intimates that there was no reason that royal splendor should dazzle his mind and his senses, for he made no account of such masks, and that no elevation in the world could intercept the course of prophetic truth. In a word, Jeremiah is here encouraged to persevere, lest the high position of the king should terrify him, or enervate his mind, so as not to declare faithfully the commands of God.

A twofold admonition may be hence gathered. The first belongs to kings, and to those who are great in wealth or power on the earth; they are warned to submit reverently to God's word, and not to think themselves exempted from what is common to all, or absolved, on account of their dignity, for God has no respect of persons. The other admonition belongs to teachers, and that is, that they are, with closed eyes, to do whatever God commands them, without shewing any respect of persons; and thus they are to fear no offenses, nor even the name of a king, nor a drawn sword, nor any dangers.

The crime is in the first place mentioned, Thou hast burnt the book, saying, Why hast thou written in it, By coming come shall the king of Babylon, and shall destroy this city Here God shews what especially was the reason why Jehoiakim cast the book into the fire, even because he could not endure the free reproofs and the threatenings contained in it. When God spares hypocrites, or does not touch their vices, they can bear prophetic teaching; but when the sore is touched, immediately they become angry; and this was the continual contest which God's Prophets had with the ungodly: for if they had flattered them and spoken smooth words to them, if they had always promised something joyful and prosperous to the ungodly, they would have been received with great favor and applause; but the word of God was unpleasant and bitter; and it exasperated their minds when they heard that God was displeased and angry with them.

This passage then ought to be carefully noticed; for the Spirit of God points out, as by the finger, the fountain of all contumacy, even because hypocrites wish to agree or to make a covenant with God, that he should not deal severely with them, and that his Prophets should only speak smoothly. But it is necessary that God's word should correspond with the nature of its author. For, as God knows the heart, he penetrates into the inmost recesses; and so also his word is a two-edged sword, and thus it pierces men even to the very marrow, and discerns between the thoughts and the affections, as the Apostle teaches us. (Hebrews 4:12) Hence it is, that hypocrites become mad, when God summons them to judgment. When any one handles gently a man full of ulcers, there is no sign of uneasiness given; but when a surgeon presses the ulcers, then he becomes irritated, and then also comes out what was before hidden. Similar is the case with hypocrites; for as it has been said, they do not clamor against God, nor even make any complaints, when the simple truth is declared; but when they are urged with reproofs and with threatenings, then their rage is kindled, then they manifest in every way their virulence. And this is set forth here, when the Prophet says, that the book was burnt, because it was written in it that the king of

Babylon would come to destroy or lay waste the land, and to remove from it both man and beast

So we see that the prophecy of Micah exasperated all the Jews, when he said that Jerusalem would be reduced into heaps of stones. (Micah 3:12)

But the Prophet immediately shows that the ungodly in vain resist God, when they kick against the goad; they must necessarily be torn in pieces by the stone with which they contend, because their hardness cannot hinder God from executing his judgments. It is therefore added, Thus saith Jehovah of the king Jehoiakim, Be shall have no one to succeed him on the throne of David By saying, that he should have no successor, he means that he should have none of his own posterity; for though his son Jeconiah was made king in his stead, yet as he reigned only for three months, this short time was not counted. Then Jeremiah declares, by God's cmnmand, that King Jehoiakim should not have a legitimate successor, for his son Jeconiah was led into exile at the end of three months; and Zedekiah was not counted as a legitimate successor, because he was the uncle. And there is also no doubt but that Nebuchadnezzar, from ill-will and hatred, set him on the throne, for he thus raised him in order to degrade Jehoiakim and Jeconiah.

We now then perceive in what sense God threatened that there would be none to succeed King Jehoiakim; for it is not simply said, ``There shall be none to sit on the throne of David;'' but, ``There shall be none to him,'' {לו} {יהיה} {לא} la ieie lu, that is, ``There shall be none of his children, or of his offspring, to succeed him on the throne of David.'' For the last king was Zedekiah, and he, as I have said, was the uncle; so that the whole royal seed were cast off, for no one after this time ever succeeded to the throne.

But it may be asked, How can this prophecy agree with the promise, that the posterity of David should continue as long as the sun and moon shone as faithful witnesses in the heavens? (Psalm 89:37, 38) God had promised that the kingdom of David should be perpetual, and that there would be some of his posterity to rule as long as the sun and moon shone in the heavens; but what does our Prophet mean now, when he says, that there shall not be a successor? This is, indeed, to be confined to the posterity of Jehoiakim; but yet we must bear in mind what we have seen elsewhere, and that is, that he speaks here of an interruption, which is not inconsistent with perpetuity; for the perpetuity of the kingdom, promised to David, was such, that it was to fall and to be trodden under foot for a time, but that at length a stem from Jesse's root would rise, and that Christ, the only true and eternal David, would so reign, that his kingdom should have no end. When, therefore, the Prophets say, that there would be none to sit on David's throne, they do not mean this strictly, but they thus refer only to that temporary punishment by which the throne was so overturned, that God at length would, in his own time, restore it, according to what Amos says,

``For come shall the time when God shall raise up the fallen tabernacle of David.'' (Amos 9:11)

We now perceive in what sense hath stood firm the promise respecting the perpetuity of the kingdom, and that the kingdom had yet ceased for a time, that is, until

Christ came, on whose head was placed the diadem, or the royal crown, as Ezekiel says. (Ezekiel 21:26) There is yet no doubt but this great inconsistency was made an objection to Jeremiah:

``What! can it be that the throne of David should be without a legitimate heir? Canst thou draw down the sun and moon from the heavens?''

In like manner, when the Prophets spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem, they said:

``What! Is it not said, `This is my rest for ever, here will I dwell?' (Psalm 83:14)

Can it be that God will be without his habitation on earth, especially when he calls it his rest?'' But the answer to all this was not difficult, even that God remained faithful to his promises, though his favor was, for a time, as it were, under a cloud, so that the dreadful desolation both of the city and of the kingdom might be an example to all.

There is no doubt, then, but that they shewed to the Prophet that the kingdom would be hid, as though it were a treasure concealed in the earth, and that still the time would come when God would again choose both the city and the kingdom, and restore them to their pristine dignity, as the Papists say, who boast in high terms of everything said in Scripture respecting the perpetual preservation of the Church:

``Christ promises to be with his people to the end of the world, that he will be where two or three meet together in his name, that the Church is the pillar and ground of the truth.''
(Matthew 28:20; 1 Timothy 3:15)

They heap together all these things, in order to shew that God is in a manner tied and bound to them. But we can easily dissipate these frivolous objections; for God does wonderfully and invisibly preserve his Church in the world; and then the outward face of the Church does not always appear, but it is sometimes hid, and afterwards it emerges and recovers its own dignity, which, for a time, might seem to have been extinguished. Hence we give now the same answer to the Papists as the Prophets formerly did to the ancient people, --- that God is a faithful preserver of his Church, but not according to the perception of the flesh, for the Church is in a wonderful manner sustained by God, and not in a common way, or as they say, according to the usual order of things.

He says that the dead body of Jehoiakim would be cast out, to be exposed to the cold in the night, and to the heat in the day This might seem unimportant, like what we threaten children with, when we mention some phantoms to them; for what harm could it have been to Jehoiakim to have his dead body exposed to the cold in the night? for no injury or feeling of sorrow can happen to a dead body, as a dead man as to his body can have no feeling. It seems then that it is to little purpose that the Prophet says, that his dead body would be exposed to the heat in the day, and to the cold at night. But this is to be referred to the common law of nature, of which we have spoken elsewhere; for it is a sad and disgraceful thing, nay, a horrid spectacle, when we see men unburied; and the duty of burying the dead has from the beginning been acknowledged, and burial is an evidence of a future resurrection, as it has been before stated. When, therefore, the body of man lies unburied, all

men shun and dread the sight; and then when the body gets rigid through cold, and becomes putrid through the heat of the day, the indignity becomes still greater. God then intended to set forth the degradation that awaited Jehoiakim, not that any hurt could be done to him when his body was cast out, and not honored with a burial, but that it would be an evidence of God's vengeance, when a king was thus cast out as an ass or a dog, according to what we have seen elsewhere, ``With the burial of an ass shall he be buried,'' that is, he will be deemed unworthy of common honor; for as it falls to the lot of the lowest of men to find a pit where their bodies lie buried, it was a rare and unusual proof of God's vengeance, that a king should he exposed as a prey to birds and wild beasts. We know what Jehu said of Jezebel,

``Let her be buried, for she is a king's daughter.''

(2 Kings 9:34)

She was worthy to be torn to pieces a hundred times. She had been cast out from a chamber, and the dogs licked her blood; yet an enemy ordered her to be buried --- and why? because she was a king's daughter, or descended from a royal family, (1 Kings 21:23:) then, he said, let her be buried.

We now then understand the meaning of the Prophet, or rather of the Holy Spirit, that it would be a remarkable proof of God's vengeance, when the body of King Jehoialdm should be exposed at night to the cold, and in the day to the heat. This has also happened sometimes to the saints, as we have before said; but it was a temporal punishment common to the good and to the bad. We ought yet always to consider it as God's judgment. When a godly man is left without burial, we must know that all things happen for good to God's children, according to what Paul says, whether it be life or death, it is for their salvation. (Romans 8:28) But when God gives a remarkable proof of his wrath against an ungodly man, our eyes ought to be opened; for it is not right to be blind to the manifest judgments of God; for it is not in vain that Paul reminds us that God's judgment will come on the ungodly; but he would have us carefully to consider how God punishes the reprobate in life and in death and even after death. It follows ---

Jeremiah 36:31

31. And I will punish him and his seed and his servants for their iniquity; and I will bring upon them, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and upon the men of Judah, all the evil that I have pronounced against them; but they hearkened not.

31. Et visitabo super eum et super semen ejus, et super servos ejus iniquitatem eormn, et evenire faciam illis (super eos, ad verbum) et super habitatores Jerusalem, et super virum Jehudab omne malum quod pronuntiavi adversus cos, et non a udierunt.

Here a reason is given for what the former verse contains; for if the Prophet had only said, that the dead body of the king would remain unburied and cast out in dishonor to be exposed in the night to the cold and in the day to the heat, the narrative would not have produced the effect intended; but God shews here the cause, which was this, that he had forewarned King Jehoiakim and all his counsellors, (called here servants) and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and all the Jews universally: as then they had been in due time clearly told what calamity was near at hand,

and yet no one had repented, for this so great an obstinacy God says now that he would take vengeance, I will visit him and his seed and the whole people for their iniquity --- what was the iniquity? even that they had so grievously and in so many ways provoked God, and had not returned to a sound mind, though reproved by the Prophet, but had become more and more hardened.

The extremity of their iniquity the Prophet thus points out, because they hearkened not to the threatenings, by which God had endeavored to rescue them from the coming ruin: for there would have been some hope of deliverance, had they deprecated God's wrath; but as his threatenings had been despised, it was, as I have said, an extreme iniquity. And we see elsewhere how much God abominates this diabolical presumption of men,

``I have called to sackcloth and ashes; but ye have called to the harp and to joy, and have said, `Let us feast and drink, for to-morrow we shall die:' as I live, this iniquity shall not be blotted out.''
(Isaiah 22:12, 13)

God swore by himself, that this sin should not be expiated, for the Jews repented not when he kindly invited them to himself, and declared to them that they could not escape extreme punishment. It is therefore no wonder that God in this place also represents their obstinate wickedness as being the greatest, the Jews having not hearkened to the reproofs conveyed to them by the mouth of Jeremiah. It follows ---

Jeremiah 36:32

32. Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burnt in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words.

32. Et (tunc) Jeremias scripsit volumen aliud, et dedit Baruch filio Neriae, qui scripsit in ipso ex ore Jeremiae cunctos sermones libri, quem combusserat Joiakim rex Jehudah igne, et adhuc additi sunt cum illis sermones multi similes illis.

Here the Prophet tells us that he faithfully obeyed God in writing another volume; and his constancy in this affair deserves no common praise; for he had lately fled in fear, he knew that the king was his enemy, as he had already ordered him and Baruch to be slain. As then he knew that the king burned with so much rage and hatred, how came he to be so bold as to exasperate him still more? But we see that the Prophets were not exempt from the influence of fear, and were often anxious about their own safety; and yet they ever preferred the duty imposed on them by God to their own life. The Prophet, no doubt, trembled, but as he felt bound to obey God's command, he disregarded his own life, when he had to make the choice, whether to refuse the burden laid on him, or to provide for his own safety. Thus then he offered his own life as a sacrifice, though he was not free from fear and other infirmities. This is one thing.

But Baruch, I doubt not, again proclaimed these words; how was it then that the king abstained from cruelty? Had his madness been by any means mitigated? It is certain that he did not become changed, and that he did not through kindness spare God's servants; but God restrained his cruelty; for when it is not his will to soften the

hearts of the ungodly, he yet bridles their violence, so that they either dare not, or cannot find the way, to execute with their hands what they have intended in their minds, however much they may strive to do so. I therefore consider that the King Jehoiakim was restrained by the hidden power of God, so that he could not do any harm to Jeremiah and his scribe Baruch; and that in the meantime the magnanimity of the Prophet and also of his scribe remained invincible; for it was God's will to fight as it were hand to hand, with this impious king, until he was ignominiously cast from his throne, which happened, as we shall see, soon after.

PRAYER

Grant, Omnipotent God, that since thou warnest us by so remarkable examples, that the ungodly by obstinately resisting thee, do nothing but aggravate their own ruin, --- O grant, that we may receive with meek hearts the admonitions of thy Prophets, and submit to thee, and be so humbled by thy threatenings and tremble at thy word, that being touched with the feeling of true repentance, and reconciled to thee by faith, we may find thee to be the best and the kindest Father to obedient children, until we shall at length enjoy that eternal inheritance which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Jeremiah 37

Lecture One Hundred and Forty-Fifth

CHAPTER 37

Jeremiah 37:1-2

1. And king Zedekiah the son of Josiah reigned instead of Coniah the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon made king in the land of Judah.

1. Et regnavit rex Zedechias, filius Josiae, pro Choniah (Jechania) filio Joiakim, quem constituit regem Nebuchadnezer, rex Babylonis, in terra Jehudah:

2. But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the LORD, which he spake by the prophet Jeremiah.

2. Et non audivit, neque servi ejus, neque populus terrae sermones Jehovae, quos loquutus est per manum Jeremiae Prophetae.

The Prophet tells us here, that after Jeconiah the king had been led into exile, the Jews had not on that account repented, though God had as it were forced them to return to him; for it was so severe a chastisement, that to become worse was an evidence of monstrous stupidity. Jeremiah, however, says that they were not reformed by that punishment; for Zedekiah, who had succeeded Jeconiah, rejected sound doctrine, and did not obey the counsel of the Prophet.

But we must bear in mind the history of that time, that we may understand the meaning of the Prophet: the Jews made Jeconiah king in the place of his father, but in the third month the army of the king of Babylon came. Then Jeconiah surrendered himself to them of his own accord. Now the Prophet had said, that there would be no legitimate successor to Jehoiakim; and this was fulfilled, though his son was set on the throne, for a three months' reign was so unimportant that it was deemed as nothing. And when Nebuchadnezzar saw that the people could hardly be kept in order without a king, he made Mattaniah king, whom he called Zedekiah. And he immediately revolted to the Egyptians and made a treaty with them, in order that he might shake off the yoke of the king of Babylon. Hence the Prophet says, that though

Zedekiah had been taught by the example of Jehoiakim and of his nephew Jeconiah, he yet became nothing the better, he does not shnply blame his ingratitude: it is indeed certain that he had been severely reproved by the Prophet for having acted perfidiously towards the King Nebuchadnezzar, for he ought to have kept faith with him to the last. He feigned a reason of his own for revolting from him; no new cause had occurred; but it was only that he might be exempt from tribute, and also lest the malevolent should object to him that he reigned by permission, and that. he was the slave of another king. As, then, he saw that his reign would be exposed to many reproaches, except he revolted from the king of Babylon, he made a treaty with the Egyptians. This deserved reproof: but the Prophet speaks here generally of his obstinate wickedness, and also of that of the whole people.

King Zedekiah, he says, the son of Josiah, reigned instead of Coniah Here the word, Jeconiah, is curtailed, as it is probable, for the sake of degrading him; and we have seen that this has been the common opinion. He is then called Coniah by way of reproach, when yet his full name was Jeconiah. He says that Zedekiah was made king by Nebuchadnezzar: hence his perfidy and ingratitude became manifest. It is added, that he hearkened not to the word of Jehovah, nor his servants, nor his people I have said that Zedekiah was condemned, not simply because he obeyed not the Prophet by keeping faith with the King Nebuchadnezzar, but also because he retained the superstitions of his fathers, and corrupted the true worship of God, and would not be called back to the doctrine of the Law.

The disobedience then, mentioned here, extended to the whole Law of God, or to the two tables; for the Jews had then become degenerate together with their king; they did not purely worship God, but polluted themselves and the Temple by impious and filthy superstitious, and they were also libidinous, avaricious, cruel, violent, and dishonest, and had thus cast off the whole teaching of the Law. And this was a proof of strange blindness, as they had before their eyes the calamities of the city and the reproach to which their king had been subjected; for as we have already said, his sons had been slain in his presence, his own eyes had been pulled out, and he was bound with chains, after having been judged guilty of a capital offense. Such an example ought surely to have terrified Zedekiah and all the rest, so as to make thenl at length wise, and to seek reconciliation with God. But the Prophet says, that they did not hearken to the word of Jehovah

He mentions the king, then his counsellors, and in the third place, the whole people; as though he had said, that this madness was found not only in the king, but also in his counsellors and in the whole community, so that no one was excusable. He then begins with the head, even the king himself, and shews also that his counsellots were nothing better, and afterwards adds the common people, in whom the fault seems to have been less; for we know that the lower orders go astray through want of wisdom and ignorance. But the Prophet here shews that even the lowest of the people were disobedient to God.

We ought to notice especially the words, that they hearkened not to the word of Jehovah which he had spoken by Jeremiah For he intimates, that though God did not appear from heaven, it was sufficient to condemn the unbelieving, that he spoke by

his Prophets. There was, then, no reason why the wicked should make evasions and say, that it was not their purpose to reject God and his doctrine, but that they only refused deference to mortals, and would not regard the words of men as heavenly oracles. This evasion availed them nothing, for God would have them to hearken to his servants. Though he did not shew himself from heaven, nor addressed them in a visible form, it was yet enough that he had once for all testified, that after the promulgation of the Law, there would always be Prophets among the people, and had commanded them to be reverently attended to. Nor could the Jews avail themselves of that evasion, which the ungodly commonly resorted to, that they could not distinguish between true and false Prophets; for if they had examined the doctrine of Jeremiah, they would have found that it had certain marks by which they could have easily seen that it was altogether consistent with the Law. That they then rejected the Prophet and his heavenly doctrine, was a proof of their obstinacy and contempt, but not through ignorance. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 37:3-8

3. And Zedekiah the king sent Jehucal the son of Shelemiah and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, to the prophet Jeremiah, saying, Pray now unto the LORD our God for us.

3. Et misit rex Zedechias Jucal filium Selemiae, et Zephaniam filium Maassiae sacerdotem (vel, sacerdotis) ad Jeremiam Prophetam, dicendo, Ora agedum pro nobis Jehovam Deum nostrum.

4. Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people: for they had not put him into prison.

4. Et Jeremias (autem) ibat et egrediebatur in medio populi; necdum posuerant eum in domum clausurae (vel, carceris)

5. Then Pharaoh's army was come forth out of Egypt: and when the Chaldeans that besieged Jerusalem heard tidings of them, they departed from Jerusalem.

5. Et exercitus Pharaonis egressus erat ex Egypto, et audierant Chaldmi qui oppugnabant Jerusalem famam de illis, et ascenderant a Jerusalem.

6. Then came the word of the LORD unto the prophet Jeremiah, saying,

6. Et fuit sermo Jehovae ad Jeremiam Prophetam, dicendo,

7. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, that sent you unto me to enquire of me; Behold, Pharaoh's army, which is come forth to help you, shall return to Egypt into their own land.

7. Sic dicit Jehova, Deus Israel, Ita dicetis regi Jehudab, qui misit vos ad me ut me interrogaretis, Ecce exercitus Pharaonis, qui egressus est vobis in auxilium, reversus est (revertatur, potius) in terram Egypti;

8. And the Chaldeans shall come again, and fight against this city, and take it, and burn it with fire.

8. Et redibunt Chaldaei et oppugnabunt hanc urbem (proeliabuntur contra urbem hanc) et capient eam et comburent eam igni.

Jeremiah had briefly explained what was the state of the city and the land, that though they had been already severely chastised by God's scourges, they yet remained obstinate in their wickedness. He now adds, that messengers were sent

to him by King Zedekiah, when danger arose from the Chaldeans; and it is probable that this message came to Jeremiah when the siege was raised, or if the siege still continued, it was at a time when the Jews, no doubt, flattered themselves with the hope of receiving some aid, while yet they saw that the power of the king of Babylon was very great. For though they hoped for some help from the Egyptians, they were yet perplexed, and fear constrained the king to send messengers to the Prophet Jeremiah. But it appears from the answer that the Egyptians were already in arms, and had also come out for the purpose of raising the siege, and driving the Chaldeans from Judea. We hence see that the king was, in a measure, elated with vain confidence, seeing that the Egyptians were coming with a strong army to assist him, and yet he was full of anxiety, as the ungodly must ever be: while they seek to confirm themselves in a state of security, they are still tossed here and there, for God's judgment is upon them. They are fearful, though they try to shake off fear. Hence Zedekiah, though he thought that he should soon be freed from all danger, yet could not wholly divest himself of anxiety, and therefore sent to Jeremiah: for the ungodly are wont to seek God, but not in earnest; they wish to discharge the outward duty, but they bring neither faith nor repentance, by which alone access to God is opened.

But Jeremiah tells us that he was then at liberty, coming in and going out among the people It may be that he had been in prison, but that after the rage of the king and of the people had cooled, he might have been set free. It is hence said that he was among the people, that is set at liberty, and at his own disposal, so that he could safely walk through the city; for to come and to go implies that he was free to follow his own business. He is said to come and to go who undertakes this or that concern as he pleases; for men, we know, are not engaged always in the same thing, but do various things as necessity requires. Such, then, was the condition of Jeremiah; he enjoyed common liberty. It is then added, that he was not as yet cast into prison, as it happened soon after. It is further said, that the army of Pharaoh was come out from Egypt to give aid to the Jews, and that thus the siege was raised, for the Chaldeans went forth to meet the Egyptians. At this time, then, Jeremiah received an answer from God. It seems not, therefore, probable that the messengers were sent, when the report spread through the city of the coming of the enemy, but rather when the city was relieved, for the condition of the people was still doubtful, as the liberty of the city and the land depended on the uncertain issue of the war. The Chaldeans had not yet come unto an engagement with the Egyptians. A victory gained by Pharaoh would have given the prospect of peace and safety to Zedekiah and the whole people; but if the Chaldeans gained the day, they saw that the greatest danger was at hand, for they would then be deprived of every assistance.

It was in this state of things that Zedekiah sent messengers to Jeremiah, to solicit his prayers. Thus we see that hypocrites are driven by the fear of God, whom yet they proudly despise, to seek his aid when forced to do so; nor is this done, that they may appear to do so before men, but because God brings them to such straits, that they cannot but feel that they stand in need of his help. They wish, indeed, as I have said, to obliterate every recollection of God, and were they also able to do

so, they would rob him of all power and authority; but as they are forced, willing or unwilling, to know that God so reigns in heaven that the whole world is subject to his power, necessity constrains them formally to pray, and, in a manner, to conciliate his favor, or, at least, to try to do so. But as I have already said, they ought to begin with repentance and faith. Hypocrites withdraw themselves as far as they can, both from the promises of God and from the duty of repentance. They so seek God that they at the same time shun him.

We must also observe, that Zedekiah felt himself so guilty, that he could not pray himself. As, then, he was conscious of his own unworthiness, he put the Prophet, as it were, between himself and God, that he might suppliantly intercede for him. This also is what the faithful often do, for they seek aid here and there that they may be more readily heard by God; and this they do according to God's command. But there is a great difference between the godly and hypocrites. The true worshippers of God, as I have said, are not content with their own prayers, but ask others to join them, while, at the same time, they pray God themselves. But hypocrites, what do they do? As they think that an access is forbidden them, and know that they are unworthy of being heard by God, they substitute others in their place to pray for them. Thus they do not seek themselves to know whether God will be propitious to them; and though they wish the whole world to pray for them, they do not yet pray themselves. Such, then, was the sottishhess of Zedekiah, who asked the holy Prophet to pray for him to God, while he himself was lying torpid in his own dregs; for he did not acknowledge that he was suffering a just punishment, nor had he recourse to the true remedy, that is, to return to God's favor, to embrace his mercy and the promises of salvation. All these principal things he omitted, and only attended to what is, as they say, accessory.

Now as to the time, we ought carefully to notice that it was when the Egyptians came to raise the siege. Thus God for a time permitted hypocrites to be deceived by a fortunate event; for the Jews then began to praise their own prudence in forming a league with the Egyptians, for that kingdom, as it is well known, was powerful, and at the same time populous, so that a large army could be raised. As, then, they saw that their treaty turned out beneficially to them, they, no doubt, assumed to themselves great credit, and thus their boldness increased. But God, however, so touched their liearts, that they continued in suspense, and, by turns, greatly feared: for Zedekiah would not have sent to Jeremiah, except, constrained by some great necessity; and yet, as it has been said, success might have inebriated him; but God rendered him anxious, so as to feel that the prayer of the Prophet was needed.

Now follows the answer: Jeremiah says that the word of Jehovah came to him, and that he was to tell the messengers of Zedekiah, that the Chaldeans would shortly return. He then says, Behold the army of Pharaoh, which has come forth to deliver you, shall return to their own land; that is, being compelled to do so, the Egyptians being either conquered in battle or smitten with fear, and returning of their own accord to secure themselves in their own cities. The Prophet says, that no advantage could be expected from the Egyptians, for the soldiers of Pharaoh would return to their own land; and then he adds, and the Chaldeans shall return and fight against

this city, until they take and burn it This was a hard answer, and Zedekiah was, no doubt, greatly exasperated at hearing the message, and also very angry with the Prophet, who thus dared plainly to threaten the city and the people with final ruin. But here the Prophet disregarded the pride of the king, for it was necessary for him to obey God's command, he therefore boldly performed his office; and, at the same time, he touched the king Zedekiah to the quick, say to the king who sent you to inquire of me, etc

The word {דרש} daresh, means indeed to ask in general, but the Prophet means here that he was to inquire; and yet this was not said before; for he only told us that messengers had been sent to ask him to pray for the safety of the king and the people. But Scripture, we know, often omits one of the two things that are included; and we may easily conclude, that the king had not only sent to Jeremiah to pray, but also to bring some favorable prophecy from the Lord. For why did he apply to him rather than to the chief priest or some others, except that he knew him to be the true Prophet of God? Then Zedekiah requested Jeremiah to pray, but he tried also to draw from him some favorable prophecy, by which he might be relieved. Hence Jeremiah indirectly reproved him, because he feignedly sent to him as though he was ready to hear whatever God might declare by the mouth of his servant, --- ``He sent you to inquire of me; he is mistaken, for he will not get what he seeks; for thus saith God, `The Egyptians shall avail you nothing, and the Chaldeans shall return and take and burn the city.'''

We now perceive that when hypocrites pretend in a circuitous way to seek God, they do not obtain what they wish; for God justly disappoints them, inasmuch as they do not come to him with sincere hearts and desires; for they wish to transform God into their own nature and character, and they bend not themselves to his service nor submit to his word. Thus it comes that God will not answer their prayers; but the faithful, who seek God sincerely and from the heart, always find him propitious; and though he may not hear them immediately, yet he really shews that he cares for their safety. But hypocrites, whose confidence God regards with disdain, deserve that it should be empty and vain. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet gave such a severe answer to Zedekiah and his messengers. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 37:9-10

9. Thus saith the LORD; Deceive not yourselves, saying, The Chaldeans shall surely depart from us: for they shall not depart.

9. Sic dicit Jehova, Ne efferatis animas vestras (vel, cum puncto diverso, Ne decipiatis, quia duoe sunt lectiones,] {תשאו} aut, {תשיאו} Ne ergo efferatis vos, vel, Ne decipiatis animus vestras) dicendo, Proficisicendo proficisicentur Chaldaei, quia non proficisicentur:

10. For though ye had smitten the whole army of the Chaldeans that fight against you, and there remained but wounded men among them, yet should they rise up every man in his tent, and burn this city with fire.

10. Quia si percusscritis totum exercitum Chaldaeorum, qui praeliantur vobiscam (vol, qui vos oppugnant) et residui, fuerint ex illis viri transfixi (hoc est, vulnerati) quisque e tabernaculo suo consurgent (hoc est, singuli ex tabernacalo suo) et ex-

urent hanc urbem igni.

The Prophet confirms the former verse, and it was indeed necessary that this should be added, for though Zedekiah might not have divested himself of all anxiety and fear, he must yet have been moved by that prophecy, and thus he might have become more hardened in his obduracy, as it is the case with hypocrites; who, when they find that they can gain nothing, become furious against God, and run on headlong in their course. This might then have been the case with Zedekiah and also the Jews; hence Jeremiah adds, by way of confirmation, Elate not your hearts, or, Deceive not yourselves; that is, on account of the report respecting the Egyptian army. Thus he told the Jews that they had no reason to expect any alleviation. And the reason is added, For if, he says, ye had smitten, the Chaldeans so that few remained, yet they would rise up every one from his tent, and burn this city

The Prophet shews how foolishly and absurdly the Jews acted, in casting their eyes on fortunate events, and thus forming their opinions. He therefore exhorts them to cease to rely on such a confidence as would deceive them; for he says, that though they gained many battles, and the war turned on their side, yet they could not escape final ruin, for they had to do with God. It was hence the same thing, as though he had said, that they were not to judge by their state at that time, as to what it would be, because God was at war with them; and therefore if God had resolved to destroy them, though there were no enemy, yet he could by one breath slay them all. And for the same reason he concludes that he could employ the Chaldeans, Though few in number remained, and even wounded, yet riley would rise up from their tents, and set the buildings of Jerusalem on fire. This city, therefore, shall be burnt; ask not by whom or when: God will in this work employ the Chaldeans, for he hath so determined.

We may hence conclude, that the Jews had been for a time victorious, at least had successfully repelled their enemies in their attacks on the city; for the Prophet would not have said this, had he not seen that the Jews entertained hope of deliverance on account of some success they had in the war. He therefore says, that all this was of no importance, for their city was to perish by fire. But the principle which I have mentioned must be borne in mind, for Jeremiah took it as granted that the destruction of the city Jerusalem was not to be effected by the forces of the King Nebuchadnezzar, neither by the power or number of his army, nor by the valor of his soldiers, but by the judgment of God. Since it is so, he says, though few remained, and they wounded, even lying as half dead, yet they will rise up every one from his tent, that is, not together, nor in a regular order, nor under a banner, as soldiers are wont to do, but each one, though no comrade were near, though scattered here and there, would yet rise up from his tent. He intimates, in short, that though the contest were only with shadows, they yet could not escape that extreme vengeance which God had threatened. Hence he says, they shall rise up every one from his tent, and burn this city

Now he says not that the Chaldeans would take possession of the city, he speaks not of the assault, but only of the burning, he hence intimates, that though the Chaldeans might have in themselves no power to hurt them, yet it was sufficient that

they were armed by God, for the purpose of setting fire to the houses, like women and children, who often burn whole cities and villages; for in this case there is no need of valor or of any great skill. So then God declares, that though the Chaldeans might not be prepared to fight, yet they were strong enough, yea, even though they were lying down and half-dead after having been wounded. This is the meaning.

PRAYER

Grant, omnipotent God, that as thou hast been pleased kindly to invite us to thyself, and settest before us the reconciliation which is through thine only-begotten Son, --- O grant, that we may not proceed in our wickedness so as to provoke thee more and more against us, and to kindle the fire of thy vengeance on our own heads, but that we may so suhmit ourselves to thee, as to flee in sincere repentance and true faith to thy mercy, that we may find thee to be propitious to us, and that thou mayest thus afford us reason to give glory to thy name, having shewn mercy to us, through the same, thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Forty-Sixth

Jeremiah 37:11-14

11. And it came to pass, that when the army of the Chaldeans was broken up from Jerusalem for fear of Pharaoh's army,

11. Et aceidit postquam ascenderat exercitus Chaeldmorum ab Jerosolyma propter exercitum Pharaonis;

12. Then Jeremiah went forth out of Jerusalem to go into the land of Benjamin, to separate himself thence in the midst of the people.

12. Tunc egressus est Jeremias Jerosolyma, ut proficisceretur in terram Benjamin, ut divideret illinc in medio populi.

13. And when he was in the gate of Benjamin, a captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah; and he took Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans.

13. Quum esset in porta Benjamin, illic erat magister custodiae, cujus nomen liria, filius Selemiae, filii Chananiae, qui apprehendit Jeremiam Prophetam, dicendo, Ad Chaldaeos tu cadis (aut, dilaberis, hoc enim significat verbum ({לפנ}

14. Then said Jeremiah, It is false; I fall not away to the Chaldeans. But he hearkened not to him: so Irijah took Jeremiah, and brought him to the princes.

14. Et dixit Jeremias, Mendacium, non dilabor ad Chaldaeos; sed non audivit eum, et apprehendit Iiria Jeremiam, et deduxit eum ad principes.

Here Jeremiah tells us how, and on what occaision, he was cast into prison. He had said shortly before, that he was in the middle of the people, or among them; but now he gives an account of the cruelty of the princes, that they not only cast him into prison, but even into a grave, for they put him, as we shall see, in a dungeon, so that it was a miracle that he did not die there; and this was not done only once; but we shall hereafter see, before the end of the chapter, that he was unhumanly treated, so that he was afraid to return to the same place, lest it should prove fatal to him. He mentions the time when this was done, that is, when the Chaldean army went forth to meet the Egyptians. He was then free to leave the city: no one before could have gone out, because the gates were closed, and the city was also surrounded by

enemies. It was then, he says, that he went out, that he might go to the land of Benjamin, where, as it has elsewhere appeared, he was born.

But he then adds, that he was intercepted by the prefect of the ward in the gate of Benjamin That gate had its name from its situation, for a part of Jerusalem belonged to the tribe of Benjamin; and hence it was not strange that the gate which led to the heritage of the tribe of Benjamin was so called. There then was Jeremiah intercepted by Irijah, the prefect of the ward, and not without a grievous charge, that he was escaping to the Chaldeans. The Prophet attempted to clear himself, but with no effect; for an opinion had prevailed, that he was already in league with the enemies. He thus gained nothing by defending himself, but was taken to the princes, the king's counsellors.

This passage teaches us that God's servants cannot escape without being exposed to many calumnies and false suspicions. Jeremiah might at the beginning have evaded this, and according to the perception of the flesh, his exemption or immunity might have been viewed as lawful, for there was now before his eyes the danger, not only of losing his life, but also of his name and reputation, which, to ingenuous and wise men, is of much more value. Had Jeremiah then chosen to evade, he might have made this pretense, --- ``I am indeed ready to offer my life as a sacrifice a hundred times, but what will it avail me, if I am to be regarded as a revolter?'' For he must have thus exposed the very name of God to many blasphemies: they might have said,'' This is the Prophet who boasted that he had been sent from above, but he is now become perfidious and a traitor to his own countw, and has tried to deliver up the city into the hands of enemies.'' Jeremiah then might have shaken off this burden laid on him; but it was nccessary for him to bear this reproach, with which he was falsely charged. Faithful teachers ought indeed to remove, as far as they can, all calumnies, and to check the wicked and malicious, so that they may not have the occasion to speak evil; but when they have done all, they will not yet exempt themselves from calumny; for their words and their deeds will be misconstrued. Thus Jeremiah was loaded with false charges; for all had persuaded themselves, that as he had so much extolled the power of King Nebuchadnezzar, he had been hired by him for the purpose of depressing the people by fear; and it may be that the violent among them did wilfully and knowingly make his case to appear worse to the ignorant, even by false reports. As then this conviction respecting him prevailed everywhere, he was apprehended as a revolter, as he was going out of the city.

But he says, that he intended to go into the land of Benjamin, so as to separate himself. The verb {חלק}, chelak, means to divide, to scatter, to dissipate; and hence some have given this meaning, that he went into the land of Benjamin in order to divide his heritage; but this seems harsh and forced. They add, ``In the midst of the people,'' as though Jeremiah wished to make his land common, and to give it to the people: but in this explanation there is nothing probable or suitable. I therefore doubt not but that Jeremiah sought this as a quiet place, as it is understood by most interpreters, he then went forth towards the land of Benjamin, that he might separate himself; that is, that he might be secluded there in the midst of his people.

It is, indeed, a brief mode of speaking, but the meaning is not ambiguous, --- that he might be there, where he might separate himself from the people, as the places were distant from one another. [333] For he was tired with the city, because he saw that he spent his labor in vain. Some think that he was afraid of being cast into prison, because he had just announced a command greatly disliked; but it is more probable that, he was worn out with weariness, because he saw that he made no impression on men so hard and refractory. Hence then it was, that he wished to withdraw from the presence of the whole people.

Then follows what we have already mentioned, that he was taken in the gate by the keeper Irijah, as though he were revolting to the Chaldeans. We have stated how this suspicion arose, even because he had faithfillly proclaimed the commands of God. We hence see how God tried his servant, when he thus constrained him to speak, so that his words became suspected. And hence also we may gather how thoroughly fixed in the minds of men was that false opinion, for Jeremiah was not heard in his own defense. He indeed said openly that he was not fleeing away, nay, that this was a false charge. It is a lie, he says, I am not fleeing to the Chaldeans

I have already reminded you that the verb {נפל} nuphal, found here, means properly to fall, but it is to be taken here metaphorically, as signifying to fall away, or to incline to another side. Thou then fallest away or inclinest to the Chaldeans, which was the same thing as to revolt. We see that the Prophet was not charged with a common offense, for it would have been the highest to forsake his own country and to pass over to the enemies: it would have been better for him to die a hundred deaths. But, as I have already said, the servants of God ought to be so courageous as to despise the slanders of the unprincipled, and, when it so pleases God, to prepare themselves for patience whenever any reproach is to be undergone, only let their conscience be always clear before God and angels; and let also their integrity confute all slanders, and let them disprove them too, provided there be those who can bear to hear them: but if a defense be not always admitted, let them patiently bear this indignity. And this also we ought to notice, that God's servants, though ready to clear themselves of crimes ascribed to them, and to defend their innocence at the peril of life, are yet often repelled and condemned unheard. This is, indeed, a great indignity; but yet as Jeremiah met with such a treatment, it ought not at this day to appear to us unendurable or new. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 37:15

15. Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison in the house of Jonathan the scribe: for they had made that the prison.

15. Et ebullierunt (iracundia) principes (nam {קצף}; hoc significat, vel, effer-

[333] The idea of trafficking or buying is given by the Sept., "to buy thence in the midst of the people." The Vulg. is, "that he might divide there his possession in the sight of the citizens;" and materially the same meaning is given by the Syr. and the Targ. The literal rendering is, "For a portion from thence (or, there) among the people;" which seems to mean, that he intended to go to the land of Benjanmin, that he might get his portion or share from the inheritance he had among his people. So that Blayney's version appears to be right, "to receive a portion thereof among the people." The Chaldeans had deprived him of his patrimony in the land of Benjamin: when they retreated he purposed to go there, "with the view," as Blayney observes, "of coming in for a share of the produce of the land with the rest of his neighbors." — Ed.

buerunt principes) contra Jeremiam, et percusserunt eum (alii vetunt transitive, percutere fecerunt, sed proprie est percutere, vel verberare, percusserunt ergo eun) et posuerunt ipsum in domum carceris, in domum Jonathan scribae, quia ipsam fecerant (id est, constituerant) in domum carceris.

Here Jeremiah pursues the same narrative, and shews how unjustly he was treated, for he found no equity at the hands of the princes any more than in the keeper of the ward. He was no doubt prepared to defend himself before them, and sufficient proof was ready at hand, only he would have had to speak to the deaf. But here he shews by one word that the liberty of speaking was precluded, for a furious madness seized them that they would not hear him. And here we may notice how much opposed is wrath to just and peaceable decisions; for if we wish to be right and equitable judges, self-government is especially necessary. When, therefore, our minds are inflamed with anger or wrath, it is impossible that any rectitude or humanity should prevail. So Jeremiah complains that he was oppressed, because the princes boiled with rage, so that they suffered him not to give the explanation which he had prepared.

He then adds, that they smote him They no doubt ordered their servants to smite him; for it would have been more than strange, had the princes themselves risen up to strike the Prophet with their fists, or to smite him with their hands. It is then probable that he was smitten by their orders and at their bidding. This is the reason, if I mistake not, why some have given this rendering, ``They caused him to be smitten.'' But he is often said to have killed a man, who has ordered him to be killed, while he himself had not touched him with his finger. Even so Jeremiah was smitten by the princes, because they had commanded him to be smitten. And this passage shews also, as in a glass, how miserable would be the condition of God's servants, were he not to sustain them by the power of his Spirit. For here is a holy Prophet overwhelmed with unjust accusations and also reproaches, and the princes abstained not from stripes, and at last he was cast into a pit. Whenever, then, such, a thing happens to us, let us cast our eyes on Jeremiah, and let it not be grievous to us to follow the steps of the holy Prophet; nor let us think it hard to endure the trials with which God was pleased to exercise him. They put him, he says, in the house, and then the word is changed, the prison, {האסור} easur, but; the same thing is meant. It now follows what sort of prison it was ---

Jeremiah 37:16

16. When Jeremiah was entered into the dungeon, and into the cabins, and jeremiah had remained there many days;

16. Et quo venit Jeremias in domum lacus, et ad mansiones, et sedit ibi Jeremias diebus multis.

The particle {כי}, ki, is to be taken here as an adverb of time, as I think, though interpreters have not observed this, When Jeremiah, he says, came into the house of the pit or dungeon, or of the prison. The word {בור} means also sometimes the grave, but is to be taken here for a pit or a deep place: he means that it was a dark and filthy prison. And he adds, and to the dwellings I know not why some have rendered it, ``victualling houses;'' for the word {החניות}, echeniot, means narrow

prisons, which we call at this day cachots: [334] he was therefore cast into a dungeon, where there were narrow places, that, the holy man had no space either freely to rise or to stand or to sit down, or to he down. Then the Prophet shews that he was so confined by the straitness of the place, that he could hardly sit or lay down or stand erect.; and he says that he was there many days. [335]

We must notice the circumstances of the case: It was a thing cruel enough in itself, that an innocent man, after having been beaten, should be thrust into prison: but when a dark and deep prison was chosen, and when he was confined to a narrow place, as though he was in fetters, it was a great addition to the indignity offered to him. Since then the holy Prophet was so atrociously treated, let us not think it strange, when the same thing at this day is endured by God's children, and for the same cause, even for bearing testimony to celestial truth. When the length of time is added, it increased the evil; for he was not retained in prison for a few days or for a month, but until the city was taken; not indeed in that prison, for the king, as we shall presently see, removed him into the ccurt of the prison. He was, however, the second time cast into a filthy prison, as though he was destined to die; thence he was afterwards removed also by the order of the king. But the Prophet says, that he was in that dungeon many days. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 37:17

17. Then Zedekiah the king sent, and tookhim out: and the king asked him secretly in his house, and said, Is there any word from the LORD? And Jeremiah said, There is: for, said he, thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon.

17. Et misit rex Zedechias et sustulit cum; et interrogavit eum rex domi suae secreto loco (hoc est, seorsum) et dixit, Estne sermo a Jehova? Tunc dixit Jeremias, Est; et cixit, In manum regis Babylonis traderis.

From these words we learn, that King Zedekiah, though he had not obeyed good and wise counsels, nor even God and his truth, was not yet one of the worst, for of his own self he called the Prophet to him, and wished to find out whether he could in any way appease God. There is here, in short, a description given of the character of Zedekiah: he was unwilling to submit to God and his word, and yet he was not so cruel as to become enraged against the Prophet; nor had he wholly cast away all fear of God, all concern for religion, and all regard for prophetic teaching. For he no doubt sent for Jeremiah as God's true servant, and in some degree honored him, and wished God to be propitious to himself. But this is usually the case with hypocrites: they would willingly be reconciled with God, but at the same time they wish to remain free, that is, to retain their own sinful dispositions; in short, they wish so to live as that God should give place to them, and allow them to sin as they please. Such was Zedekiah, and yet he had not reached to the highest pitch of impiety, for

[334] The versions and the Targ. render the word differently; its meaning was not evidently understood. Blaney gives the best explanation, who renders it "cells." "The dungeon," he says, was a deep pit like a well, and near the bottom were scooped niches, or cells, for the lodgement of the prisoners. The word comes from, {,{חנה to fix, to settle, to lodge; hence the plural noun here means places for prisoners to settle or lodge on, where they could fix themselves, without sinking in the mire at the bottom of the pit, as the case was with Jeremiah on another occasion. See Jeremiah 38:6. That pit, it seems, had no cells. --- Ed

[335] This paragraph is intermingled in the original with the text; but it has been thought better to introduce it separately. — Ed.

as yet he had some regard for the Prophet; nor was he so savage and cruel as his counsellors. He then called him to himself and asked him privately, that he might not depart, as we shall see in another place, in any measure from his royal dignity: for he simply asked the Prophet not to speak openly, because he would thus lose his own authority.

He then asked him in secret, because he had been perplexed. He wished indeed for some favorable answer, but he hardly dared to hope for it; and therefore he led the Prophet to a secret place, and asked him without any being a witness, Is there, he said, a word from God? Some explain this, as though Zedekiah had asked whether the prophecies of Jeremiah were true, as though he had said, ``What thou hast hitherto spoken, has it come from God?'' but this is no suitable explanation; on the contrary, he asked, Whether the Prophet had lately received any word from God? He wished then for some new message, and to hear something respecting the future deliverance of the city: for he was no doubt persuaded that Jeremiah had been hitherto discharging the office of a Prophet, as it became him; for he did not ask him as a common man, nor did he regard him as an impostor, but inquired whether there was a word from God. True is what I before stated, that hypocrites always seek God's favor in a foolish way; for they would have God to gratify their sinful lusts, but God cannot deny himself. Hence Zedekiah, though he shewed apparently some regard for religion, yet foolishly asked, Whether there was a word from Jehovah? that is, Whether any message had been lately made known to Jeremiah? He answered, There is, even this, Thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the Chaldeans

Here we may notice the boldness of the Prophet; he had not been broken down by all the evils he had met with, but ever faithfully performed the office committed to him. He therefore answered the king honestly, though not without danger, Thou shalt be delivered, he said, into the hands of the Chaldeans: for he had hardly come out of prison, where he had been buried as in a grave, and we shall see that the prison had been to him like death; and the Prophet was not divested of infirmity and fear, as he will presently shew; yet fear did not prevent him from faithfully performing the office committed to him. Though the Prophet dreaded the sufferings of the prison, though he also feared death, he yet overcame all these feelings, and presented his life as a sacrifice, when he openly and boldly answered the king, that the Chaldeans would shortly be conquerors, and make him a captive. Then follows the expostulation which the Prophet made to the king ---

Jeremiah 37:18

18. Moreover Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, What have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison?

18. Et dixit Jeremias regi Zedechiae: Quid peccavi tibi et servis tuis? (hoc est, quid sceleris in to admisi et in servos tuos) et populum hunc, quod tradidistis me in domum carceris.

Though the Prophet had spoken what was displeasing to the king, he yet complains that wrong had been done to him, as he had been cast into prison; and thus he shews that he had been unjustly condemned for having threatened ruin to the city and destruction to the kingdom, because he was constrained to do this by the

obligations of his office. Hence the Prophet shews that he had not sinned in this --- that he had proclaimed God's commands, however bitter they were to the king and to the people.

This passage deserves special notice: earthly princes are so proud, that as soon as they order anything, they wish every dispute about their authority to be suspended; for they will have their own ordinances to be counted laws, and their own decrees to be sacred and authoritative; and yet we know, that by following their own wills, they decree often what is wholly unjust and inconsistent with everything that is reasonable. This passage then, as I have said, deserves special notice; for Jeremiah boldly declares that he had not sinned, because he had threatened the king, displeased his counsellors, inveighed against the impiety of the people, and denounced utter ruin on the city and the Temple. He then denies that in all this he had done anything wrong. So also Daniel said,

``Against God and the king have I not sinned,'' (Daniel 6:22)

and yet he had disregarded the king's decree, and firmly refused by an impious flattery to put the king in the place of God: he however denied that he had done anything wrong against the king, because his decree was unjust and wicked. Let us then bear in mind, that though princes may in bear their decrees to be disregarded by us, they are yet not absolved before God and his angels, and also that we can boldly, openly, and with a full mouth, as they say, assert our innocence, when religion constrains us, and when it is not lawful to obey the impious and unjust edicts of kings. He afterwards adds ---

Jeremiah 37:19

19. Where are now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land?

19. Et ubi prophertae vestri, qui prophetarunt vobis, dicendo, Non veniet rex Babylonis contra vos et contra hanc terram?

Here Jeremiah, taking confidence, advances to a higher ground; for he reprobates the folly of Zedekiah, because he had given ear to the false prophets and their flatteries. But this he did, that he might more fully confirm his own innocence, as though he had said, ``I indeed am grievously blamed, because I threatened ruin to the city and the Temple; but what if the Lord had constrained me to do so? and it is evident that I was commissioned by God, and that I alleged nothing without authority; for I have always declared what has happened, and events have proved that I was sent from above, when I announced to you what was to be. But where are your prophets? for they have been always flattering you; and it has happened through their falsehoods, that ye have not returned to the right way. It was yet in your power to be reconciled to God, when I at first warned you; and all my labor and endeavors were for this end, that you might anticipate God's wrath by a willing repentance. Since then your prophets have deceived you, and the event now clearly proves this, know, O king, that I have been sent from above.''

We thus see that Jeremiah was not so anxious about his life, but that he always remained stedfast to his purpose; and thus he turned not aside from making an honest profession of the truth, so as to provide for his own safety, as they do, who

are fearful and think that they act prudently, when they are compliant and try to please men opposed to them at the expense of truth. This was not done by Jeremiah. He had indeed a regard for his life, as we shall now see; but he went on in the discharge of his office, and valued the truth communicated to him from above more than hundred lives. It is then with reference to this that he says, Where are your prophets? as though he had said, ``You see that you have all been deceived by their false prophecies.'' It follows ---

Jeremiah 37:20

20. Therefore hear now, I pray thee, O my lord the king: let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee; that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there.

20. Et tu audi obsecro (vel, nunc, vel agedum) domine mi Rex; cadat precatio mea coram facie tua, ut ne (ad verbum, et non sed, potius, ut ne) remittas me (v.el, redire me facias) in domum Jonathan scribae, neque moriar lilic.

This verse shews that Jeremiah was not destitute of human feelings, for he, as other men, dreaded death. But yet he could so control himself, that no fear made him to turn aside from his duty. Fear, then, did not dishearten him, as the boldness which we have noticed was a manifest proof of his constancy. The Prophet therefore overcame, as to his work, every anxiety and the fear of death; and yet he did not disregard his life, but sought, as far as he could, deliverance from his evils. He asked for some alleviation from the king. We hence see that the Prophets were not logs of wood, nor had iron hearts; but though subject to human feelings, yet they elevated themselves to an invincible courage as to their work, so as to fulfill their office.

As to the words, Let my prayer fall before thee, they mean a humble supplication; it is a mode of expression derived, as we have before seen, from what was done by men in prostrating themselves in prayer, and is transferred here from God to mortals. The Prophet then humbly asked, that he might not be cast again into that horrid prison where he had been confined --- and why? that he might not die We see that he shunned death, for this was natural; and yet he was prepared to die, whenever necessary, rather than to turn aside in the least from discharging the duty imposed on him by God.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we must in various ways carry on a warfare on earth, we may be animated by the power of thy Spirit, so as to go on through fire and water, and be ever so subject to thee, that relying on thine aid, we may never hesitate to face all perils of death, all troubles, all reproaches, and all the terrors of men, until having at length gained the final victory, we shall come to that blessed rest, which thine only-begotten Son hath procured for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and forty-Seventh

Jeremiah 37:21

21. Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah into the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread out of the bakers' street, until all the bread in the city were spent. Thus Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

21. Et praecepit rex Zedechias, et posuerunt Jeremiam in atrio custodiae, et dederunt ei frustum panis quotidie e platea pistorum, usque dum consumptus esset totus panis ex urbe; et habitavit Jeremias in atrio custodiae.

The Prophet tells us, that God regarded the miseries to which he had been unjustly exposed: and the king no doubt became humane towards Jeremiah, because God turned his heart towards what was just and right. We said, indeed, yesterday, that the king was not in disposition cruel or sanguinary; yet he would not have been so easily eritreated by the Prophet, had he not been influenced by the hidden working of God's Spirit. We hence see how God favors his servants and has regard for their infirmity when necessary. We yet see also that the Prophet was not so kindly dealt with as to be allowed to return free to his own house, but that he was removed to another prison, where his condition was more tolerable. He was then in the court of the prison

He says, that a crust of bread was given to him daily, or every day. The word {ככר}, kekar, is by some rendered ``mass,'' or lump, and means sometimes a large loaf; but it is probable, that during so much scarcity the Prophet had but a scanty living. He had then a crust or piece of bread every day We see how mean was his food; but God often tries his servants in this way, withholding from them all the delicacies of this world. It is added, from the street of the bakers; by these words is meant, I think, that it was coarse bread, not made of fine flour, such as rich men did eat, for their mouths could not endure what was rough and course. Then God's holy Prophet was content with the common bread. The king and his counsellors had their own bakers; but it is said that bread was brought to the Prophet from a common place, the street of the bakers And the bread then sold during such a scarcity was no doubt black bread. We hence see what kind of bread it was, because it was sold for the common use of the people.

Thus the Prophet shews, that though some relaxation was allowed him, he was still confined in prison, and also that no meat nor any delicacies were given him, but a crust of bread only. He however commemorates the favor of God, inasmuch as in so great a scarcity he was not without bread. He had, then, his daily bread until all provisions failed.

And hence we learn, that God often so provides for his servants, that he appears to have forsaken them; and yet he then especially takes care of them and supplies them with what is needful for their support. Had Jeremiah been at home, he might have been at any time stoned by the people; for there were not wanting those disposed to stir up famished men against him. He might then have been every moment in danger of his life at home. But now in prison, he was safe, and no one could do him any harm. Besides, had he been at home, many might have robbed him, so as to leave him nothing to preserve life; but in prison he had his daily allowance. Thus, then, God often conducts his servants in a manner that is wonderful and beyond what we can conceive, and in the meantime acts as the head of a family, in supplying their wants. In short, the Prophet here intimates that he was cared for by God, so that during the famine and scarcity among the whole people, his bread was yet given to him, when he could not have begged it. When he could not have procured bread for

himself either by labor, or by industry, or by begging, or by money, he shews that God took care of him so as to feed him during that distress.

He however adds, that he was in the court of the prison, in order to shew that God tried his patience, for a prison was a place of degradation. The Prophet was exposed to the reproaches of all; and then the princes might have often threatened him with danger, and might have also transferred him to another place, as we shall hereafter see. Therefore, in a measure only did God bring aid to his Prophet, for it was not his pleasure wholly to deliver him, and yet he suffered him not to be reduced to extremities. Now follows ---

Jeremiah 38

CHAPTER 38

Jeremiah 38:1-4

1. Then Shephatiah the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah the son of Pashur, and Jucal the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur the son of Malchiah, heard the words that Jeremiah had spoken unto all the people, saying,

1. Et audivit Saphatias fillus Matthew tam, et Guadalias filius Passhur, et Juchal filius Selemiae et Passhur filius Malchiae, sermones quos Jere-mias loquutus fuerat ad toturm popu-lum, dicendo,

2. Thus saith the LORD, He that remaineth in this city shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: but he that goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; for he shall have his life for a prey, and shall live.

2. Sic dicit Jehova, Qui manebit in urbe hac morietur gladio, fame et peste; qui autem egressus fuerit ad Chaldaeos, rivet et erit ei anima sua in spolium et vivet.

3. Thus saith the LORD, This city shall surely be given into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which shall take it.

3. Sic dicit Jehova, Ecce tradendo tradetur haec urbs in manum exer-citus regis Babylonis, et capiet eam.

4. Therefore the princes said unto the king, We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in this city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt.

4. Et dixeunt principes ad regem, Moriatur nunc (vel, agedum, est hor-tantis particula {נא}) vir iste, quoni-am propterea (vel, hoc modo) solvit manus virorum bellicosorum, qui residui sunt in urbe hac, et manus totius populi, loquendo ad ipsos se-cundum istos sermones; quoniam hic vir non quaerit pacem (hoc est, non spectat ad pacem) populo huic (populi hujus) quin potius ad malum.

The Prophet now shews that he was again dragged from the court of the prison to

the inner part, which was dark, filthy, and like a grave. The cause of this he states: it was because four of the princes had heard his words. It is probable that many of the people had come there for the purpose of hearing the Prophet, and that he, having received a message, delivered it to every one that came to him. Though then he was shut up in prison, yet the word of God could not be bound, as Paul says, who gloried in the fact, that though he was in chains, yet the truth spread far and wide. (2 Timothy 2:9.) Such was the case as to Jeremiah; though he was retained as a prisoner, he yet ceased not to discharge his office; and yet there is no doubt but that the purpose of the king was in this way to restrain him. The prison was, as it were, the captivity of prophetic truth. But the king and his counselors were mistaken; for Jeremiah was not less free in the court of the prison, than if he had walked through the city all the day, nay, he had many heralds.

But the four princes mentioned here watched him, even Shephatiah, Gadaliah, Jucal, and Pashur. Then the four princes he names, having insidiously watched what he said, immediately made a commotion. They had, no doubt, contrived the ruin of the Prophet before they came to the king; for the unprincipled and wicked, we know, discuss matters together when intent on mischief, and their courtly arts must be taken to the account. As, then, the four were in authority, they must, doubtless, have influenced the greatest part of the king's council, and led astray easy men, or such as were not of themselves bent on evil. The matter was at length brought before the king; and therefore he adds, that they came to the king But he first explains the doctrine, on account of which these unprincipled men created so much ill-will to him, and endangered his life. Hence he says that the accusation was, that he had not only threatened with ruin all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but that he had also pro-raised life to all that would go out to the Chaldeans: Every one who abides in the city shall die by the sword, famine, or pestilence; but every one who goeth out to the Chaldeans shall live This was the accusation.

We have seen elsewhere that the Prophet had before said the same; it was not, then, a new thing, for he had thirty years before that time dearly pronounced the same in the Temple, and it was then written as a prophecy and fixed to the doors of the Temple. It was, therefore, nothing new to hear all this from the mouth of Jeremiah. But as I have already said, the king and his couriers thought that he was so subdued by evils that he could hardly open his mouth. In short, they thought that the holy man had, in a manner, lost his tongue since he had been in prison. This, then, was the reason why they now accused him so gravely to the king, and declared him worthy of death. He had deserved death many years before, if he had now committed a capital offense. But as I have already stated, they regarded the Prophet as having designedly despised the king's authority, and they were indignant because he could not be subdued, when yet he was a prisoner and might see danger at hand every hour. This, then, was the reason why they regarded as a new thing what Jeremiah said, Whosoever abides in the city shall perish, etc.

As to these threatenings, we have elsewhere said, that all those who expected help from the Egyptians were willful despisers of God; for the Prophet had often exhorted them all, quietly and submissively to bear that temporary punishment which

God had resolved to inflict on them. They wished in their perverseness to drive to a distance God's judgment, and then when they saw that God was their enemy, they deemed it enough to have the Egyptians as their friends. It was then no wonder that the Prophet allotted to them the sword, and famine, and pestilence.

He then adds, Whosoever passeth over to the Chaldeans shall live The condition, however, was very hard; his soul, he says, shall be for a prey, as though he had said, ``He who flees to the Chaldeans shall only save his life, but must suffer the loss of all his property,'' as when a shipwreck is dreaded, there is no one who is not ready to save his life at the loss of all his goods; and, therefore, in extreme danger the merchants are wont to cast into the sea all that they have, for they prefer to escape to the harbor empty and destitute of everything, than to perish together with their riches. It was, then, a hard condition; but the Prophet shews that they could not otherwise escape; they were to give up their own country, and all other things, and could only preserve their life. For this reason he says, that their life would be for a prey to them, as when anything is snatched from the fire, or as when one is exposed to plunder, he were content to take something away by stealth, for otherwise, if he sought to take away many things, he would have to contend with many enemies. The Prophet then intimates that the Jews could not save themselves from death in any other way than by casting away all they had, and by being solicitous only to save life. He again repeats, he shall live. By this repetition he more pressingly urged them, and with more earnestness exhorted them to save their life.

Then follows a confirmation, Given up shall be this city into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon, and they shall take it The Prophet shews the reason why he exhorted the Jews to flee, because the city would at length be taken. This is substantially what he says.

Now the princes add, Die let this man, because in this manner, or therefore, that is, on account of his bad counsel, he weakens the hands of the men of war, etc. Here hand is to be taken for valor, for deeds are mainly performed by the hands. Hence to loosen or weaken the hands means the same as to render men inert, or so idle as not to move a finger. Then the princes accused Jeremiah on this account, that he terrified the men of war and thus rendered them listless. It was a specious charge; but the slander had nothing to support it; for Jeremiah could not have been condemned as a public enemy to his country, when he earnestly exhorted them to flee and gave no hope to the people, in order they might all, despairing of deliverance, willingly surrender themselves to their enemies.

A question may be raised here, whether it is lawful for a private individual to persuade subjects to violate their oath of allegiance to their king or prince. I now call Prophets private persons; for I have in view civil order. Jeremiah, indeed, sustained a public character, for he was God's Prophet; but as to the government of the city he was a private individual, one of the people. It seems, then, that the Prophet had passed over the limits of what is right, when he persuaded the people to revolt, for that could not have been done without forfeiting allegiance to the king. To this I answer, that the Prophet was invested with a special command, and that, therefore, he did nothing presumptuously or rashly. Though, then, the people had pledged to

the end their faith to the king, yet as God had now delivered the city to the Chaldeans, the obligation of the oath ceased; for when governments are changed, whatever the subjects had promised is no longer binding. As, for example, when any country has a prince, he binds the whole people to himself by an oath, so that they may all abide in their allegiance. When any one invades that country, the subjects incur the charge of perfidy if they come not forward and assist their prince, as they had promised; but when a foreign enemy takes possession of the whole land, the obligation of the oath ceases; for it is not in the power of the people to set up princes, because it belongs to God to change governments as he pleases. Since, then, this power belongs to God alone, while a prince rules, the people ought resolutely to continue obedient to him, as their legitimate prince, set over them by God. But this was not at that time the case with the Jews; for though the Chaldeans had not yet entered the city, yet God had declared that they were its masters. The people, then, were not to wait until the Chaldeans broke in into the city, burnt its houses, and killed all they met with; but it ought to have been sufficient for them that the prediction of the Prophet was the decree or sentence of God, by which they were given up to the Chaldeans.

The question as to Jeremiah and all others in similar circumstances, is now answered: for when any one sees only some danger at hand, he ought not, on that account, to persuade the people to forsake their prince; but every one who seeks to be God's faithful servant, will risk his own life in the defense of his king. When called to his council, he will advise what is useful and right; but he will not stir up commotions and tumults: on the contrary, he would rather die a hundred times than cause the people to revolt either by his counsels or by his influence. But the case of Jeremiah, as it has been said, was peculiar; for God had made known his purpose as to the Chaldeans. Hence Jeremiah did not only prudently persuade the people to do what he deemed necessary, but he also discharged faithfully his office as a Prophet: nor did he give any other counsel than what he had been commanded to give: nay, he commanded them, by authority, to pass over to the Chaldeans, for it was according to God's will.

The princes, however, brought this charge against him, that he weakened the hands, etc.; and added, In this manner he seeks not the good of the people, when he thus speaks, (peace here is to be taken for what is good or useful,) but he seeks evil This they slanderously added, for Jeremiah, as far as he could, consulted the public good, he wished the city to continue safe; had it been in his power, he would have put to flight all the Chaldeans; but he could not carry on war with God, under whose banner the Chaldeans fought. Jeremiah then sought the good of the people, but he could not resist God, and therefore he gave way to the divine decree: he saw no other remedy than this, that the Jews should undergo a temporary punishment, and be chastised by an exile, so that they might return afterwards into their own country. Had it been possible, as I have said, he would have kept the people from every injury; but this was not now practicable; for God had pronounced that it was all over with the kingdom and the city, until the Jews were punished by an exile of seventy years. There was then a second good or benefit, so that exile might be: more tolerable to the miserable, or captivity become milder: and this good was, to

come of their own accord to King Nebuchadnezzar, and to suffer themselves to be led forth to the Chaldeans. This was the second good.

Jeremiah then, seeing that the city, the kingdom, and the Temple were not to stand, was anxious to urge with all his might what remained to be done, in order that the city might at least continue as it was, while the inhabitants migrated into another land, so that afterwards they might return to it. This was the best thing for the people, because God had determined to drive them all into exile. It was then absurd to bring against him this unjust charge, that he sought not the good of the people, but their ruin.

But as we said yesterday, all the sayings and doings of the saints have been always unjustly condemned. And if the same thing happen to us at this day, let us patiently bear it. We also see that it has been always objected to the Prophets and faithful teachers, as a crime, that they did not consult the public good, as all ungodly men at this day bring the same charge against us, especially the couriers, who take it as granted, that were anything changed, it would be the cause of all kinds of disturbances; and hence they think, that their religion could not possibly fall without ruin to the public good. Hence it comes, that the free preaching of the Gospel is disliked by them, as though it brought with it some public calamity. Therefore they call us turbulent; and they say that we go astray through ignorance: though we are not avowedly enemies to the public good, yet we do not understand how kingdoms are to be governed; and hence we rashly stir up the greatest tumults. All these reproaches we have to bear, as Jeremiah did, when, with a quiet mind, he endured the hatred which the princes unjustly produced against him, on account of his doctrine, which yet he had announced by God's command, and which was necessary for the safety of the city and people; for the Jews could not, against God's will, remain in their city, from which God had resolved to remove them. When, therefore, Jeremiah saw that the city could not be defended against the Chaldeans, even had he been the only counselor of the king, and not God's Prophet, what could he have advised better or more beneficial, than to anticipate the extreme cruelty of their enemies, and at least to do all they could, that the city might not be burnt with fire, and that the slaughter of the people might not be universal, but that they might continue alive, with the loss only of their property? He could not then have brought a better counsel. But, as I have already said, nothing is deemed good or useful by the ungodly, except liberty perversely to resist God. This was the reason why they so unjustly accused God's Prophet. It follows ---

Jeremiah 38:5

5. Then Zedekiah the king said, Behold, he is in your hand: for the king is not he that can do any thing against you.

5. Et dixit rex Zedechias, Ecce ipsc in manibus vestris; quia rex non potest erga vos quicquam.

Zedekiah doubtless knew that wrong was done to the holy Prophet; for though he wished him to remain as he was, yet he knew that the Prophet had not threatened the people from ill-will or a hostile mind; and he was thus conscious that he had to do with God rather than with a mortal man. However this may have been, he knew that

Jeremiah was not an enemy to the public safety according to the charge brought by the princes. He might then have wished to deliver the Prophet from their hands, but he submitted to their fury; for he was divested of all regal power, and was become, as it were, a slave to his own counselors, on whom depended the government of the kingdom.

They wrongly explain this verse, who think that the king spoke honorably of his counselors, as though he had said, that such was their prudence and dignity, that nothing could be denied them. They pervert the meaning of the Prophet; for the king, on the contrary, acknowledges here, that he was reduced to such a condition, as though he were a private individual, he, in short, confessed that he was the servant of servants; ``Now I see,'' he says, ``that I am no king, but that ye so rule, that, willing or unwilling, I am forced to yield to you, even in the best cause.'' There is then no doubt but that it was the bitter complaint of the king when he said, The king can do nothing against you. [336]

But Zedekiah deserved this degradation: for he ought to have been from the beginning more teachable, and to submit to God. But in the first place, as we have seen, he had despised prophetic doctrine, and hearkened not to the voice of God; and in the second place, he revolted perfidiously from the Chaldean king, and became thus guilty of ingratitude, for when his nephew was dethroned, that is, Jeconiah or Coniah, he obtained the regal power through the favor of the king of Babylon. He had therefore been ungrateful in denying tribute to him. But his impiety was the main cause of all evils. As then he had been such a rebel against God, he deserved that the princes should prove rebels to him. He then degraded himself, and deprived himself of royal authority, when he refused submission to the word of God, and also when he denied tribute to the king of Babylon. It was no wonder, then, that God made him subject to the princes and counselors, who were yet his servants.

As to these couriers, their arrogance was inexcusable in daring to condemn Jeremiah; for this was to take away from the king his own right; Die let this man, for he is worthy of death. Why was it that they were not content with accusing him, without assuming also to be his sole judges? As, then, they treated the king so disrespectfully, there is no doubt but they were despisers of God, when they deemed as nothing the royal dignity. But as to the king, he reaped, as I have said, the fruit of his own impiety, for he had not given to God his due honor in embracing the truth taught by the Prophet. It was therefore necessary, that he should be unworthily and contumeliously treated, so that he dared not to say even one word in behalf of a just and good cause. This was the reason why he said, He is in your hands, for the king can do nothing against you

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou invitest us daily to thyself with so much kindness, and givest us also time to repent, and then offerest to us the hope of mercy and salvation, if we return to thee, --- O grant, that we may not pass by such benevolent warnings with deaf ears, but in due time attend to thee, and with true

[336] "The king," observes Blayney, "evidently speaks this in disgust with the princes, for endeavoring to frustrate his clemency." — Ed.

and sincere acknowledgment of all our sins so surrender up ourselves to thee, that we may find thee to be merciful; and that when we return to thee we may so continue in obedience to thee, that we may be capable of receiving thy constant kindness, until the full fruition of it shall be given us in thy celestial kingdom, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Forty-Eighth

Jeremiah 38:6

6. Then took they Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison: and they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.

6. Et tulerunt Jeremiam, et demiserunt eum in puteum Malchiae filii Hammalech (in lacum, proprie,) qui erat in atrio custodiae; et (itaque) demiserunt Jeremiam funibus; et in lacu non erat aqua, sed coenum; et demersus fuit Jeremias in coeno.

HERE is narrated the extreme presumption as well as cruelty of the princes; for they cast the holy Prophet into a pit, where he sank in the mire. It was a proof of hardened impiety not to spare so excellent a servant of God; and it was also a savage cruelty, when they had no cause of being so filled with rage, except that Jeremiah had obeyed God, and faithfully performed the office committed to him.

Let us at the same time learn from this example, whenever it pleases the Lord to try our patience, to bear with resignation what we see to have been borne by the holy Prophet. If, then, we shudder at any time at the horrors of the cross, so that it may seem hard to us to bear persecution, let us remember this example of the Prophet. In a word, there is here, on the one hand, shewn to us, as in a picture, the wickedness of the world; and on the other, the wonderful constancy and also the singular meekness of God's servant shine forth gloriously.

Jeremiah then says, that he was taken by the princes and cast into a pit, which was in the court of the prison; and in that part, where one of the counselors dwelt, even Malchiah the son of Hamelech And at the same time he describes the state of the place, that it was a miry pit, so that he sank down in the mud. He does not mean that he was covered with mud, but that he was fixed in it, as the Hebrew word intimates; and we may thus rightly render the words, ``He lay fixed in the mud.'' It now follows ---

Jeremiah 38:7-9

7. Now when Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, one of the eunuchs which was in the king's house, heard that they had put Jeremiah in the dungeon; the king then sitting in the gate of Benjamin;

7. Audivit autem Ebedmelech Aethiops vir eunuchus (vel, unus ex numero procerum, {מיסרס} enim ut alibi dictum fuit, non tanturn eunuchos vocant, sed etiam proceres et consiliarios regis) ipsc autem erat in domo regis (per parenthesin hoc legendum est, audivit ergo) quod posuissent Jeremiam in lacum; rex autera sedebat in porta Benjamin:

8. Ebedmelech went forth out of the king's house, and spake to the king, saying,

8. Et egressus est Ebedmelech e domo (vel, palatio) regis, et loquutus est ad

regem, dicendo,

9. My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for there is no more bread in the city.

9. Domine, mi Rex, perverse egerunt viri isti in onmibus quae fecerunt Jeremiae Prophetae, quando eum demiserunt in foveam (vel, lacum,) uti subtus se morietur a fame (hoc est, prae fame,) quia nullus panis amplius est in urbe.

Jeremiah relates here how he was delivered from death; for he could not have lived long in the mire; partly, because he must have died through want; and partly, he must have been starved through cold and suffocated with the filth of the dungeon. But God rescued him in a wonderful manner through the aid of Ebedmelech, an Ethiopian. He was an alien, and this is expressly said, that we may know, that among the king's counselors there was no one who resisted so great a wickedness. But there was one found, an Ethiopian, who came to the aid of God's Prophet.

There is then implied here a comparison between an Ethiopian, an alien, and all the Jews, who professed themselves to be the holy seed of Abraham, who had been circumcised, and boasted loudly of God's law and covenant; and yet there was not one among them, who would stretch forth his hand to the holy servant of God! It may be there were some who pitied him, but courage was wanting; so that no one dared to open his mouth, for it was a reproach to patronize the holy man. They, then, preferred the favor of the ungodly to their own duty. But there was an Ethiopian so courageous, that he dared to accuse all the king's couriers and the other princes. There is, then, no doubt but that the Spirit by the mouth of the Ethiopian brought a perpetual disgrace on the king's princes, who passed themselves as the children of Abraham, and boasted in high terms of God's covenant. A similar case is represented by Christ in a parable, when he says that a Levite and a priest passed by a wounded man and disregarded him, but that help was brought to him by a Samaritan. (Luke 10:30-35.) His purpose, no doubt, was to condemn the Jews, even the Levites and the priests, for their barbarity in caring nothing for the life of a miserable man in his extremity. So also, in this place, the Ethiopian is set forth to us as an example, for he alone had the feeling of kindness and humanity, so as to bring help to the holy Prophet, and to rescue him, as it were, from immediate death and the grave: but we see all the king's couriers either wholly torpid or influenced by the same spirit of rage and cruelty, as to be mortal enemies to the holy man, because he freely and openly declared to them the command of God.

And Jeremiah says that Ebed-melech heard, etc. We may hence conclude, that he was anxious about the safety of the holy Prophet, and that he had his friends who watched the proceedings. It is then added, that he was in the palace, but that the king was sitting in the gate of Benjamin; for kings were wont to administer justice in the gates, and to have there their tribunal; and it was there that the people held their regular assemblies. The king, then, was sitting in the gate of Benjamin But, in the meantime, his palace was a place of execution and the den of robbers. We hence see that the sloth of the king is here denoted, for he apparently performed the proper office of a king, but neglected the principal part of it, for he suffered a

holy man to be east into a pit. As, then, he thus exposed the Prophet's life to the will of the princes, it is evident that he was but an empty shadow, though he stood there as the judge of the people, and had there a sacred tribunal.

It now follows, that Ebed-melech went forth from the palace and came to the king's tribunal, that he might there plead the cause of the Prophet. It is right to notice this circumstance as well as the former. For if Ebedmelech had met the king accidentally, he might have spoken to him in passing; but as he went forth from the palace, it is clear that he had been meditating on what he was going to do, and that he had not felt only a sudden impulse of compassion: but that when he might have rested quietly in the palace, he came of his own accord to the king to make known his complaint. And further, he did not address the king in a room or in some private corner of the palace, but he spoke to him in the gate, that is, in a public assembly. We hence see that the previous circumstance commends to us the perseverance of this man, for he was not only suddenly moved, but persevered in his holy purpose; and the second circumstance commends to us his magnanimity, for he did not shun ill-will, but openly and boldly spoke for Jeremiah before the people; and he amplified the excellency of the Prophet by bringing an accusation against the princes. He no doubt knew that he was bringing himself into danger, but he exposed his own life that he might aid the Prophet.

He then said, that the king's counselors had done wickedly in all the things which they had done against Jeremiah the Prophet, because they had cast him into the well: and he added, There he will die under himself, or as some render it, and rightly, ``in* his own place.'' But the expression is striking, but cannot be fully expressed in our language: for Ebedmelech meant that Jeremiah would die, though no one molested him, though no evil or harm were done to him by another. He will,* then, die in his own place, that is, he will die, if left where he is; because he lay, as it has appeared, sunk in mire. And then he said, He will die through famine; for he had been cast into the pit as into a grave. And as scarcity prevailed among the whole people, Jeremiah could not have hoped for any aid; and bread, as we shall hereafter see, could not have been thrown to him. Then Ebedmelech says here first, that Jeremiah had been unworthily treated, because he was God's Prophet; for he honors him with this title, that he might expose the impiety of the princes; and secondly, he shews how miserably he lay in the pit, because no one could supply him with food, and there was no more bread in the city. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 38:10

10. Then the king commanded Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die.

10. Et praecepit rex ipsi Ebed-melech Aethiopi, Sume ad manum tuam hinc triginta viros, et educas Jeremiam Prophetam e fovea antequam moriatur.

We here see, what I have already said, that; the Prophet's deliverance was wholly from above. The king, smitten with fear, had lately given over the holy Prophet to the cruelty of his princes; and had confessed that he had no longer any authority: ``for it is not the king,'' he said, ``who now governs you.'' As, then, the king had not

dared resolutely to contend against his princes:, how was it, that he now ventured to extricate Jeremiah from the pit? We hence see that the king's mind had been changed; because he was lately so stunned with fear, that he dared not to plead the cause of the holy man; but now he commands the Ethiopian to take him out from the pit It then appears that this was over-ruled by a divine power.

But let us hence learn to be courageous, when necessity requires, though there may not be a hope of a favorable issue. Ebedmelech might have thought within himself that his attempt would be in vain, however strenuously he might have pleaded for Jeremiah. He might, then, have thus relinquished that purpose which he had so boldly undertaken; for thus they who are over-wise are often led, as it were, into inertness: ``What can you effect? thou art but one, and they are many; and then the thing is done. If the king himself has been forced to yield to their fury, and thou being a private individual, with what. confidence can you resist them? and further, a tumult will be raised, and thou wilt perish in it; and in the meantime they will perhaps stone with stones that unhappy man, whom thou seekest to help.'' All these things might have occurred to Ebedmelech, and thus he might have desisted. But we see that he rested in confidence on God's favor. Let us, then, remembering his example, hope beyond hope, when God requires us to do a thing, that is, when faith, the obligation of duty, demands anything from us, and which may be done, if we close our eyes to all obstacles and go on in our work; for events are in God's hands alone, and they will be such as he pleases. In the meantime it is simply our duty to proceed in our course, though we may think that our labors will be in vain and without any fruit. Ebedmelech happily succeeded, and how? because he performed the part of a pious and upright man. Thus God will extend his hand to us; whatever difficulties may meet us, we shall overcome them all by his power and aid.

Then the king commanded Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, Take hence thirty men with thee and extricate Jeremiah from the well Ebedmelech might even then have relinquished his undertaking; for he might not have been able with thirty men to overcome so great a power; for all the king's counselors had united together, and no doubt they had enlisted many others. We thus see that Ebedmelech did not rely on human aid, but that being strengthened by invincible confidence he undertook this office, so that he dared to draw Jeremiah out of the pit. It hence follows ---

Jeremiah 38:11

11. So Ebedmelech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah.

11. Et sumpsit Ebedmelech homines illos in manum suam (hoc est, sub sua potestate,) et venit in domum regis, nempe in locum sub thesauris; et sumpsit illinc veteramenta tractorum, et veteramenta (ad verbum) corruptorum, et demisit ad Jeremiam in lacum per funes.

Here Jeremiah goes on with the history of his deliverance. The courage of Ebedmelech ought ever to be noticed by us, for he went immediately to the holy Prophet. And it is said, that he took from some hidden place old tatters, De vieux haillons, as we call them. It is properly a noun substantive. But if its harshness be displeasing,

we may give this rendering, ``old tatters which had been dragged, and old tatters which were rotten.'' Yet some render the words thus, ``Worn out clothes and rotten clothes.'' But the former is more properly the meaning; for {סחב}, sacheb, means to drag, and it may be rendered in French, Vieux haillons trainez, ou, qui avoyent traine Then we have {סלחים}, salechim, corrupted or marred, usez; for {סלח}, salech, means to salt; but it is a verb in Hophal, and in that form it means to corrupt. They were torn or rotten garments, des vieux haillons a demi pourris It is said then that Ebedmelech took these old, torn, and rotten garments, and which had been used. This ought to be carefully noticed; for it appears that Ebed-melech was afraid of the violence of the princes, not so much on his own account, but lest he should be hindered in effecting his purpose.

For if he had provided other things, he might have been apprehended; report might have been brought to the princes, who would have immediately assembled and put a stop to his efforts. There is then no doubt but that Ebedmelech, being very confident, prudently considered what might prevent him in his attempt of bringing help to the holy Prophet. Hence it was, that he stealthily took from a hidden place these worn-out and marred garments. This is one thing. Then we see the miserable state of the holy Prophet; he lay half buried in mud, and he was to be drawn out by ropes or cords, and to have these torn and worn-out garments under his arms. And we are afterwards expressly told for what purpose these clothes were sent down to him.

Jeremiah 38:12

12. And Ebedmelech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine arm holes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so.

12. Et dixit Ebedmelech Aethiops Jeremiae, Pone nunc veteramenta tractorum et corruptorum sub axillis manuum tuarum subtus funes: et fecit Jeremias sic.

We find the same words here as before, Put now the old tatters, dragged or torn and rotten, [337] under the pits of thy hands underneath the cords. This is an improper mode of speaking in Latin, but not in Hebrew. Then it is, ``Put them under thine armpits underneath the cords.'' This was to be done, lest the Prophet should receive any hurt; for he was to be drawn up by the cords, and he was fixed in the mud: and this could not have been done without lacerating his skin and injuring his armpits, for that part, we know, is tender. Then Ebedmelech ordered the Prophet to take these old tatters and to put them under the cords, so that he might be drawn up by the men with the least injury. This was the advice of Ebedmeleeh, and Jeremiah did as he was bidden.

God thus delivered his Prophet in a wonderful manner from death: but we hence see how miserable was his condition; for the Prophet could not have otherwise escaped than by using these worn-out and rotten tatters and by being drawn up by cords. There is no doubt but that he had thought of the difficulty; for he had been there now some time; and he was not so strong that he could trust to his own arms, and he knew that his hands were not strong enough to hold fast the cords. But he

[337] Blayney gives a better version, "torn rags and worn-out rags." The literal rendering is, "Rags of the torn, and rags of the rotten." — Ed.

doubtless east all his cares on God and his providence. Though then he does but briefly tell us that he did as he was bidden, he yet has left us to consider how much confidence he had, when he immediately obeyed, and did not decline what he might have justly feared, that he was feeble and weak; nor did he know whether his hands were strong enough to hold the cords, nor how the cords were to be applied to his shoulders. He therefore did what Ebedmelech had told him, for he knew that the advice came from God. It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 38:13

13. So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

13. Et extraxerunt Jeremiam funibus, et extulerunt ipsum e fovea (vel, lacu;) et habitavit Jeremias in atrio custodiae.

We here see that the Prophet was rescued from death, not however that he might be set at liberty, and sent home, for that would not have been for his benefit, as he would have been taken again by the king's counselors. Ebedmelech could not, therefore, save his life otherwise than by having him confined in another part of the prison. He could have wished, no doubt, to have him as a guest in his own house: he doubtless wished to do for him more than he did. But his prudence deserves to be commended, that he placed the Prophet again in prison; for otherwise the fury and cruelty of the princes could not have been mitigated. Then Jeremiah dwelt in the court of the prison.

He was evidently led there by Ebedmelech. If one were to object and say that this was a proof of too much timidity; to this the answer is, that Ebedmelech was not fearful on his own account, but because he saw that he had to do with wild beasts; and he saw that their rage could not otherwise be calmed than by having Jeremiah confined in the prison. Indeed, the whole city was then like a prison, as it is well known; for they were oppressed everywhere with want, and no one could hardly go out of his house. This state of things was then wisely considered by Ebedmelech, for he had not only his own business to attend to, but he also labored to preserve God's Prophet.

When God at any time relieves our miseries, and yet does not wholly free us from them at once, let us bear them patiently, and call to mind this example of Jeremiah. God, indeed, manifested his power in delivering him, and yet it was his will that he should continue in prison: even thus he effects his work by degrees. If then the full splendor of God's grace does not shine on us, or if our deliverance is not as yet fully granted, let us allow God to proceed by little and little; and the least alleviation ought to be sufficient for comfort, resignation, and patience. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 38:14

14. Then Zedekiah the king sent, and took Jeremiah the prophet unto him into the third entry that is in the house of the LORD: and the king said unto Jeremiah, I will ask thee a thing; hide nothing from me.

14. Et misit rex Zedechias et tulit (hoc est, accersivit) Jeremiam Prophetam ad se ad ingressum tertium, qui erat in domo Jehovae (hoc est, in ipso Templo,) et dixit rex ad Jeremiam, Ego interrogo to verbum, ne celes a me verbum (hoc est, Ego rem

unam abs to quaero, ne quicquam celes.)

Here is added another narrative, --- that King Zedekiah again sent for Jeremiah to come to him in the Temple, that is, in the court of the Temple; for it was not lawful for the king to enter into the Sanctuary, and the court is often called the Temple. But there were, as it is well known, many entrances. The largest gate was towards the east, but there were gates on the other sides. The court also had several parts, separated from each other. Then Zedekiah, that he might speak privately to Jeremiah, came to the third entrance of the court, and there he asked the Prophet faithfully to explain to him what he had received from God.

There is no doubt but that Zedekiah in course of time entertained a higher regard for Jeremiah as God's faithful servant. Yet he was not, as we have said, really attentive to the teaching of the Prophet. Hence the mind of the king was in a dubious state, like those hypocrites, who, having some seed of God's fear remaining in them, fluctuate and continually change, and have nothing solid and fixed. They dare not, indeed, to despise either God or his servants; nay, they acknowledge that they are under God's authority, and that his word is not evanescent; and yet they make evasions as much as they can, and seek to change, as it were, the nature of God. Such was the character of Zedekiah. For he was not one of those who grossly and openly despise God, as we see at this day, the world being full of Epicureans, who regard religion as a fable. Such, then, was not Zedekiah, but he retained some fear of God; nay, he even shewed regard for the Prophet; and yet he was unwilling to submit to God, and to follow the counsels of the Prophet. He was, therefore, suspended, as it were, between two opinions. But it is probable that he entertained some hope, because he had saved the life of Jeremiah. he might, then, have thought that God was pacified, or that he would remit in some degree his severity, as hypocrites always flatter themselves. For if they do the least thing, they think that they merit some favor, I know not what, at God's hand. Hence Zedekiah, when he had relieved the holy Prophet, and fed him during the greatest scarcity, thought that this service was acceptable to God; and it was in part acceptable; but he was mistaken in thinking this to be a kind of expiation. Hence then it was that he sent for the Prophet; he expected some favorable answer, even that God's wrath was pacified, or at least mitigated. But we must defer the rest till to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, omnipotent God, that since the life of thy servants ought to be deemed precious by us, each of us, according to his ability may strive to do his part in this respect, and, in the meantime, so cultivate mutual love as to assist one another in time of necessity, and that we may also be so solicitous respecting thy servants, as to consecrate all our efforts, all our labors, and all our services to thee, and strive thus to please thee, so that all our doings may be directed to this end, until, having at length finished the course of our present warfare, we shall come to that rest in thy celestial kingdom, which has been procured for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Forty-Ninth

Jeremiah 38:15

15. Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken unto me?

15. Et dixit Jeremias ad Zedechiam, Si annuntiavero tibi, an non interficiendo interficies me? et si consilium dedero tibi, non auscultabis mihi (non audies ad me, ad verbum.)

THE Prophet seems here to have acted not very discreetly; for when he ought of his own accord to have announced to the king the destruction of the city, being asked he refused to answer, or at least he took care of his life, and secured himself from danger before he littered a word. And the Prophets, we know, disregarding their own life, ought to have preferred to it the commands of God, as we find was often the case with Jeremiah, who frequently at the risk of his life proclaimed prophecies calculated to rouse the hatred of all the people, and to create the greatest danger to himself. It seems, then, that he had made no good progress, since he now fails, as it were, in this hazardous act of his vocation, and dares not to expose himself to danger.

But it ought to be observed, that the Prophets had not always an express command to speak. For had God bidden Jeremiah to declare what we shall hereafter meet with, he would not have evaded the question; for he had been so trained up for a long time, that he feared not for himself so as to turn aside from the straight course of his office. That he now, then, seems to draw back, this he did because God had not as yet commanded him to explain to the king what we shall presently see. For he would have done this without benefit: and he had often admonished the king, and had seen that his counsel was despised. No wonder, then, that he was unwilling to endanger his life without any prospect of doing good. If any one brings this objection, that it is then lawful for us to do the same; to this I answer, that we are not thoughtlessly to cast pearls before swine; but until we try every means, we ought to hope for the best, and therefore to act confidently. But Jeremiah had fully performed his duty: for the king could not have pleaded mistake or ignorance, since the Prophet had so often testified that there was no other remedy for the evil but to pass over to the Chaldeans.

As then the Prophet had so often warned the king, he might now be silent, and thus excuse himself, ``Thou wilt kill me, and at the same time thou wilt not believe me, or, thou wilt not obey, if I give thee counsel.'' These two clauses ought to be read together; for if Jeremiah had seen that there was a prospect of doing good, he would doubtless have offered his life a sacrifice. But as he saw that his doe-trine would be useless, and that his life was in danger, he did not think it right rashly to expose his life, when he could hope for no benefit. The Prophet then did not regard only his own danger, but was also unwilling to expose heavenly truth to scorn, for it had often been already despised. He then did not answer the king's question, because he was convinced that he would be disobedient, as he had ever been up to that very time. It follows ---

Jeremiah 38:16

16. So Zedekiah the king sware secretly unto Jeremiah, saying, As the LORD liveth, that made us this soul, I will not put thee to death, neither will I give thee into

the hand of these men that seek thy life.

16. Et juravit rex Zedechias Jeremiae in secreto, dicens, Vivit Jehova, qui fecit nobis animam hanc, si interfecero te, et si tradidero te in manum istorum qui quaerunt animam tuam.

The king, desirous of having a new revelation, promised safety to the Prophet by an oath. He then swore that he would not take revenge, though he might be displeased with the Prophet's answer he might indeed have conjectured, though Jeremiah had not expressly said anything, that the answer would be unfavorable, and by no means agreeable to his wishes. For if some pleasant and joyful oracle had been given to the Prophet, he would not have made a preface respecting his own danger, and the wrath of the king, and also respecting his obstinacy. Zedekiah then could have concluded, that nothing but what was sad could be expected. For this reason he made an oath, that whatever might be the answer, he would not be so offended as to cause any harm to the Prophet.

He said, I will not kill thee, nor deliver thee into the hand of those who seek thy life, that is, who are enemies to thy life: for to seek life is the same thing as to pursue man to death. It is a way of speaking that often occurs, especially in the Psalms. (Psalm 38:12; Psalm 40:14, 15.) Then he refers to the mortal enemies of Jeremiah: and he promises at the same time that he would, with undisturbed mind, receive whatever he might hear from the Prophet.

Let us notice the form of the oath, Live does Jehovah, who made for us this soul He first made an oath by the life of God, that is, by the immortal God. The word {חי}, chi, when applied to God, denotes a life different from what is in men or in brute animals; for men live by the will of another, that is, while God gives them life. It belongs then to God alone to live, for we do not live, nor move, nor have any being but in him, as Paul says, in Acts 17:28; and hence he teaches us in another place, that God alone is immortal. (1 Timothy 6:16) At the same time comprehended in this word is everything that peculiarly belongs to God; for God does not live to enjoy ease and indulge in idleness, but to govern the universe, to exercise his power throughout heaven and earth, to judge men, to render to every one his own just reward. Then life in God is not an idle life, as ungodly men imagine, but includes his infinite power, justice, wisdom, and all that peculiarly belongs to him. Whenever then we speak of the life of God, let us know that we do not live but through him, and also that he does not sit idly and carelessly in heaven, but that he governs the whole world, and is the judge of men.

According to this meaning, then, Zedekiah said, Live does Jehovah, and then he added, who made for us this soul. He expresses more clearly what I have already stated, and it is the same as though he had offered his own life before God as a pledge. He then prayed for the punishment of perjury on himself; for when he made an oath by God, the giver of life, it was the same as though he had said, ``Let my life be forfeited, if I deceive thee, or turn false.'' We hence see what is the end of an oath, even that God's sacred name may be for us a pledge, that our word may be relied on. It hence follows, that God's name, whenever we swear, cannot be taken with impunity: for we expose our life to his judgement, that he may revenge the

wrong done to him; for his name, as it is sufficiently known, is profaned by perjuries. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 38:17

17. Then said Jeremiah unto Zedekiah, Thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; If thou wilt assuredly go forth unto the king of Babylon's princes, then thy soul shall live, and this city shall not be burned with fire; and thou shalt live, and thine house:

17. Tunc dixit Jeremias ad Zedechiam, Sic dicit Jehova, Deus exercituum, Deus Israel, Si egrediendo egressus fueris ad proceres regis Babylonis, vivet anima tua, et urbs ista non consumetur (non incendetur) igni, sed vives tu et domus tua.

A question may be raised here, Whether God had again bidden his Prophet to repeat what he had so often spoken in vain? To this we cannot say anything certain, except that the probability is, that the Prophet did not open his mouth without being guided by the Holy Spirit. For though he had not received any new command, yet the Spirit of God influenced him, and ruled his tongue as well as his heart. We shall indeed presently find, that what was nigh at hand had been revealed to him; not what he had before, but it was added as a new confirmation of former doctrine. But this is only a probable conjecture; let then every one take his own view of the question.

That he might now gain credit to his answer, he prefaced it by saying, that he did not speak except from God's mouth. He had often declared this, having testified that what he said was made known to him by God. But it is not now known whether he had been bidden to repeat the same things; though it is certain that he did not make a wrong use of God's name, nor did he, without authority, assert that it was God's word. The Spirit, therefore, as I have said, was his guide and ruler, though we may grant that he did not receive any divine command.

He calls God, the God of hosts, and the God of Israel. By the first title he denotes the omnipotence of God; and by the second, the covenant which he had made with the Jews. He then did set forth the immeasurable power of God, that he might make Zedekiah to fear; for hypocrites, though they are constrained to dread God's name, yet afterwards do, in a manner, become hardened: it is therefore necessary to rouse them, as the Prophet did here. He then touched on the impiety of Zedekiah; for he not only professed himself to be one of God's elect people, but he was also the king and head; he ruled over the heritage of the Lord. And yet he did not believe any of the prophecies. There is therefore implied a reprobation, when the Prophet says, the God of Israel

A mitigation of punishment is added, provided Zedekiah willingly put his neck under the yoke. And it was no common mercy from God, that he could yet escape extreme punishment; for he was unworthy to be regarded by God, since for some years he had not attended to what he had heard from the mouth of Jeremiah, that he was to surrender himself, his people, and the city to the Chaldeans. he had refused, nay, he had been refractory and obstinate against God. We hence see, that he was unworthy of any alleviation; and yet God was still ready to forgive him, as to his life, provided he passed over, of his own accord, to the Chal-deans. And thus he was made more inexcusable, inasmuch as when he heard that God would be propitious

if he submitted to due punishment, he was still unwilling to obey, as afterwards we shall see. And thus we see that Jeremiah had not said without reason, ``If I give thee counsel, thou wilt not hear nor obey me;'' for the event proved this. This is one thing. Then he said, Thou shalt live; and in the first place, he said, Thy soul shall live; and then, This city shall not be burned, and thou shalt live; and he repeated the words, Thou shalt live, thou and thy house Now follows the threatening ---

Jeremiah 38:18

18. But if thou wilt not go forth to the king of Babylon's princes, then shall this city be given into the hand of the Chaldeans, and they shall burn it with fire, and thou shalt not escape out of their hand.

18. Si vero non egressus fucris ad proceres regis Babylonis, tradetur urbs ista in manum Chaldaeorum, et exurent eam igni, et tu non evades e manu ipsorum.

The Prophet gave to the king the hope of pardon; not that he promised impunity, but that the king might at least hope that God would be merciful to him, if he anticipated his extreme vengeance. But as hypocrites are not easily moved when God allures them by the sweetness of his promises, hence a threatening is added, ``Except thou deliverest thyself up,'' says the Prophet, ``to the. Chaldeans, thou shalt not escape, and the city shall be taken and burnt by the Chaldeans.''

Zedekiah might have had hope in part, and thus have found the mercy which God offered to him. As he had profited nothing in this respect, it was necessary, in another way, to arouse him, by setting before him the destruction of the city, and his own death. But he was not prevailed upon either by fear or by hope, to obey the advice of the Prophet. We hence see, that though he did not avowedly despise God, he was yet neither cold nor hot, but wished to be wholly spared. Hence then it was, that he rejected the favor offered to him by the Prophet. However his excuse follows ---

Jeremiah 38:19

19. And Zedekiah the king said unto Jeremiah, I am afraid of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me.

19. Et dixit rex Zedechias ad Jeremiam, Ego metuo (vel, crucior) ob Judaeos qui defecerunt ad Chaldaeos (vel, solitus sum, vel, timeo, et metuo Judaeos ipsos,) ne forte tradant me in manum ipsorum, et contumelia me afficiant (alii vertunt, illudant mihi.)

Zedekiah seems, here to have had a good reason why he should not immediately obey the Prophet. And often the best of the faithful openly set forth their anxieties, and we have seen that even the Prophet, when any apprehension of danger was entertained, sometimes mentioned it. It was not then a thing to be blamed, that Zedekiah ingenuously confessed that he was prevented by the fear of those who had revolted to the Chaldeans. For we know that subjects, having once cast off the yoke, and violated their pledged faith, conduct themselves in an insolent way; for they know that those to whom they have not performed their duty would be implacable to them. Zedekiah then was justly anxious, and his simplicity in explaining to the Prophet his fear, seemed worthy of an excuse, for he seemed to give some sign of obedience. But the event at length will shew us, that he was so bound by fear, that

he refused the counsel of God and the Prophet. It often happens, as I have just said, that the faithful also fear, and thus vacillate or stand still, when God commands them anything hard and difficult, and they would willingly withdraw from the contest, but they at length obey God, and surrender their own thoughts, and submit in obedience to God. But Zedekiah so feared, [338] that he could not partake of God's goodness promised to him.

We hence see what the faithful have in common with the reprobate, and also how they differ from one another. At first the faithful fear as well as the unbelieving; they are anxious, they vacillate, and make known their perplexities: the unbelieving at the same time indulge themselves, and become hardened in their perverse purposes; but the faithful fight with themselves, and subject their thoughts to the will of God, and thus overcome fear by faith; they also crucify the flesh, and give themselves up wholly to God. We have seen the same thing before in the Prophet. But we shall now see the obstinacy of King Zedekiah, to which we have referred. Then Zedekiah feared lest the Jews, who had revolted to the Chaldeans, should treat him with insolence. The Prophet thus answered him ---

Jeremiah 38:20-22

20. But Jeremiah said, They shall not deliver thee. Obey, I beseech thee, the voice of the LORD, which I speak unto thee: so it shall be well unto thee, and thy soul shall live.

20. Tunc dixit Jeremias, Non tradent te, audi agedum vocem Jehovae quam tibi profero (quam ego loquar ad te,) et tibi erit bene (tibi bene cedat,) et vivet anima tua:

21. But if thou refuse to go forth, this is the word that the LORD hath shewed me:

21. Quod si tu abnueris ad egrediendum (hoc est, recusaveris egredi,) hic est sermo quem ostendit mihi Jehova;

22. And, behold, all the women that are left in the king of Judah's house shall be brought forth to the king of Babylon's princes, and those women shall say, Thy friends have set thee on, and have prevailed against thee: thy feet are sunk in the mire, and they are turned away back.

22. Et ecce omnes mulieres, quae relictae fuerint in domo regis Jehudah egrediuntur ad proceres regis Babylonis, et ecce ipsae dicent, Suaserunt tibi (alii, deceperunt te, vel, subduxerunt) et praevaluerunt tibi viri pacis tuae; defixi sunt in luto pedes tui, conversi sunt retrorsum.

Here again Jeremiah strengthens Zedekiah, that he might not hesitate to make the trial, since God would yet give him pardon, so that at least his chastisement would be paternal and light He then promised to Zedekiah that he would be safe from all the insults about which he was anxious. They will not deliver thee, he says; as though he had said, ``Leave this to God's providence, resign thyself to God, and doubt not but that he will keep thee safe.'' God, in his kindness, as I have said, allows

[338] The verb means trouble of mind or anxiety rather than fear, "I am disturbed with regard to the Jews," etc. The Vulgate is, "I am solicitous," and the Targum., "I am anxious. Our version, "I am afraid of," is the Syriac. The king seems to have been too proud to own that he had fear. The last clause in the verse may be thus rendered, "And they exult over me." The verb means to raise up or elevate one's self, and then the preposition {{ל means over, or against. The king was disturbed in his mind, being apprehensive of the taunts and insults of those already gone to the Chaldeans. --- Ed

the faithful to cast their cares into his bosom: but at the same time, if any disobey, when he confirms them, it is a sign of deliberate wickedness, and such perverseness extinguishes all the light of grace. Such was the stupidity of Zedekiah, that he did not accept of this second promise. He might indeed have confessed his fear, but he ought also to have received the remedy. The Prophet assured him that his life would be safe in God's hand; what more could he have wished? But this was said to no purpose, because fear fully occupied his mind, so that there was no entrance for the promise. Now this ought to be carefully noticed; for there are none of us whom many cares do not disturb, and many fears do not perplex; but a place ought to be given to a remedy. God succors us when he sees us distressed by anxious thoughts; but if fear so prevails, that all the promises by which God raises us up avail nothing, it is a sign of hopeless unbelief.

It afterwards follows, Hear the voice of Jehovah, which I utter to you, that it may be well with thee, and that thy soul, may live The promise is again added, to lead Zedekiah to submit more willingly to God. For though we know that we cannot escape his power, it will yet be dreaded by us, except he favors us with the promises of grace. In this way, then, the Prophet endeavored to lead Zedekiah to render obedience to God: Hear, he says, the voice of Jehovah, that it may be well with thee He shewed that it was yet in the power of Zedekiah to provide for his own safety, if only he obeyed the word of God. And this passage teaches us, that the Prophet had not spoken thoughtlessly and in vain, but under the guidance and teaching of God's Spirit For though it may not have been, that he had received a new command, he yet knew that it was God's will, that he should confirm and reassert the previous oracles; for he did not falsely assume God's name, when he bade Zedekiah to hear God's voice which he had made known.

Now, though this discourse was especially directed to Zedekiah, we may yet conclude, that it is always for our good to embrace whatever God declares to us, though it may apparently be hard and unpleasant, as it was to Zedekiah; for it was by no means an agreeable thing to him to deliver up himself to his enemies, to be deprived of his regal power, to be drawn into exile, and from a king to become a slave; and yet nothing was better for him, in order to save his life, than to obey God. Though, then, the words of God contain what is contrary and grievous to our flesh, yet let us feel persuaded that God always speaks what is good for our salvation. It would then have been well for Zedekiah, had he obeyed the counsel of the Prophet; for he would have found in captivity that God would be propitious to him, and this would have been an invaluable comfort; and then he might have been brought back from exile, at least he would have preserved the city and the Temple: but by his obstinacy he betrayed the city to his enemies, and hence it was also that the Temple was burnt.

He then adds, If thou refuse to go forth, this is the word which God hath shewed to me Jeremiah again declares that Zedekiah resisted in vain, because he kicked, as it is said, against the goad, for he could not possibly escape from coming into the hand of his enemies; which, when done, then neither the city nor the Temple would be spared. But the Prophet repeats again, that it had been shewn to him what to speak, he then spoke not in his own name, but by God's command; which, it may

be, was not then given him: but the Prophet knew that God's decree, of which he had been the herald, could not be abolished. He then says, that this word had been shewed to him by God, even what follows ---

Behold, the women who as yet remain in the palace of the king, shall go forth to the princes of the king of Babylon, that is, having left the city they will betray thee to thine enemies; and they shall say, The men of thy peace have deceived thee, or persuaded thee, and have prevailed; thus fixed in the mire are thy feet, and they have turned backward There is here a part stated for the whole, for under one thing is included the whole calamity of the city. We indeed know that the female sex do not stand in the ranks to fight, and that when a city is taken, women are commonly spared. When, therefore, the Prophet says, Go forth shall women who are yet remaining in the king's palace, it is the same thing as if he had said, ``Even the women shall be compelled to go forth to the enemies, and give themselves up into their power; what then will become of the men, when such shall be the hard condition of the women?''

We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet: Go forth then shall women, that is, when the city is taken, the women in the palace shall be drawn forth from their hiding-places, and be constrained to appear before their enemies. And then he adds, and, behold, they shall say, etc. He used the particle {הנה}, ene, twice, in order to lead Zedekiah into the very scene itself; for it is necessary thus to rouse those who are torpid in their apathy. And, behold, he says, they will say Here Jeremiah declares that women would be witnesses to bear testimony to the folly of the king, and also to the wickedness and obstinacy of the princes, as though he had said, *``Thou* wilt not obey me to-day, and thy counsel-lors also pertinaciously resist; God has already pronounced judgment on you: ye despise, and regard it as nothing: God will at length rouse up women, who will openly proclaim thy folly, O king, and the perverseness of thy counselors, for having despised all the prophecies.''

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou daily invitest us to repentance by constant exhortations, we may seriously reflect on thy goodness, and in due time return to thee and submit to thy will, and never refuse to undergo the punishment thou layest on us; and that we may not in the meantime so provoke thy extreme vengeance, as to find thee a rigorous judge, but ever experience, even under punishment, thy paternal mercy, until we shall at length come to the fullness of that joy which is laid up in heaven for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fiftieth

We, were obliged yesterday to break off where the Prophet said to King Zedekiah that women would be his judges, and that for a heavier reproach to him, because he refused to believe the oracles of God. Though the Prophet had often exhorted him to repent, he had yet refused all his admonitions. Therefore Jeremiah here declares that he would have to bear the punishment he had deserved, even that the very women would openly speak of his folly and of the perfidy of all the princes. They shall then say, They have persuaded or seduced thee, as some read, and others, ``have driven thee,'' which I should prefer, were it the common meaning, for it immediately follows,

and have prevailed over thee; but we may simply take it in its proper sense, because they had perfidiously persuaded the king.

He calls them the men of peace, from whom acts of kindness might have been expected. We indeed know that friends and associates were thus called by the Hebrews. Peace does not only mean unity, but what is more, even friendship, such as ought to be between a king and his counselors. Jeremiah, no doubt, sought in this case to try whether Zedekiah was yet capable of being recovered; for he foretells that women would announce this as from a judicial throne; but as I have said yesterday, and as we shall hereafter see, he spoke to the deaf.

It is then added, Fixed are thy feet in the mire This is to be taken metaphorically. He might have secured his own life, had he passed over to the enemy, and thus a willing surrender might have been, as it were, the price for his liberation; but he chose rather to live in his own nest: and the Prophet says that this torpor would be like clay, in which he would he fixed. What follows, turned are they backward, is, in my judgment, improperly applied to the princes. I read the words in connection with the former, Fixed are thy feet in the clay, turned backward; for everything happened to the king contrary to what he hoped. [339] It follows ---

Jeremiah 38:23

23. So they shall bring out all thy wives and thy children to the Chaldeans: and thou shalt not escape out of their hand, but shalt be taken by the hand of the king of Babylon: and thou shalt cause this city to be burned with fire.

23. Et omnes uxores tuas et filios tuos deducent ad Chaldaeos, et tu non evades e manu eorum, quia in manu regis Babylonis comprehenderis, et urbem hanc combures igni.

Jeremiah pursues the same subject; but he sets forth at large the calamity, that the king being at least frightened with horror, might submit to a right counsel; for when we hear that death is at hand, this indeed fills us with horror; and when many evils are mentioned, we must necessarily be roused; and this, no doubt, was what the Prophet looked for. Then he says that Zedekiah would come into the hands of his enemies, hut he adds other indignities, which would bring greater bitterness, They shall draw out, he says, all thy wives and thy children, etc. Had Zedekiah been right-minded, he would have preferred to die a hundred times, and thus to have died for them all, than to have been the cause of so many evils. For we know that many have boldly exposed themselves to danger in defending the chastity of their wives; and doubtless such a reproach is far harder to be endured by ingenuous minds than a

[339] Both the Sept. and the Vulg. take "fixed" in a transitive sense, "They have fixed" or caused to sink; and the last words are made to refer to the princes. As to the Vulg. the two clauses are, "They have sunk thy feet in the mire and in a slippery place, and have departed from thee." The Syriac. as to the last clause is the same. The whole matter is related as seen in a vision, given to the Prophet as he says in the previous verse, — 21. This is the thing which Jehovah made me to see; and (he said) Behold the women, who have remained in the house of Judah, going forth to the princes of the king of Babylon, and behold them saying, — They have roused thee and prevailed over thee, even thy friends; sunk have they in the mire thy feet, they have run away from thee. The scene, as seen in the vision, is presented to the king, the women going out and then speaking tauntingly to him. The princes roused or excited Zedekiah to break faith with the king of Babylon, and prevailed on him to do so. By so doing they sunk him as it were in the mire, that is, brought him to difficulties, and then ran away from him. And then in the next verse the Prophet confirms and explains the vision. — Ed.

hundred deaths. We hence see what was the design of the Prophet; for he saw that Zedekiah could not be sufficiently roused by merely setting his own death before him, hence he added other circumstances, calculated to affect him still more, They shall draw out, he says, thy wives and thy children

We hence learn how conjugal fidelity was then with impunity violated. It was, we know, an ancient evil, but it had now passed into general practice, so that it was, as it were, the common law: and yet what God had once established continued unchanged, even that every man should have only his own wife. As, then, polygamy had so prevailed and had become so licentious among the Jews, we see that the fear of God was in fact extinguished and all regard to purity. More liberty was indeed allowed to kings, but they were not on that account to be excused, because their life ought to have been an example to others, a mirror of uprightness and chastity. When, therefore, they married a number of wives, it became an intolerable evil. And now when mention is made of all the wives, we conclude that the king had not only three or four wives or concubines, but a large number, that he might gratify his lust. hence then we learn how great was the corruption of that age. It is also a wonder that the king was thus given to his lusts, and not brought back to some degree of moderation when necessity itself constrained him. We hence see that he must have been extremely insensible in retaining so many concubines, when his only city was hardly safe, and the whole country in the possession of enemies. But thus perverse men despise God and his scourges. For though all confess, according to the common proverb, that necessity is a mistress whom all are forced to obey, yet the greater part struggle with necessity itself, as we see was the case with Zedekiah, who refused to bend or turn, though very poor and miserable, and who suffered nothing of his royal pomp and splendor to be diminished. Hence it was that he had a large number of wives or concubines, as mentioned here.

It then follows, This city shalt thou burn with fire It is certain that the torch was not applied by Zedekiah, nor was he the agent in the burning. But the Prophet reminded him that the cause of all the evils might justly be attributed to his obstinacy; as though he had said, that the Chaldeans would indeed be the authors of the burning, as they would with their own hands set the houses on fire, and yet that the first and the chief fault would be in Zedekiah himself, because he obstinately resisted God. [340]

But as to the women, this brief notice must be added: other kings, indeed, had been very dissolute; but God now applied the remedy when the court was purged from all its old filth. For with Jeconiah, we know, the royal dignity ceased; and the city was exposed to plunder; and yet some concubines remained; and these passed as by hereditary right to other kings, as they succeeded to the wives as to the kingdom. But when wickedness became incorrigible, all the concubines were taken away also. It was then a sign of final destruction. It follows ---

[340] And this city shall be burnt with fire," is the rendering of the Sept., the Syriac., and the Targum. The Vulg. is, "and he (the king of Babylon) will burn this city with fire." The first, no doubt, is the true version of the Hebrew, except the verb he in Hiphil, according to our version, and also that of Blayney; but what corresponds best with the passage is the former rendering. — Ed.

Jeremiah 38:24

24. Then said Zedekiah unto Jeremiah, Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die.

24. Et dixit Zedechias ad Jeremias, Vir nesciat (hoc est, nemo sciat) de sermonibus istis, et non morieris (hoc est, ne moriaris.)

Here is seen the miserable condition of the king. Had he no faith in the answer of Jeremiah, he would not have thus feared. But he acknowledged that what he had heard from the mouth of the Prophet was true. In the meanwhile he delayed and extended time as far as he could, and chose rather to spend his life in trembling than to be immediately freed from all care and anxiety. This was by no means to act like a king; for had he any courage, he would not have waited to the last hour. We indeed know that men of courage boldly meet death, when they see no hope of honor remaining. Zedekiah had lost his authority; he held indeed the title of a king, but he was without power; for he was compelled servilely to obey his counselors; and now he feared his own shadow, and yet protracted time, as I have said, as much as he could; and on this account he requested the Prophet, that this conversation might remain as buried.

By saying, thou shalt not die, he did not threaten the Prophet, but intimated that silence would not be less a benefit to Jeremiah than to himself: ``Thou wilt rouse the fury of all against thyself, if thou speakest of this interview, for no one can bear to hear anything of the ruin of the city: if then thou consultest thine own benefit, say not a word of this, and let it not come to the people nor to my counselors.'' Under the color of an advice then he said to Jeremiah, ``See lest thou die [341] He therefore did not speak threateningly.

Jeremiah 38:25-26

25. But if the princes hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king, hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; also what the king said unto thee:

25. Et si audierint proceres quod loquutus fuerim tecum, et venerint ad te, et dixerint tibi, Expone (vel, narra) nunc nobis quod loquutus fueris ad regem, ne celes a nobis (hoc est, ne celes nos quicquam,) et non occidemus te, et quid locutus sit tecum rex:

26. Then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication before the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there.

26. Et tunc, (copula enim resolvi debet in adverbium temporis, tunc) dices illis, Prostravi ego preces meas coram facie regis (hoc est, suppliciter deprecatus sum regem,) ne reduceret me in domum Jonathan, ut morerer illic.

Here again Zedekiah shews his anxiety, lest Jeremiah should be apprehended, were the princes unexpectedly to assail him; for he might in this respect have stumbled, though admonished. Then the king intimated to him what to answer, in case the counselors came to him and made inquiry respecting their intercourse. He then advised him simply to say, that he entreated him not to send him back to the filthy

[341] The words literally are, “Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die.” Such is the rendering of the Sept., the Vulg., and the Targum.; the Syriac. is, “lest thou die;” which suggests the view taken by Calvin. — Ed.

pit, where he almost perished. The miserable servitude of the king appears now still evident; for he feared his own counselors, lest they should revolt from him. he might easily have made a spontaneous surrender of himself, but he dared not, lest he should be killed by them in a tumult; and yet, on the other hand, he feared lest the princes should despise him, and so redeem themselves by the sacrifice of his life.

We see in what straits he was, but God rendered to him a just recompense for his obstinacy. It was indeed a miserable thing to hear that the king' was thus oppressed on every side, but the cause of all this ought ever to be borne in mind; which was, that he had despised God and his Prophet. He then deserved to be in this state of anxiety, to fear death on every side, and not to be able to extricate himself from those cares and perplexities which tormented him.

Let us then learn to cast all our cares on God, so that our life may be safe, and that we may have calm and tranquil minds: otherwise what is written in the Law must necessarily happen to us,

``Our life will hang on a thread, so that we shall say in the morning, Who will give us to see the evening? and in the evening, How can we live to the morning?'' (Deuteronomy 28:66, 67)

Lest then the same thing happen to us as to this miserable king, let us learn to re-cumb on God, for this is the only way to obtain peace.

For though Zedekiah set before Jeremiah the danger which he might bring on himself, if he confessed what took place between them, he yet had a regard no doubt to his own safety, for his care for the Prophet was not very great. If, then, he says, the princes will hear that I have spoken to him, etc. We see here, that as kings very curiously inquire into the sayings and actions of all, so they in their turn are exposed to innumerable spies, who observe all their secret proceedings. Zedekiah, as we have already seen, left his palace, sought some secret place, and at the third entrance called to him Jeremiah. This place might be deemed in some measure secret, yet he knew that he was observed even by his own servants.

Thus kings, while they seek immoderate splendor, renounce the main good, which ought to be preferred to all other things. For it is commonly said that liberty is an invaluable gift, and it is very true: but were we to seek for liberty among mankind, we should by no means find it in courts; for all there are slaves, and slavery begins with the most elevated. Kings, then, while they thus seek from their height to look down on all mankind, are placed, as it were, in a theater, and the eyes of all turn to them, so that no liberty remains for them; and they who hang on their favor are also in constant fear. This, then, ought to be noticed by us; for there is no one who does not seek splendor; but yet we know how anxious is the life of princes. Their external appearance is indeed very flattering; but we do not see what inward torments harass them. When, therefore, it is said of Zedekiah, that he could not have a secret conference, it hence appears that kings are by no means free.

He says, ``Though they promise thee impunity, trust them not.'' Zedekiah feared lest the Prophet should be too credulous, and should freely relate to the counselors what he had said. But he no doubt had reflected on the fact, that the Prophet had

already announced the destruction of the city. He then could have hardly hoped for the silence which he required. Hence then it was, that he so earnestly bid him to be careful; and though the counselors should promise that there would be no danger to him, he yet bade him to be silent. Say to them, he said, I humbly prayed the king not to send me back to the house of Jonathan, that I might not die there It was not indeed a falsehood, but this evasion cannot be wholly excused. The Prophet justly feared, and, as we have before seen, he was perplexed and anxious, for that prison was horrible, and it would have been better at once to die than to have been thus buried alive in the earth. But it is certain that he did not come to the king for this purpose, for he had been sent for. Though, then, the Prophet did not expressly or in so many words say what was false, yet it was a kind of falsehood; and what follows, in reference to himself, cannot be excused.

Jeremiah 38:27

27. Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him: and he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded. So they left off speaking with him; for the matter was not perceived.

27. Et venerunt cuncti proceres ad Jeremiam, et interrogarunt ipsum; et annuntiavit illis (hoc est, narravit illis) secundum sermones istos, quemadmodum praeceperat rex, et siluerunt ab eo, quia sermo non fuit auditus.

Here, indeed, the Prophet confesses that he did as the king had commanded him; but he does not commend what he had done. There is no doubt but that on the one hand he placed before his eyes the timidity of the king, who, being forgetful of plain dealing, slavishly feared his own counselors; and that., on the other hand, he manifested that he was not sufficiently discreet, for when the princes came, even if he wished not to deceive them, he yet concealed the main thing, and said that he went to the king to pray for his own life, which was not true. Though then what he said was in part true, that he prayed not. to be sent back to prison, yet he could not by this evasion be wholly exempted from blame.

In short, we see that even God's servants have sometimes spoken evasively, when oppressed with extreme fear; and thus we are reminded to seek of God magnanimity of mind and resolute firmness; for he alone can strengthen and sustain us when we are terrified by any fear of danger.

He says, that he did as the king had commanded him; but he ought rather to have hearkened to God's word, in which simplicity is enjoined. It is also said, that the princes were silent, that is, departed in silence; for no one had been a witness to the conference, and the matter had not spread farther; for the king was silent through fear, and the Prophet also had not made known the secret interview. Hence it was that the princes departed, and thought that the matter was as represented. In short, Jeremiah intimates that they were deceived by this pretext. It follows at last,

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Jeremiah 38:28

28. So Jeremiah abode in the court of the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken: and he was there when Jerusalem was taken.

28. Et habitavit Jeremias in atrio custodiae, usque ad diem quo capta fuit

Jerusalem; et accidit secundum quod capta fuit Jerusalem.

Some render the last words simply thus, ``And it happened that Jerusalem was taken;'' and others, ``It happened accordingly that Jerusalem was taken;'' but this seems unnatural. Others take the relative as a demonstrative pronoun, and of this I approve, ``For it happened that according to this Jerusalem was taken.''

He first says that he dwelt in the court of the prison. It hence appears that he was not even then at liberty; for though the king wished him to be free, yet he dared not to release him. This is one thing. Then he says, that he was there until the day the city was taken We shall hereafter see that he was saved by the king's command, and was brought out of prison. He was, then, until that day in the court of the prison, as though he had said, that he was a prisoner until the king was taken prisoner, together with his counselors, and also until the day the whole city was taken. And here we may see, as in a vivid form, the wonderful judgment of God. As long as the Jews boasted that they offered sacrifices to God, they kept Jeremiah shut up in prison, so that he was not a free man until the king was taken, the city perished, and almost all were driven into exile. I have no doubt but that he added the following by way of explanation, And it happened that according to this Jerusalem was taken; that is, he reminds readers in these words, that he had not been a false Prophet, but a true and faithful witness as to God's judgment, for all his prophecies were verified by the event. [342] He then says that the city was taken, not by chance, but because God had so declared. He now begins to narrate historically the destruction and the burning of the city. He therefore says, ---

[342] These words are left out in the Sept. and the Syriac. The Vulgate, and the Targum. give this version, “And it came to pass that Jerusalem was taken;” which seems not in this connection to have any meaning. Some connect them with the following chapter, but improperly. Our version, followed by Blayney, gives the best sense, “And he was there (that is, in the court of the prison) when Jerusalem was taken:“ He was there not only to the day or time of its capture, but during that time. This was added to shew that he was not released by the Jews, but by those who took the city. — Ed.

Jeremiah 39

CHAPTER 39

Jeremiah 39:1-2

1. In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it.

1. Anno nono Zedechiae regis Jehudah, mense decimo venit Nebuchadnezer rex Babylonis et totus exercitus ejus Jerosolymam, et obsiderunt eam.

2 And in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, the city was broken up.

2. In undecimo anno Zedechiae, mense quarto, nona mensis, disrupta fuit urbs.

Jeremiah seems here indeed to undertake the office of an historian rather than that of a Prophet; but he seals his previous prophecies, and at the same time shews that he had brought forward nothing rashly or thoughtlessly. There is, then, here a proof of all his former doctrine; he brings before us the reality, and shews that whatever he had predicted was accomplished by God's hand, and in a manner almost incredible. We now understand what this chapter contains.

he says that King Nebuchadnezzar came, though he soon departed from the siege, for, as we shall presently see, he went to Riblah, which, as some think, was the Antioch of Syria; but of this we shall speak in its proper place. When, therefore, the king came with his army, he soon departed, and his purpose was to live at leisure, and in the enjoyment of pleasures as long as the city was besieged, he was not disposed to undertake the trouble and weariness of a long warfare; but yet, in order to spread more terror, he came himself to the City and gave instructions to his army.

We must notice the time: he came in the ninth year, in the tenth month, that is about the end of the year. Zedekiah, no doubt, entertained a good hope, though reports were flying as to the coming of the Chaldean army; for the king had not so soon prepared for the war as he ought to have done. he thought that his revolt from

the king of Babylon would be passed by unpunished. But the Prophet here reminds us that it was a false confidence; for though God spared him for a time and suspended his judgment, he yet at length punished the impiety of his revolt, to which was also added ingratitude, as it has been before stated. Thus much as to the ninth year and the tenth month

It then follows, In the eleventh year, in the fourth month, the city was broken up We hence see that the city was besieged for a year and half; for there was the whole of the tenth year, and then added must be two months of the ninth year and four months of the eleventh year; and thus a year and half was the whole time. Here also we must remember how much the Jews must have suffered; for were a city at this day to bear a siege for a few months, it would appear a rare instance of valor; but Jerusalem was besieged for a year and half. Let us now consider what number of people must have been there, and we have seen that the Prophet threatened them with famine. And how much scarcity there was in the city, the Prophet has not only testified elsewhere, but in the book of Lamentations he has shewed most fully. (Lamentations 4:10.) And there was not only famine, but it was followed by pestilence. We hence learn how ferocious must have been the character of the king, that he could see miserable men perishing by scores, and yet persist in his obstinacy. Nor is there a doubt but that the people were also on their part obstinate, and became at length stupefied through their sufferings; for there was hardly one, from the least to the greatest, who did not despise what the Prophet taught; and thus they were all blinded by madness and stupidity.

It ought to be noticed that they bore a siege for a year and six months, and that they were not even then persuaded to surrender themselves, until the city was broken up, that is, until the walls were beaten down by battering-rams and other warlike engines; for the city was broken when the wall, beaten by the engines, fell down. In short, the city was gained by storm; this is what is meant, and will hereafter be more fully expressed. But I cannot proceed further now.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are surrounded by so many dangers, and bring on ourselves daily, through our sins, so many miseries, --- O grant, that we may at least yield to thy threatenings, and learn in due time to seek thy favor and to anticipate thy judgment, and so to humble ourselves under thy mighty hand, that we may find thee propitious to us miserable sinners, who flee to thy mercy, until, having at length been freed from all our sins, we shall appear before thy tribunal, and there receive the reward of our faith, even that blessed immortality, which thine only-begotten Son, our Lord, has procured for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifty-First

Jeremiah 39:3-4

3. And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, even Nergalsharezer, Samgarnebo, Sarsechim, Rabsaris, Nergalsharezer, Rabmag, with all the residue of the princes of the king of Babylon.

3. Et ingressi sunt omnes duces regis Babylonis, et sederunt in porta media, Neregal, Sarezer, Samegar, Nebusarzechin Rabsaris, Neregal, Sarezer, Rabmag, et

residuum ducum (hoc est, et alii duces) regis Babylonis.

4. And it came to pass, that when Zedekiah the king of Judah saw them, and all the men of war, then they fled, and went forth out of the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls: and he went out the way of the plain.

4. Et factum est cum vidisset eos Zedechias rex Jehudah, et omnes viri militares, tunc aufugerunt, et egressi sunt ex urbe noctu per viam horti regis ad portam inter duos muros, et egressus est per viam deserti.

IT is proved here that the prophecy of Jeremiah was fulfilled; so that it became really evident that he had not spoken unadvisedly, but from the mouth of God. And thus was fulfilled also what is said as a common proverb, that fools become wise too late; for they never obey good and wise counsels while they may, but at length they are made to know by their own miseries and their teacher, experience, that what they despised is true, but without any benefit. This happened to Zedekiah, who had been often exhorted by the Prophet to surrender himself to King Nebuchadnezzar. As, then, he had obstinately refused the yoke, he was at length constrained to reap the fruit of his obstinacy.

Now Jeremiah says, that the princes of King Nebuchadnezzar, that is, those he had set over his forces, entered the city, the wall being broken down, and sat in the middle gate; for it was necessary for them to be wary, lest there should be ambushes; and even conquerors do not immediately penetrate into every part when a city is taken, but search whether all the places be free from enemies. This then was done by the leaders of the army, for they stood in the middle gate, that they might exercise authority over the city, and yet be safe from all ambushes. Jeremiah mentions some of them by name, but it is uncertain whether he adds a surname to some of them. But as this is doubtful and is of no great moment, it is enough for us that the chief of the leaders are named, in order to accredit the narrative.

he then adds, After Zedekiah saw them, etc.; not that he came to that part, but after he understood that that part of the city was occupied by the enemies; for matters then had come to an extremity. Then he fled with his men of war. And here is set before us a sad spectacle: men in no way trained up for war were left in the city, women also and children were left there, while the men of war fled, inasmuch as their condition was worse, because they had delayed the taking of the city. It was then according to what is commonly done, that they fled. We yet see that ungodly men, after having long despised heavenly truth, flee in time of danger, and are so filled with terror, that they cast themselves headlong into many perils. This is a just reward to those who are not terrified by the threatenings of God, but become so hardened, that they too late acknowledge that they ought to have feared; and being, as it were, stunned, they see not what is expedient, and cannot follow any fixed course.

The Prophet adds, that they fled in the night, and that they went out by the way of the king's garden, and lastly, that they came to the gate which was between the two walls There is in this passage nothing superfluous; for he meant to shew us, that though the king thought that he could escape from the hands of his enemies, he

was yet taken, as God had predicted. For, if after the city was taken, he had come as a suppliant, of his own accord, he might probably have obtained mercy; and this counsel, we know, was given while the state of things was not yet desperate; but he put no faith in God's word. In the meantime he thought that he could disappoint his enemies, if he quickly fled through some secret way. Some think that there was a subterranean passage, which had a door in the middle of the garden, and had also an egress at the other end in the plain of Jericho, as we shall hereafter see. And that region was barren, and therefore solitary. Hence the king entertained confidence; but he found, at length, how certain was prophetic truth; for it is said afterwards, that the Chaldeans followed and took him. But this circumstance, as I have said, ought to be carefully observed, that the king, as the Prophet tells us, fled. through a secret way, during the darkness of the night, and escaped. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 39:5

5. But the Chaldeans' army pursued after them, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho: and when they had taken him, they brought him up to Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath, where he gave judgment upon him.

5. Et persecuti sunt exercitus Chaldaeorum ipsos, et apprehenderunt Zedechiam in desertis Jericho (alii vertunt, in planicie, et fuit planicies; coeterum ut dixi, inculta, et squalida et vacua etiam incolis;) et tulerunt ipsum, et adduxerunt ad Nebuchadnezer regem Babylonis Riblathah (urbem) in terra Chemath, qui locutus est cum ipso judicia.

The Chaldeans pursued the fugitive king, no doubt, through a hidden impulse from above. It is, indeed, probable that he was betrayed by his own people; and this often happens in a disturbed state of things; but however, he might have escaped, had he not been given up by the hand of God. These things are therefore narrated, that we may know that the ungodly, by their evasions, gain no other thing than really to acknowledge that God is true ill his threatenings as well as in his promises. They believe not his word, it is therefore necessary that they should be convinced by actual experience. Zedekiah then is here set before us as an example, so that we may know that as soon as God announces any calamity, we ought to tremble and to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, for he holds us on every side completely shut up, so that if hiding places and refuges be open before us, they can yet avail us nothing.

The Prophet then tells us, that he was taken in the deserts of Jericho This circumstance also is important, for he had gone forth beyond the sight of men, even into solitude; for that plain was not so fruitful as to support many inhabitants, but it was as it were a desert. It is then a wonder how the Chaldeans found him in that solitude, but they had God, as it were, as their guide. Hence then it was, that Zedekiah fell into the hands of the Chaldean army. The Prophet adds, that they brought him into Riblah, which is thought to have been Antioch. It is also called Hemath; but this name designated the country and not the city. And yet in Amos 6:2, it means the city, when it is said,

``Go to Calneh, go to Hemath the great.''

But it may be, that the dignity of the city was the reason why the country was so called; and no doubt Pliny, in his fifth book, calls that part of Syria Antiochean; and as to what he says shortly before, that Antioch was that part of Syria toward Cilicia, that place seems to me to have been corrupted. I rather read thus, that it was a part of Syria, for, as I have said, he calls it Antiochean. And it was not unsuitable that the city should be called Hemath and Riblah, and that the name of the city should be given to the country. Interpreters indeed agree, that Riblah was Antioch. Jerome says, that in his day, the first station towards Chaldea still retained its ancient name, though, by changing some letters, they called it Emmaus. But he doubts not but it was Antioch, which was formerly called Epidaphne, and had also the name of Hemath. There then Zedekiah was brought to Nebuchadnezzar, who spoke judgments with him, that is, who brought him as a criminal before his tribunal, that he might pronounce sentence upon him; for to speak judgments means the same as to minister justice or to pass judgment.

Now this was very inconsistent with royal dignity, for though, as a conqueror, he was angry with his enemy, he might yet have been content with his death alone. Kings are not wont to deal in this way with kings, for they respect themselves, and are not disposed to degrade royal dignity. But Jeremiah says, that Zedekiah was by no means dealt with royally; for he was constrained to plead guilty, and was condemned by a solemn sentence. Then to speak judgments is the same as what we call in French former proces criminel. And this indignity increased the weight of his calamity and his punishment; for Zedekiah not only had to bear many reproaches, while the king of Babylon expostu-lated with him, but he was also brought to judgment, so that punishment, according to the common practice, was allotted to him. For Nebuchadnezzar had made him king, and imposed tribute on him. He therefore condemned him as guilty of perfidy and perjury. This is the degradation which the Prophet points out, when he says, that he spoke judgments with him, or acted towards him judicially; and he repeats the same expression in the last chapter. It follows ---

Jeremiah 39:6

6. Then the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah in Riblah before his eyes: also the king of Babylon slew all the nobles of Judah.

6. Et occidit rex Babylonis filios Zedechiae in Riblathah coram oculis ejus; et omnes nobiles Jehudah occidit rex Babylonis.

It is probable that Nebuchadnezzar continued in that pleasant city while Jerusalem was attacked, for he would not endure the weariness of a long siege, and he also wished to be far away from danger. It was enough for him that his generals, of whom mention is made, fought under his banner. Nebuchadnezzar then was beyond the reach of danger, and yet he filled the Jews with terror, because he did not return home, or to the principal seat of government, but remained in the neighborhood; for the Antioch of Syria was not far from Judea.

The Prophet now tells us how cruelly Nebuchadnezzar acted towards Zedekiah. It was surely a sad spectacle to see a king, who had been before in repute, who was of a noble family, who was a type of Christ, lying prostrate at the feet of a proud

conqueror. But much more bitter to him than this, was to see his own sons killed before his eyes. It would have been better for him to die a hundred times than to be compelled to witness that slaughter. He was, however, compelled to do so. And then, that all hope might be cut off, all those who excelled in dignity and power were slain. For under the name princes, Jeremiah generally in-eluded the chief men; so that all who had any name among the people were killed. It was a horrible carnage! not only the king's sons were slain, but all who were capable of restoring the city and the land to a better condition. Thus Nebuchadnezzar wished to take away every hope, by putting to death the royal family and all the nobles. It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 39:7

7. Moreover he put out Zedekiah's eyes, and bound him with chains, to carry him to Babylon.

7. Et oculos Zedechiae excaecavit, et vinxit eum cathenis (in duali numero, duabus cathenis,) ut adduceret ipsum Babylonem.

Here was an accumulation of misery: the king had his eyes pulled out, [343] after having been a spectator of the slaughter of his own sons! He then saw heaped together the dead bodies of his own offspring and of all his nobles. After that slaughter he was made blind. His life was, no doubt, prolonged to him, that he might die, as it were, by little and little, according to what a notorious tyrant has said. And thus Nebuchadnezzar intended to kill him a hundred and a thousand times, and not at once to put him to death, for death removes man from all the miseries of the present life. That Zedekiah remained alive, was then a much harder condition.

And this has been recorded that we may know, that as he had been so long obstinate against God, the punishment inflicted on him was long protracted; for he had not sinned through levity or want of thought, or some hidden impulse, but hardened himself against every truth and all counsels. It was therefore just that he should die by little and little, and not be killed at once. This was the reason why the king of Babylon pulled out his eyes.

The Prophet says in the last place, that he was bound with chains, and that he was in this miserable condition led into Babylon This reproach was an addition to his blindness: he was bound with chains as a criminal. It would have been better for him to have been taken immediately to the gallows, or to have been put to death in any way; but it was the design of Nebuchadnezzar, that he should lead a miserable life in this degraded state, and be a public example of what perfidy deserved. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 39:8

8. And the Chaldeans burned the king's house, and the houses of the people, with fire, and brake down the walls of Jerusalem.

8. Et domum regis et domum populi combusserunt Chaldaei igni, et muros Jerusalem diruerunt.

[343] The pulling out of his eyes is derived from the Vulg.; the other versions and the Targum. express literally the Hebrew, "And he blinded the eyes of Zedekiah." And the custom was to hold before them red-hot iron. It seems also that they practiced in the East the horrible custom of pulling out the eyes. But to blind the eyes must have been a different form of barbarity. — Ed.

Here also the Prophet shews that whatever he had predicted was fulfilled, so that nothing was wanting to render faith sure and fixed. He had said, as we have seen, that if Zedekiah surrendered himself of his own accord, the houses in the city would not be burnt. Zedekiah thought this all vain, or at least he closed up his ears. He now heard, though he was blind, that God had declared nothing in vain by the mouth of Jeremiah; for his palace was burnt, and also all the other houses.

He put {בית}, bith, in the second clause, the singular for the plural; and so there is here an enallage, for it was not only one house of the people that was burnt, but the fire consumed all the houses. We at last come to the walls, which were beaten down; and thus the city was destroyed as Jeremiah had predicted. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 39:9

9. Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive into Babylon the remnant of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to him, with the rest of the people that remained.

9. Residuum vero populi qui superstites erant in urbe, et elapsos (hoc est, defectores,) qui defecerant ad ipsum (nempe, ad Nebuchadnezer,) et residuum populi qui relicti fuerant (qui fuerant superstites, idem nomen repetitur) transtulit Nabuzardan princeps interfectorum Babylonem.

The Prophet now relates also what happened to others, even those who remained in the city, and whom Nebuchadnezzar and his army had spared: he says that they were brought to Babylon. There were those who had fled and went over to the Chaldeans before the city was taken; for we have seen that so great was the despair of many, that they revolted, and those were they whom Zedekiah chiefly feared, lest he should be, as we have seen, an object of mockery to them, had he gone to the Chaldeans and made a willing surrender. Jeremiah now says that those also were led into Chaldea. Nebuchadnezzar might have removed them on this account, because he could not confide in traitors. He had found out their inconstancy, for they had revolted from their own real and legitimate king. As then they had. thus once violated their faith, he could not but regard them with suspicion, and therefore removed them, lest they should afterwards attempt something new, and create disturbance; or, it may be, that it was done according to their request, because they feared lest, after the departure of the Chal-deans, the common people should rage against them, as they had helped the enemies, and thus had become perfidious and ungrateful towards their own country. It might then be, that they themselves had made this request, and that it was granted them: they might then live quietly in a far country, but they could not be safe in Judea. However, whatever may have been the reason, Jeremiah tells us, that they were led with the rest into Babylon and Chaldea.

he afterwards names the head or general of the army, even Nebuzaradan, whom he calls the prince of the killers, or of the cooks. The Greek translators have rendered it {ἀρχιμάγειρον}, the prince of the cooks, who at this day is called Grand Master in the courts of princes. But their opinion is more probable, who render the words, the prince of the killers. The verb {טבח}, thebech, means to slay, to kill, and to kill men as well as to slay beasts; and for this reason some have applied it to cookery. But as Nebuzaradan is mentioned here as the chief among military men, the probability is

that he was the judge of all capital offenses in the army. [344] Hence Jeremiah names him when he says that they were removed who remained in the city.

But there seems to be here an unnecessary repetition, as he mentions twice, the rest of the people which remained There is, however, a difference, for in the first clause he says, in the city He then means those who had been besieged, and whom Nebuchadnezzar had pardoned so as not to put them to death. The last clause embraces more, even all the inhabitants of the land; for there were many scattered abroad, on whom Nebuchadnezzar might have vented his rage, but he removed them as slaves into Chaldea. Then our Prophet speaks here of these two parties, for he says that there were some remaining in the city, and that others were remaining, even those who were found scattered through various parts of the country, and had not been besieged by the Chaldean army. He afterwards adds, ---

Jeremiah 39:10

10. But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard left of the poor of the people, which had nothing, in the land of Judah, and gave them vineyards and fields at the same time.

10. Et ex populo pauperes, quibus nihil quicquam erat, reliquos fecit Nabuzardan, princeps interfectorum, in terra Jehudah, et dedit illis vites et agros in die isto.

He now adds, that some were left to inhabit the land, even the poor and those who had nothing He says that these were made, as it were, the lords of the land when the Chal-deans returned into their own country. We here see that poverty is often an advantage, for the nobles, as we have seen, were killed, and many also of the middle class were killed in the siege of the city, and some of them were treated a little more humanely. Still the exiles were miserable, and driven to a distant land without any hope of return. The land was now left to the poor alone; and those who possessed not' a foot of ground before, lived now very comfortably; for they were not so large a number, but that each of them had some extent of land, as we shall hereafter see. While then these miserable men, who before lived very scantily, and perhaps begged their bread, while these remained secure in the land of Judah, the possessors of the land were torn away and driven into exile; and as Nebuzaradan had assigned to each of them vineyards and fields, it hence appears how much better it was for them to have suffered hunger for a time, to have been in an ignoble condition, and to have been trodden as it were under foot by others, than to have lived in pomp and splendor. Thus often God shews his care for us, when he suffers us not to rise high, but keeps us in an obscure and humble condition; and the issue at length proves that he thus had a regard for our salvation.

At the same time there is here set before our eyes a woeful change. The king is led bound in chains, and is also blind; and all the rest having left their own, are driven into exile; and, on the other hand, the poor alone, and needy men who had nothing, dwell at large, as it were, in their own possessions. As, then, they had their quiet habitations and large fields, and enjoyed a land so fertile and rich, there is no doubt

[344] The Vulg. is, "the chief of the soldiers — magister militum;" the Targum., "the prince of the slayers;" the Syriac., "the prince of the attendants, or guards." The best rendering would be, "the chief of the executioners." The guards, the royal attendants, were commonly the executioners. See 1 Samuel 22:17; Mark 6:27. — Ed.

but that Nebuzaradan meant thus to rouse the envy of the exiles; for they saw that needy and worthless men dwelt in that land from which they had been banished. Hence their indignation was increased when they saw that they were more severely and cruelly treated than those lowest of men. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 39:11-12

11. Now Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, saying,

11. Praecepit autem Nabuchad-nezer rex Babylonis de Jeremia per manum Nabuzardan principis interfectorum, dicendo,

12. Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee.

12. Tolle ipsum et oculos tuos pone super eum, et ne facias ei quiequam mali; sed prout loquutus fuerit tecum fac cum eo.

The Prophet now sets forth the paternal care of God, which he had experienced in the preservation of his life and safety. The innocent, we know, are often killed in a tumult, and the storming of cities is turbulent, so that many things are done without any thought; nay, even the leaders are not able to moderate the excesses of the victorious. When, therefore, the Chaldeans burnt the palace, Jeremiah might have perished at the same time, being suffocated by the very smoke of the fire. We know what happened at the taking of Syracuse. Marcellus did not wish that Archimedes should perish, nay, he commanded that he should be preserved; for he wished to save that man on account of his singular industry and noble genius. However, while he was drawing circles on the ground, he was killed by a common soldier. If no one had come to Jeremiah, he might, as I have said, have been buried under the ruins of the palace, when the king's court was burnt down. But he says that he had been wonderfully preserved, for Nebuchadnezzar had given a command respecting him, that he might not be exposed to any trouble, but that Nebuzaradan as well as the whole army should secure his safety.

It is indeed probable that the king of Babylon had heard of Jeremiah; and though he was in prison, yet the Word of God, which he boldly proclaimed, was not bound. Then the report of this might have reached the king of Babylon: and hence it was, that he was disposed to preserve him; for he had given a faithful counsel to Zedekiah. But Nebuchadnezzar no doubt regarded only his own advantage; and hence we ought to bear in mind the wonderful goodness of God in preserving, as it were, by his own hand, the life of the Prophet; so that in extremities no one touched him, but he remained free and quiet, as we shall hereafter see. But we must put off the rest until to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, omnipotent God, that since thou hast once given us so awful a proof of thy wrath in the destruction of that city, which thou didst choose, and in which thou hadst had thy holy habitation, --- O grant, that we may learn so to submit to thee in true humility and obedience, that we may not provoke thy extreme displeasure, but on the contrary anticipate it by real repentance, and that being terrified by thy threatenlugs, we may so submit ourselves to thee as to obtain thy mercy, and thus

to regard thee as a Father, ever propitious to all those who flee to thee through Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifty-Second

Jeremiah 39:13-14

13. So Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard sent, and Nebushasban, Rabsaris, and Nergalsharezer, Rabmag, and all the king of Babylon's princes;

13. Et misit Nabuzardan, princeps interfectorum, et Nebusazban, Rabsaris (diximus quosdam has voces interpretari, quod sit princeps eunuchus, sed aliis magis placere esse proprium nomen, quos ego sequor) et Neregal, Sarezer, Rabmag, et alii principes Regis Babel (Babylonis:)

14. Even they sent, and took Jeremiah out of the court of the prison, and committed him unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, that he should carry him home: so he dwelt among the people.

14 Miserunt (inquam) et tulerunt Jeremiam ex atrio custodiae, et dederunt eum (hoc est, commiserunt eum) Godoliae filio Achikam, filii Saphan, ut deduceret eum domum; et ita habitavit in medio populi.

Here Jeremiah completes what we began yesterday to expound, even that by the command of King Nebuchadnezzar he was delivered from prison. But we have said, that though that heathen king had regard to his own interest, yet his mind was ruled by the secret power of God, who thus designed to rescue his servant from death; for God is wont thus to work even by the ungodly, who have another thing in view. It is not always by a voluntary act that men serve God, for many execute what God has decreed when they have no intention of doing so: and he so turns and drives them here and there, that they are constrained, willing or unwilling, to obey his authority. Thus, then, it was that Nebuchadnezzar liberated Jeremiah.

And yet the Prophet fully believed that he did not owe his life to King Nebuchadnezzar, but that he had been in a wonderful manner preserved by God's favor; and to shew this is the design of the whole narrative.

He says, that the king had sent all-the leaders of the Chaldean army to take him out of the court of the prison, and that he was then delivered to the care of Gedaliah, not that he might be watched as usual, but because the princes knew that the people had entertained hatred towards the holy Prophet, and therefore wished him to be preserved safe from all violence. This then was the reason why they committed him to the keeping of Gedaliah, who, as we shall hereafter see, was in favor with the Chaldeans and highly esteemed.

He adds in the last place, that he dwelt in the midst of the people: by which expression is set forth complete liberty, as we say in our language, aller et venir. He then says that he was in the midst of the people, because he had been before shut up in prison. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 39:15-18

15. Now the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah, while he was shut up in the court of the prison, saying,

15. Ad Jeremiam vero fuit sermo Jehovae, quum adhuc esset clausus in atrio custodiae, dicendo,

16. Go and speak to Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring my words upon this city for evil, and not for good; and they shall be accomplished in that day before thee.

16. Vade et dic Ebedmelech Aethiopi (hoc est, alloquere Ebed-melech, dicendo,) Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Ecce adduco sermones meos super urbem hanc in malum, et non in bonum; et erunt coram facie tua in die illo:

17. But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the LORD: and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of whom thou art afraid.

17. Et eripiam te in die illo, dicit Jehova, et non traderis in manum hominum, a quorum facie tu expavescis (ad verbum est, quos tu expavescis ab eorum facie;)

18. For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in me, saith the LORD.

18. Quia liberando liberabo te, in gladium non cades, et erit tibi anima tua in spolium, quia sperasti in me, dicit Jehova.

The Prophet tells us here that God was not unmindful of that Ethiopian, by whom he had been preserved, though he was an alien and from a barbarous nation. We have seen, however, that he alone undertook the cause of the Prophet, when others, being terrified by fear, did not exert themselves, or were avowedly enemies to God's servant. Ebedmelech then alone dared to go forth in a case so hopeless, and undertook the defense of the holy man. The Prophet says now that this service was so acceptable, that it would not be without its reward. We have said that Ebedmelech had thus manifested his concern for the Prophet's life, but not without evident danger; for he knew that the princes were united against him, and that these ungodly men had drawn to their side the greatest part of the court and also of the common people. Then Ebedmelech roused against himself both high and low; but God aided him, so that he was not overpowered by his adversaries. In his very danger he experienced the favor of God, and was protected and delivered from danger.

But now he finds that he had not ill employed his exertions; for he had not only been humane and merciful towards a mortal man, but had also done service for God; for whatever we do for God's servants, he acknowledges as done to himself, and will have it to be laid to his account, according to what Christ says,

``He who gives a cup of cold water to one of the least of my disciples, shall not lose his reward.'' (Matthew 10:42)

There is then no doubt but that the Spirit of God intended by the example of Ebedmelech to rouse us to the duties of humanity, even to teach us to sue-coup the miserable, and to give them help as far as we can, and not to shun the hatred of men or any dangers, which we may thereby incur. And as we are torpid and negligent in doing good, the reward given to the Ethiopian is set before us, so that we may know, that though nothing is to be hoped from men, when we are kind and liberal, yet we shall not lose our labor, for God is rich enough, who can render to us more than can be expected from the whole world. This then is the lesson conveyed here.

But the circumstances must be noticed: the Prophet says, that he was commanded to promise deliverance to Ebedme-lech, while he was yet confined in prison. This, at the first view, seems strange; for the Prophet might have objected and said,

``Thou biddest me to go forth; why, then, are not the gates of the prison opened for me? and then thou wouldst have me to be the herald of thy favor; but my present miserable condition will prevent any credit to be given to my words: for how can Ebedmelech believe that I have been sent. by thee? for I am here confined and surrounded by many deaths.'' But let us hence learn not to bring down God's word to our judgment, when anything is promised beyond our expectation, and all our conceptions. Though, indeed, God seemed, as it were, to mock his servant, when he ordered him, a prisoner, to go to Ebedmelech; and yet the Prophet received and embraced this command, and performed it, no doubt, though this is not expressly mentioned.

This is the reason why he says, that a word came to him from Jehovah, while he was in the court of the prison

The word Ethiopian is now repeated, because God intended, in the person of an alien indirectly to reprove the Jews; for no doubt they despised him, because he was not of the holy seed of Abraham. But God shews that he peculiarly regarded him, while he rejected the masked and hypocritical children of Abraham, who were only born of him according to the flesh, but had, by their impiety, renounced him, so that they were wholly unworthy of so high an honor.

And he says, Go and say, Behold, I am bringing my words on this city for evil and not for good; and they shall be before thee in that day. We conclude, from these words, that this was spoken to Ebedmelech before the city was taken by the Chaldeans, in order that he might remain quietly at home, and not flee away with the king, who, as we have seen, tried to escape. God then intended to strengthen the confidence of Ebedmelech, so that he might not fear and tremble like others, and expose himself to death, in trying to secure his safety. For this is the design of all God's promises, even to keep us from being disturbed, to give us quietness of mind, and to cause us to look for the help promised to us. For we know that when fear lays hold on our minds, there is no settled purpose, but we are harassed by disquietude, and, as it were, tossed to and fro. It was therefore God's design to bring aid beforehand, so that Ebedmelech might not, with others, be hurried into despair. He says, Behold, I am bringing, etc. God here confirms Ebedmelech in the truth, that he would be the author of the calamity; for had Jerusalem been taken by chance, Ebedmelech might justly have feared; but when he was taught that it was to happen through God's just judgment he would feel sure of his safety; for it would be in the power of the same God to save one man and even many, while he was destroying the whole people. This, then, is the reason why God declared that he was bringing his words for evil and not for good; for except Ebedmelech had been convinced that the city and its inhabitants were in God's hand and power, he could never have been led to entertain good hope; but when he knew that the city would perish through the righteous vengeance of God, he would then be fully confident as to his own safety; for God promised to preserve him in the midst of the common ruin.

He says, Thou shalt see, my words shall be before thee, as though he had said, ``Thou shalt be an eye-witness of my power.'' It was indeed necessary, as I have said, that Ebedmelech should see God's hand in the destruction of the city and people; for

he would ever have vacillated, and would have known no rest, had he not before his eyes the hand and the vengeance of God, This is one thing. But as to the words, I am bringing my words for evil and not for good, we have explained them elsewhere. The word evil does not mean sin here, but according to a common usage, evil is said to be whatever men regard as adverse to them; so all punishments inflicted by God are called evils, as we find in Isaiah,

``I am God, who create light and darkness, life and death,
good and evil.'' (Isaiah 45:7)

He then adds, But I will deliver thee in that day, and thou shalt not be given up into the hand of the men whose face thou fearest Here God promises that Ebedmelech would be saved through a special privilege; and the Prophet shews that this prophecy had not been without reason announced. For though Ebedmelech had, with an intrepid mind, undertaken the cause of Jeremiah, and boldly and perseveringly fronted all reproaches, he yet was not divested of all the feelings of nature, but he had his fears, especially when he saw the cause of fear set before him. Hence the Prophet says, that he feared the face of enemies: and this might, at the same time, avail to rouse him to receive with more alacrity, the promise offered to him; for we know that the blessings of God are, in a manner, deemed of no value by us, when we do not know how necessary to us they are. The prophecies and the promises, by which God comforts us and animates us to patience, are for the most part viewed as of no worth, until God really shews to us how miserable we must be, except he thus succors us. Then the Prophet wished to remind Ebedmelech of this, when he said that he feared. Thou fearest, he says. For if Ebedmelech had no fear, he might have disregarded this prophecy as being superfluous. But being reminded of his fear and anxiety, he became more ready to receive what God promised to him.

Then he says, that he would be safe, because the Lord would deliver him in that day And, again, he confirms the same thing, For delivering I will deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword The Prophet again calls the attention of Ebedmelech to God himself; for we know how all things are in a confusion when cities are taken by storm. Except then Ebedmelech had his mind fixed on God, he could never have retained any hope of deliverance. Hence the Prophet assures him again, that God would be his deliverer. And he adds, Thy soul shall be for a prey This mode of expression has been elsewhere explained. The comparison is taken from those who deem that a great gain which is yet but small, if they get it beyond their expectation, as when a man finds a prey which he had by no means hoped for: he becomes suddenly rich, or increased in his goods; and though the gain may not be great, he yet greatly rejoices. So they who escape alive from present death, have no small reason to be joyful, because their life has been preserved. In the meantime God alludes to those who regard it enough to escape from death, though they may be deprived of all other things. As those who, in shipwreck, cast forth their mer-chandize, and their money, and all they have, deem it enough if they can reach the harbor, and they prefer to beg their bread all their life rather than to sink in the midst of the sea, so he who escapes with his life; though poverty is bitter, yet the horror of death is so great, that he deems his life a great, gain, though stripped of all that he had.

The reason follows, because he trusted in God. Another reason might have been assigned, even because he had not been wanting in his kindness to a holy man, but had extended his hand to him in his extreme misery; but as that office of humanity proceeded from faith and piety, God does here express the chief cause. As then the mercy which Ebedmelech exercised towards the Prophet was an evidence of his piety and faith, here is found the fruit in its own tree, or in its root: and certain it is, that Ebedmelech would have never been so humane towards the Prophet, had he not relied on God and his aid; for unbelief is always timid. There is then no doubt but that the vigor which appeared in Ebedmelech, when he regarded his life in bringing aid to the Prophet, made manifest that faith which is now commended: because then thou hast trusted in me, therefore delivering I will deliver thee, says God. There is now then no doubt but that Ebedmelech had some of the elements of faith and piety. If then God has allowed us to make farther progress, we may feel the more assured that he will be our deliverer; for his grace and his power will ever exceed our faith, how much so ever it may be. Now follows ---

Jeremiah 40

CHAPTER 40

Jeremiah 40:1-4

1. The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD, after that Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had let him go from Ramah, when he had taken him being bound in chains among all that were carried away captive of Jerusalem and Judah, which were carried away captive unto Babylon.

1. Sermo qui fuit ad Jeremiam a Jehova, postquam dimisit eum Nabuzardan, princeps interfectorum, e Ramah, quum sustulisset ipsum: et ipse vinctus erat cathenis (vel, manicis,) in medio captivitatis (hoc est, multitudinis captivae) Jerusalem et Jehudah, qui transferebantur Babylonem.

2. And the captain of the guard took Jeremiah, and said unto him, The LORD thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place.

2. Et sumpsit princeps interfectorum Jeremiam, et dixit ad eum, Jehova Deus tuus loquutus est malum hoc super locum hunc;

3. Now the LORD hath brought it, and done according as he hath said: because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed his voice, therefore this thing is come upon you.

3. Et adduxit et fecit Jehova sicut loquutus fuerat, quia peccastis Jehovae, et non audiistis vocem ejus; et fuit vobis res haec (hoc est, accidit vobis haec res.)

4. And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thine hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come; and I will look well unto thee: but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold, all the land is before thee: whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go.

4. Et tu ecce (hoc est, quantum ad te,) ego ecce solvi te hodie a manicis (vel, cathenis, sed potius, a manicis, quoniam addit) quae erant super manus tuas (ideo perperam alii, vertunt, compedes, quia non ligantur compedibus;) si bonum in oculis

tuis fecerit, ut venias (hoc est, si tibi placuerit venire) Babylonem, venias; ego autem ponam oculum meum super te; si autem malum in oculis tuis fuerit, ut venias Babylonem, desine (cessa, vel, supersedeas:) ecce tota regio coram facie tua est, ad bonum et rectum in oculis tuis, ad proficiscendum (hoc est, quod fuerit bonum et rectum in oculis tuis,) ut illic eas, eas.

Here Jeremiah pursues more at large what he had briefly touched upon before; for the Hebrews were wont, in a few words, to state the substance of the whole, and then to explain more diffusely what, they had briefly said. Jeremiah had before told us that some of the Babylonian generals had been sent to release him from prison; and he added that he had been committed to the care of Gedaliah, who had been set over the poor of the land. He now tells us, that he, as yet bound with chains, had been brought forth to Ramah in that miserable condition. These things appear inconsistent, but, as I have said, we must bear in mind, that there is an omission in that summary, which we have noticed. For, in the first instance, Jeremiah only said, that he had been freed from his chains; but he now states the manner more distinctly, and, as it were, the different parts of the transaction. Then this order ought to be especially noticed.

Moreover, this chapter so begins, that he seems throughout the chapter to have forgotten the introduction. He says, that a word came to him; he afterwards declares historically, how he had been brought to Ramah, and then that he had been released there, and also that Gedaliah was set over the remainder of the people: in short, there is not in this long' passage any mention made of any prophecy; but there is inserted a whole historical narrative before the Prophet expresses what God had committed to him, after the city was taken, and after he had been restored to his former liberty. When, therefore, he says here, that a word came to him, we must wait until he has completed what we find in this chapter; for he will then return to this prophecy.

Let us now consider the words. After Nebuzaradan, he says, dismissed him from Ramah, etc.; into which place he had been brought by the guards, when he was as yet bound with chains. There is then no doubt but that the leaders of the army had ordered Jeremiah to be brought there, after he was taken out of the court of the prison, and that he was brought there in the presence of all the people; for it is probable also that all the Jews, who were to be led into exile, were brought there too, and that they were there mustered, that none might escape, for they would have slipped off here and there, had they not been delivered to guards. When, therefore, all the captives were there, Nebuzaradan ordered Jeremiah to be brought forth, not for the sake of degrading him, for, as we have seen, the king had been solicitous about his life; and no doubt this coutier wished to gratify his king in every way: but it was, on the contrary, for the purpose of an indirect reproof to all the people, as though he would honor the servant of God, who had so faithfully warned them, and for so long a time, even above forty years, and would set before them their wickedness, and also their ingratitude, for having so cruelly treated God's servant.

This then was the reason why Nebuzaradan wished Jeremiah to come bound with chains, and to be released in the presence of all the people; it was that the Jews might

at length be ashamed of their pride and impiety against God, and of their ingratitude towards the holy Prophet. Nebu-zaradan then did not treat Jeremiah reproachfully; but he brought him forth in chains, that he might publicly expose the wickedness of the whole nation.

He says, that an option was given him by Nebuzaradan; so that if he wished, he might remain in his own country, and choose the best place for himself, and the situation which was most agreeable to him; but if he chose rather to go to Babylon, there he might go. This, certainly, was a liberal offer. The Prophet was not only freed from prison and loosed from His chains; but liberty was so given him, that he alone was free, while the whole nation was reduced to bondage. For they who remained had no liberty to go elsewhere. But Nebuzaradan gave here a free option to Jeremime, so that he was at liberty either to live in Chaldea, or to remain in any place he wished, or in any part of the earth.

But before he says this, he administers reproof to the people, and says, Jehovah thy God hath spoken evil on this city; and he hath brought it, and made it to come. Here Nebuzar-adan undertook the prophetic office, and spoke in high terms of God's righteous vengeance on the people. There is no doubt but that God had raised up such a teacher to the Jews; for they had for forty years and more obstinately rejected celestial truth. God had not ceased kindly to invite them to repentance, and to promise them pardon and salvation, provided they repented. As then God had not ceased for so long a time, and continually to address them according to his paternal goodness, and at the same time had spoken to the deaf, they deserved to hear such a preacher as Nebuzaradan, who now contumeliously upbraided them, that they had brought this evil on themselves, because they had been disobedient and rebellious against God, as they had not obeyed his word.

There is here a remarkable example set before us, so that we may learn, that when God addresses us by his servants, we ought immediately to render obedience to him; let us learn to fear when he threatens us, and learn to entertain hope when he offers his favor to us. For if we reject the Prophets when they are sent to us, other teachers will arise, who will deride us, and though they may be themselves ungodly, they will yet upbraid us with our impiety. This then is the doctrine we ought to gather from this passage, in which we see that Nebuzaradan, as though gifted with the prophetic spirit, severely rebuked the people. He, indeed, addressed Jeremiah, and seems to have included him with the people, when he said, Thy God hath spoken --- because ye have sinned and have been rebellious. But Nebuzaradan, no doubt, thus highly commended the faithfulness of Jeremiah, because he had been true and faithful in his vocation and office, he then did not make him as one of the people, nor did he mean that he had sinned with others, or had been rebellious against God. But, in the first, place, he addressed Jeremiah, Thy God, he said; and this was expressed by way of honor, even that God was the God of Jeremiah; for though the people boasted that they were holy, yet Nebuzaradan here indirectly condemned their foolish boastings, since he inti-mated that Jeremiah alone was worthy of being deemed one of God's servants, as though he had said, that the Jews were unworthy of the honor of glorying in God's name, or of professing it: Thy God then hath spoken The rest tomorrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast promised that we shall be to thee as the apple of the eye, --- O grant, that we may ever flee under the shadow of thy mercy, and that this alone may be our tranquillity in times of confusion and misery: and may we, at the same time, recumb in confidence on thy help, that we may, in sincerity, perform what thou commandest us, and that which is our duty to do, so that we may, by experience, find, that all they who obey thy voice are really sustained by thine hand, and that those are never disappointed who look for the certain reward of their obedience from thee; and may we carry on the warfare so perseveringly in this life, that we may know that there is a reward laid up for us in heaven, when Christ thine only-begotten Son shall appear. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifty-Third

WE began yesterday to explain the words of Nebuzaradan which he spoke before all the Jews. We have said that though he directed his words to Jeremiah, yet what he said referred to the whole people; for he spoke in praise of Jeremiah, and subscribed to his prophecies: he hence concluded that the people deserved their extreme punishment. He says that God had spoken, not that he had faith in the words of Jeremiah, but as far as he saw, that they were serviceable to his purpose. He-gladly laid hold on what he approved, as ungodly men do, who embrace what is useful for them in God's Law and the Prophets, though they do not regard them with much reverence; and yet they pretend a great concern for religion. Such was the case with Nebu-zaradan; when he had got the victory over the Jews, he boasted that he was the minister of God; Jehovah, he says, has spoken, as though he had said, that the Jews suffered such punishment as they deserved, because God had long before declared that he would punish them.

And then he adds, that God had done as he had spoken, because they had sinned and hearkened not to his voice He was nothing better; but as I have already said, he boldly reproved others. And this is a common thing with hypocrites and all despisers of God; they are judges in another's cause, but look not, as one has said, on the other side of the wallet. Thus all are keen and ready enough to condemn others; and of this we have an example here in Nebuzaradan, for, as though he was the lawful judge of the people, he declared that the destruction of the city and Temple had not happened by chance, but that it was a just punishment inflicted by God on the wicked, because they had obstinately rejected the prophetic doctrine, and had been intractable and disobedient.

Nor is there indeed a doubt, as we hinted yesterday, but that God, in order to expose the Jews to greater shame, raised up for them this prophet; for when Jeremiah addressed them, and that for their safety, while yet there was time to repent, they had perversely rejected that favor of God. They then deserved to be addressed with no benefit by a foreign teacher, who exulted over them, as this unbelieving heathen did in the present instance.

As to the option given to Jeremiah, we said yesterday that it was openly made in the presence of the Jews, in order that Nebuzaradan might wound them the more. But at the same time it was God's purpose to make the perseverance of his servant

an example, as we shall hereafter see. Let us now proceed, ---

Jeremiah 40:5

5. Now while he was not yet gone back, he said, Go back also to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people: or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go.

5. Adhuc autem non reversus erat (hoc per parenthesin legendum est) et revertere ad Godoliam filium Achikam filii Saphan, quem praefecit rex Babylonis urbibus Jehudah, et habita cum eo in medio populi, vel ad quemcunque locum qui visus erit in oculis tuis ad proficiscendum illuc proficiscere; et dedit illi princeps interfectorum cibum et munus (est enallage numeri, munera) et demisit eum.

Jeremiah goes on with the same discourse, that Nebuzar-adan dealt bountifully with him, and permitted him to go wherever he wished. We hence conclude that Nebuchadnezzar was fully convinced of the honesty and uprightness of Jeremiah. For he knew how he was regarded among his own people, and that he might rouse great disturbances, except he was upright and quiet. As, then, Nebuchadnezzar had no doubt respecting' the character of Jeremiah, he wished to grant him free liberty to choose his own habitation in any city he pleased, or to remove wherever it seemed good to him. Invitation was given him to go to Babylon, and a promise of favor was added; but it was further permitted to him to remain in his own country.

I have said that this was done according to the divine purpose, that the Prophet might give a proof of his religion. For if he had gone to Chaldea, it might have been that the confidence of many would have failed them, and that faith in the promises would have vanished: for they might have thought it a sign of hopeless despair, had the Prophet gone there. That he might not then disturb weak minds, he thought it his duty to remain in his own country. And hence God inclined the mind of Nebuchadnezzar and the minds of his leaders to grant liberty to the holy Prophet to remain in Judea, as though for the purpose of raising a standard for the captives, and of accomplishing their return after seventy years. We shall, however, see presently that he was led away elsewhere; but that in no degree frustrated his prophecies, because violent men led him away as a captive, and he at length died in Egypt. But he did not willingly remove from Judea, though he found there nothing but grief and sorrow; for he did not gratify himself, nor could he indulge in any pleasures, in the abundance of meat and drink, but he was ever lamenting the overthrow of his own nation, and especially the destruction of the Temple. As, then, he preferred Judea to all other countries, and submitted to be a constant spectator of so many miseries, he gave a remarkable proof of his faith and patience, and thus strengthened the faith of the miserable exiles, so that they might know that God would be yet merciful and propitious to his people.

He goes on with the words of Nebuzaradan, but he introduces this clause, He was not yet gone back, that is, because he was not yet gone back. Then Nebuzaradan said, ``Return to Gedaliah,* that is, if thou preferrest to live here rather than to follow me, then go to Gedaliah.'' Here Nebuzaradan shews how he would have Jeremiah

to live in safety in that land, which was as yet like a den of robbers, even that he should be with Gedaliab. And we see how solicitous Nebuzaradan was to preserve the life of the Prophet, for he wished that Gedaliah should be his guardian, as he had briefly said before; but he now sets the matter more fully and more at large before him, Return,* he says, to Gedaliah, whom the king of Babylon hath set over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him he intimates that Jeremiah would be without danger if he dwelt with Gedaliah, because he had been set over Judah by the king of Babylon. Repeated at the same time is what we have before observed, that it was in the Prophet's power, either to go to Gedaliah or to go anywhere else; Whatever place, he says, it seems right in thine eyes to go to, go there He did not then assign to him any certain place, but gave him leave to go anywhere; so that the Prophet was to choose for himself an habitation either in Judea or out of Judea.

It follows, that he gave him food; for so I render the {ארחה}, areche, though some, ``a* present;'' but it means food, as we shall hereafter see in the fifty-first chapter, where Jeremiah speaks of daily bread. The second word, {משאה}, meshae,* I regard as meaning a gift or a present. Then Nebuzaradan bestowed on God's servant food and other gifts. As to food, the Prophet might have well accepted it, for after the city was taken we know that he must have been in want of everything. Even before, he lived very scantily and miserably, having only a piece of bread daily. And now, when Nebuzaradan supplied him with food, there was no reason why the holy man should not in such want receive what was given him. But as to the presents, Jeremiah may seem to have forgotten himself; for it was a disgrace to him to receive from an enemy of God's people, a present or gifts for his doctrine; for whence proceeded this benevolence and bounty to the Prophet, except that Nebuzaradan knew that his prophecy referred to the destruction of his own nation? It seems, then, that for this reason he wished to reward the holy man; he ought then to have refused these presents. But it is probable that he was not enriched by a large sum of money, or by costly things; Nebuzaradan only gave him some token of benevolence; and the Prophet might without suspicion have received the present, not as a reward for his doctrine, but rather as a confirmation of it offered by God, because the Jews had been enemies to him as long as he had been faithfully spending his labors among them; for when he bitterly reproved them, he had no other object but to secure their safety. But as he had been so inhumanely treated by the Jews, God intended that more humanity should be shown to him by a heathen and barbarous nation than by the children of Abraham, who boasted that they were the holy people of God. It was, then, for this reason that Jeremiah received gifts from the hand of Nebuzaradan. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 40:6

6. Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.

6. Et venit Jeremias ad Godoliam filium Achikam in Mispath; et habitavit cum eo in medio populi, qui residui erant in terra.

Here is shown to us the firmness of the Prophet, that he hesitated not to reject, what Nebuzaradan kindly offered to him, and yet he might have committed a great

offense in making light, as it were, of Chaldea. It was, as we know, a very pleasant country, and very fertile; and tyrants cannot bear their bounty to be despised; for when they are pleased to honor any one, however little may be what they offer, if he refuses, they regard it as a dishonor done to them. The Prophet, then, might have been overcome by modesty and fear, so as to remove to Chaldea. That he dared simply to refuse the offer, and to ask that he might dwell in his own country, was a proof and evidence that he had more concern for religion, and more care for God's Church, than for all the favors of men, and all that he might have hoped from the wealth of Babylon and Chaldea.

We hence see that the Prophet in receiving presents, accepted of nothing but what he knew would be for the benefit of God's Church. At the same time he made light of the offense he might have given, when he chose to remain in his own country; for as we have said, it was as though he erected a standard to invite the Jews to return, and thus to prove the truth of his prophecy respecting their exile being temporary, the end of which was to be hoped for after seventy years. For this reason he says, that he went to Gedaliah, and dwelt in the midst of the people, even Of those who remained in the land. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 40:7-8

7. Now, when all the captains of the forces which were in the fields, even they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam governor in the land, and had committed unto him men, and women, and children, and of the poor of the land, of them that were not carried away captive to Babylon;

7. Et audierunt omnes principes exercituum qui erant in agro, ipsi et viri eorum, quod praefecisset rex Babylonis Godoliam filium Achikam in terra; et quod commiserat ei viros et mulieres et parvulum (hoc est, parvulos, sed fere in singulari numero hoc nomen legitur tam singulari quam plurali·significatione,) et ex paupertate terrae ex his qui non fuerant translati Babylonem;

8. Then they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men.

8. Et venerunt ad Godoliam in Mispath Ishmael filius Nathaniae et Jochanan (Joannes) et Jonathan filii Chareah et Seraiah filius Thanekumeth et filii Ophi, qui erat Nethophites, et Jazanias filius Maachati, ipsi et viri eorum.

Mention has been before made of Gedaliah. We have seen that the Prophet was once rescued from death through his kindness, for he interposed for him when almost all with one consent doomed the holy Prophet to death. [345] And God bestowed on him no common honor, that while he was seeking nothing, Nebuchadnezzar should set him as governor over the land. He did not, indeed, enjoy power for any length of time; but it was yet God's will to extend his hand to the pious man, so that he might have, at least for a time, some evidence of his favor. He was at length, as we shall see, killed by treachery.

[345] There is here an oversight; it was his father Ahikam that delivered the Prophet, as recorded in the twenty-sixth chapter (Jeremiah 26). — Ed.

The Prophet now tells us, that the leaders of the forces, before scattered together with their troops, were now come to him. When the Prophet says that they were in the field, I do not think as some, that they were those who fled when the city was taken. But probably they were those who were forced to flee from the cities at the first entrance of the Chaldean army. Nor does it seem probable that they escaped, when all the companions of the king were overtaken and caught in the plain of Jericho, as we have already seen. I then think that they were those who had been scattered here and there, having deserted the cities committed to them at the first approach of their enemies. As then they had been wanderers from their own country and exiles, they now returned to Gedaliah. By saying that the leaders of the forces had heard, he does not mean that they had now an army, but that they had been set over cities and towns in Judea together with their troops.

They then and their men, came to Gedaliah, when they heard that the king of Babylon had set Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, over Judea, and that men, women, and children were committed to his power or keeping. And then he adds, from the poverty of the land, that is, from the dregs of the people, even from those who had not been removed to Babylon: they came, even Ishmael, etc.; who, as we shall hereafter see, became a traitor. He was, as the Prophet says, of the royal family. His spirits were still very high, and influenced by envy, he killed Gedaliah, though he had been kindly received by him. He had, at the same time, received a reward for his treachery from the king of Amon. But all these things we shall see in what follows.

He names here the fugitive chiefs, the first of whom was Ishmael, and among them were the sons of Kareah; who had pledged their faith to Gedaliah; but he was too credulous, and, at the same time, closed his ears to wise counsels and warnings. The Prophet proceeds to tell us how Geda-liah dealt with his own nation, ---

Jeremiah 40:9-10

9. And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan sware unto them and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.

9. Et juravit illis Godolias filius Achikam et viris eorum, dicendo, Ne metuatis a serviendo (hoc est, ne metuatis servire, ne impediat vos timor quo minus serviatis Chaldaeis;) sed subjicite vos et servite regi Babylonis; et bene erit vobis.

10. As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah to serve the Chaldeans, which will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine, and summer-fruits, and oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken.

10. Et ego, ecce ego manebo in Mispath, ut stem coram facie Chaldaeorum (hoc est, ut occurram Chaldaeis) qui venient ad nos; et vos colligite vinum et fructus aestivos ({קיץ} significat oestatem, sed transfertur metaphorice ad oestivos fructus,) et oleum; et reponite in vasis vestris, et habitate in urbibus quas apprehenderitis.

Here, as I have hinted, is explained the great humanity of Gedaliah, and also his pious solicitude for his own nation, in order that the perfidy and cruelty of the son of Nethaniah might appear the more detestable, who slew a man so well deserving in his conduct to him and to others, having been led to do so by reward.

The Prophet says that he swore to them; nor was it strange to interpose an oath in a state of things so disturbed. Hardly could Ishmael and the rest have any confidence, since the Chaldeans had been so extremely hostile to them; they must, indeed, have been in the greatest trepidation. There was, therefore, need of a remedy, even that Gedaliah should assure them of his integrity. This was the reason why he made an oath; for had it been in times of tranquillity, an oath would not have been necessary. But as their life hung, as it were, on a thread, and they saw many dangers on every side, there was need of a confirmation; nor did Gedaliah receive them without some danger; for it was not pleasing to the Chaldeans that such men should continue in the land. For we have seen that the princes had been on this account killed, and then all the chief men among the people had been removed to Chaldea, lest any of them should attempt some new commotions. It was, therefore, the object of Nebuchadnezzar to keep the country quiet; and this was the best way to prevent any disturbance. Gedaliah then, no doubt, saw that this would not be very agreeable to the Chaldeans, and yet his humanity prevailed, and his concern for his own nation, that he not only hospitably received them, but also promised them by an oath, that there would be safety for them. He therefore exhorted them to be confident, and also to serve the Chaldeans. It was, indeed, especially expected of them, that they should surrender up themselves, as their case was hopeless. Then Gedaliah promised that the Chaldeans would be content with a voluntary submission; and he promised them also, that there would be a safe dwelling for them in the land.

And he ordered them to gather wine, and corn, and fruit, and to store them up, as there would be no danger from war. He also ordered them to dwell in the cities which they had taken, or to which they had been driven. The verb here is ambiguous; but I prefer its most literal meaning, which ye have taken. They could not, indeed, have taken a city by force and arms, as they had only a few men, and could never have been equal to their enemies. Then the forcible taking of cities is not what is meant; but Gedaliah's meaning was, that they might safely remain wherever they were, or that they might dwell in any city they came to. But it was a great 'thing when he said to them, that he would stand for them; for he thus laid down his own life, as though he had said that he would be a surety that nothing grievous should happen to them. And hence it is more clearly seen that he did not regard himself, but that he used the power given him for the public good; for if he had ambition, he would have been, doubtless, more careful to ingratiate himself with the king of Babylon, and he would have resolved to deal no less cruelly with a people so hard and refractory, than their enemies. But when he extended his wings as the hen, to gather under them the residue of his own nation, it appears quite evident that he had no care for his own private safety, but that whatever power had been given him by King Nebuchadnezzar, he employed it wholly for the public good.

Then these words ought to be especially noticed, And I, behold, I will dwell in Mizpah, that I may stand, etc., that is, that I may meet the Chaldeans who may come to us, that is, lest they should come upon you for some hostile purpose. It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 40:11-12

11. Likewise when all the Jews that were in Moab, and among the Ammonites, and in Edom, and that were in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan;

11. Atque etiam omnes Judaei qui erant in Moab (hoc est, apud Moabitas) et apud filios Ammon, et apud Idumaeos (et in Edom,) et quicunque erant in omnibus terris (hoc est, qui dispersi erant per varios regiones,) audierunt quod dimisisset rex Babylonis reliquias (residuum aliquod) Jehudah, et quod praefecisset illis Godoliam filium Achikam filii Saphan;

12. Even all the Jews returned out of all places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer-fruits very much.

12. Et venerunt omnes Judaei (venerunt ergo omnes Judaei) ex cunctis locis ad quae expulsi fuerunt et venerunt (reversi sunt) in terrain Jehudah ad Godoliam in Mispath; et collegerunt vinum et fructus aestivos multos valde (hoc est, in magna copia.)

The Prophet shews here, that except intestine wickedness had arisen, the condition of the people would have been endurable until the time of exile had elapsed. God had pre-fixed, as it has been before stated, seventy years. Nebuchadnezzar had already so withdrawn the flower of the people, that still some inhabitants remained, that the land might not be wholly naked and forsaken. For besides the poor who had been left, he has already told us, that some chief men came with their troops. He now adds that all the Jews, who had fled to neighboring nations, came to Geda-liah; some had taken refuge among the Ammonites, and some among the Moabites; these came and dwelt in the land. Then God did thus moderate the rigor of his vengeance, so that some remnants continued in Judea until the restoration of the whole people. But the perverseness of those who had before despised his favor, is on the other hand most clearly shewn. God no doubt designed to make manifest their extreme wickedness; for they not only despised the kindness of King Nebuchadnezzar, but rushed headlong to their own ruin; for their fury and madness led them on to kill their own leader, and thus all things were thrown into confusion, as this might have provoked the indignation of the conqueror to obliterate the very name of the people by slaying the captives as well as those who had been left in the land. To point out this was the object of the Prophet in this part of the chapter.

He says that all the Jews; he puts in the particle {גם}, gam, for the sake of emphasis, and even all the Jews, who had fled either to the Moabites or to the children of Ammon, or to the Idumeans, or to other parts in other countries. There is no doubt but they made up a considerable number. Then the whole land must have had many inhabitants; and though it was not populous, yet the desolation that might have been feared, was not extreme. We hence conclude, that there was no overstatement made, when Gedaliah promised security to the leaders of the forces and their companions. As he then made an oath that they would all be safe, he did not deceive them, for he really proved his faithfulness, because these miserable exiles,

who returned into Judea, dwelt in safety, and God also gave them a rich abundance of fruits, so that they lived comfortably in their own country. Before the city was taken these were wanderers, and no doubt they must have suffered great poverty and want. But now the Lord gave them relief, and supplied them with plenty.

But we hence know more fully how great must have been the impiety and wickedness of Ishmael and his companions, who not only had the liberty to dwell comfortably in their own country under the care and protection of Gedaliah, but who also enjoyed abundance of blessings. For as the most miserable of them gathered great abundance of fruits, they might have had a large portion of all good things. Hence then the more and the more detestable appeared their ingratitude. And it further appears how extreme and incurable was their perverseness, that they were not moved and affected, when they saw Jerusalem destroyed, the temple burnt, and the horrible slaughter which had taken place; and especially when they knew what Nebuzaradan had preached respecting God's vengeance, and had performed the office of a prophet in reproving them. That they thus so obstinately rejected the blessings of God and resisted what he did for them, was an evident proof that they were monstrously stupid; and this is what the Prophet intended to shew, as we shall hereafter see. But I must make an end here.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are not sufficiently attentive in considering thy judgments, we may learn to become wise by the examples of others, and so to reflect on what thou teachest us by thy servants the Prophets, that we may apply it to our own use, and thus render ourselves teachable and obedient to thee, and that especially when thou chastisest us with thy scourges, we may not resist thy power, but so submit to thee, that we may at length be raised up and comforted by thy mercy and be restored to a complete salvation, through Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifty-Fourth

Jeremiah 40:13-14

13. Moreover Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah,

13. Et Johanan (Joannes) filius Chareah et omnes duces copiarum qui fuerant in agro, venerunt ad Godoliam in Mispath;

14. And said unto him, Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not.

14. Et dixerunt ei, An sciendo scis, quod Baalis rex filiorum Ammon misit Ismael filium Nathaniae qui percutiat to in anima? Sed non credidit illis Godolias filius Achikam.

A sad history is here given, from which we may conclude, that God's wrath against the people had not been appeased by the destruction of the city and the burning of the Temple. It was some token of mercy, when Gedaliah was set over the remnant of the people and the poor, who had been allowed to dwell in the land. But now Gedaliah is slain, and a miserable scattering must have ensued. The wrath also

of the king of Babylon was kindled, because the Chaldeans, who had been given as guards, were at the same time killed. It was then God's purpose to execute his judgment also on these remnants.

But the Prophet shews how it was that Gedaliah was killed, even because Ishmael had been hired and advised by the king of Ammon. he says, however, that he had been warned by the sons of Kareah, of whom mention has been made, but that he had no faith in them. And hence the Prophet begins by saying, that John the son of Kareah and the other leaders came to him. He had, as we have seen, received them before, and had sworn to them that he would be their defender, so that no one would hurt them; he had undertaken to face all danger, and offered his head as a pledge that the Chaldeans would not attempt anything against them. They came then to him, because with safety was connected public benefit, he had, then, bound them to himself by no common benefit, and it was for their good that he should be safe and secure, who was in favor with the king of Babylon.

They therefore came and said, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah was suborned by the king of Ammon It may have been that the king of Ammon had hoped to be the king of Judea, or to have all that land as his own after the departure of the Chaldean army. But as his expectation was disappointed, he began to attempt another tiling, to render the land desolate by creating disturbances. Such then seems to have been the reason why he induced Ishmael to undertake the impious and abominable act of killing Gedaliah.

As to Gedaliah having no faith in their words, a question may be here raised, How was it that God suffered this holy man, endued with such rare virtues, to be basely killed by a traitor and an assassin? In the first place, we must hold it as true, that God's judgments are just, though they correspond not with our notions. It seems indeed, at the first glance, very unaccountable, that Gedaliah should have been slain, who yet had emerged, as it were, from death, and had obtained favor with the Chaldeans; but it was God's purpose to take him to himself, and at the same time to execute his vengeance to the utmost on the people; for we shall see that those who had been left were wholly unworthy of God's favor; and we shall also see, that as mad wild beasts they ran headlong to death, and never ceased to provoke God's wrath against them.

Let us then learn from this passage, that when God calls his servants from this world, he regards their salvation, so that death is for their good. For Gedaliah might have seen, that had he lived longer, things more bitter than hundred deaths would have happened to him. It was then God's will to take him in time, before he was overwhelmed with sorrows. For it was no small cause of grief to see the people obstinately struggling against the goodness of God, until their final ruin came. This obstinacy then might have been the cause of incredible sorrow to the holy man: hence the Lord removed him in due time. In the meantime, as I have said, he opened a way for his wrath, so that after it became evident that the remnant that had been saved were wholly unworthy of mercy, they were destroyed together with the rest.

But, in the second place, we see that there was a fault mixed with virtue in Gedaliah. Love, indeed, is not suspicious, as Paul says, and ought not easily to admit

an accusation. (1 Corinthians 13:5.) But he ought to have been circumspect, not only for his own sake, but because his death brought with it the ruin of the whole people. He ought then to have been more cautious. But we hence learn how difficult it is even for the best of men, endued with peculiar virtues, so to conduct themselves, as not to deviate on either side. It was a. praiseworthy simplicity that Gedaliah did not suspect that Ishmael would be so perfidious and so wicked; but as in this instance he shewed no regard for himself nor for the public safety, he was to be blamed. But, as I have said, it was God's purpose to remove him to his rest, for had he lived, he would have been a hundred times overwhelmed with troubles. Ungodly men may blast the memory of the holy man, because he had been so stupid: but as I have already said, that as he must have deviated either on this or that side, it was better that Ishmael should not be accused until he was found guilty. Gedaliah's only mistake was, that he disregarded the treachery of which he had been warned. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 40:15-16

15. Then Johanan the son of Kareah spake to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly, saying, Let me go, I pray thee, and I will slay Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know it: wherefore should he slay thee, that all the Jews which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant in Judah perish?

15. Et Joannes filius Kareah dixit ad Godoliam in secreto in Mispath, dicendo, Ibo nunc (vel, agedum eam) et percutiam Ismael filium Nathaniae ita ut nemo sciat: quare percutiet to in anima, [346] et dissipabuntur totus Jehudah, qui congregati sunt ad te (hoc est, dissipabuntur qui congregati sunt ad te ex toto Jehudah,) et peribit residuum Jehudah?

16 But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing: for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael.

16. Et dixit Godolias filius Achikam Joanni filio Kareah, Ne feceris hanc rem, quia merdacium tu loqueris contra Ismael.

We here see that the holy man was blinded, so that he not only disregarded the counsel given to him, but also rejected the help offered to him. It is again a thing worthy of praise, that he was unwilling that Ishmael should be rashly killed, the cause being not known; but he ought to have carefully inquired, and the thing being found out, he might have defended himself, and put to death a wicked man and a public pest. He was armed with the sword; and he might have justly punished Ishmael, if he had only been attentive to the matter, that is, if he had taken the trouble to ascertain the fact. As then he had been endued with authority, for Nebuchadnezzar had set him over the land, he was to be blamed in this, that he abstained from taking' vengeance, (for he was not a private man,)but he did not believe that there was so great a treachery in Ishmael, whom he thought to be an honest and upright man, and friendly to him. Nevertheless, there is a medium between simplicity on the one hand, and cruelty on the other. Had he immediately become incensed against Ishmael, it would have been blamable cruelty; for we ought not to be carried away

[346] Why should he kill (or smite) thy life?" so all the versions and the Targum. But {נפש means often a corpse or a dead body, Leviticus 21:1; Leviticus 22:4. Then the most obvious rendering would be, ``Why should he smite thee dead?'' or, ``Why should he smite thee a corpse?'' Blayney gives the meaning, but not a translation,'' Wherefore should he take away thy life?'' --- Ed.

headlong to condemn innocent men; for if we indiscriminately receive all sorts of calumnies, no man can remain innocent. But as I have said, Gedaliah might have so acted as not to wrong Ishmael by believing every idle report, and yet he might have taken care of himself. He might have done this, had he inquired, and having known the case, determined accordingly; but he willfully closed his eyes, and thus committed a great mistake.

But we hence see, that when in other things he was not without judgment and foresight, he was in this instance, as it were, destitute of a sound mind; for it was God's purpose to open a way for his judgment, so that he might destroy the remnant of the people. And at the same time we see how difficult it is not to do wrong, when we desire to be just, tolerant, and unsuspicious. We are, in short, taught, how difficult a thing it is, and how rare is the virtue to exercise moderation. Ishmael might have been immediately convicted of perfidy and wickedness; this was what Gedaliah was unwilling to do; and why? because he was unwilling to suspect anything wrong in a man whom he thought to be sincere and faithful. Well, but at the same time he did wrong to John, the son of Kareah, and to the other leaders of the forces. They came to him, not one man or two men, but the chiefs who had been set over the soldiers by King Zedekiah. These came to him, so that their charge was probable. What did Gedaliah say? Thou speakest falsely, he said. he reproachfully repelled John, the son of Kareah, who yet was well disposed towards him, and wished to save him from his danger. We hence clearly see that the best of men never so act, but that under the color of equity and humanity they often fall into sloth and neglect; and that when they wish to be humane towards one, they act unkindly and reproachfully towards many. So it is ever necessary to flee to God, that he may rule us by the spirit of discretion. Now follows the murder of Gedaliah.

Jeremiah 41

CHAPTER 41

Jeremiah 41:1-3

1. Now it came to pass in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah the son of Elishama, of the seed royal, and the princes of the king, even ten men with him, came unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah; and there they did eat bread together in Mizpah.

1. Et accidit mense septimo, ut venerit (et venit) Ismael filius Nathaniae filii Elisamae, e semine regio, et proceres regis et decem viri cum eo ad Godoliam filium Achikam in Mispath, et comederunt illic panem simul in Mispath.

2. Then arose Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and the ten men that were with him, and smote Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan with the sword, and slew him, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land.

2. Et surrexit Ismael filius Nathaniae, et decem viri qui cum eo erant, et percussit Godoliam filium Achikam tilii Saphan gladio; et occidit eum quem praefecerat rex Babylonis in terra.

3. Ishmael also slew all the Jews that were with him, even with Gedaliah, at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans that were found there, and the men of war.

3. Et Judaeos qui erant cum eo, cum Godolia, nempe, in Mispath, et Chaldaeos qui inventi sunt illic, viros bellicosos percussit Ismael.

It was a detestable cruelty and barbarity in Ishmael to kill Gedaliah who entertained him, and whom he found to possess a paternal regard towards him. Heathens have ever deemed hospitality sacred; and to violate it has been counted by them as the greatest atrocity; and hospitable Jupiter ever possessed among them the right of taking vengeance, if any one broke an oath given when at table. Now Ishmael had sworn, as we have seen, that he would be faithful to Gedaliah. He was again received by him, and was treated hospitably; and from his table he rose up to slay the innocent man, who was his friend, and had acted towards him, as it has been

stated, the part of a father. And hence he became not only a parricide, but also the traitor of his own country; for he knew that it could not be but that Nebuchadnezzar would become more and more incensed against that miserable people, whom he had spared: but he made no account of his own fidelity, nor shewed any regard for his own brethren, whom he knew he exposed to slaughter and ruin.

But the cause of this madness is here indirectly intimated; the Prophet says, that he was of the royal seed. The royal seed was then, indeed, in the greatest disgrace; the king's children had been slain; he himself had been taken away bound to Babylon after Nebuchadnezzar had made him blind. But we see, that those who had been once in any dignity, can hardly relinquish those high notions by which they are inflated. So that when those of the royal seed are reduced to extreme poverty and want, they still aim at something royal, and never submit to the power of God. The fountain then of this madness the Prophet points out here, as by the finger, when he says, that Ishmael was of the royal seed: for he thought that it was by no means an honor to him, that Gedaliah was set over the Jews. He, no doubt, imagined that the kingdom was to be perpetual, since God had so often promised, that the throne of David would stand as long as the moon continued in the heavens. (Psalm 89:37) But mere ambition and pride led him to commit this abominable murder: and thus it was, that he suffered himself to be persuaded by the king of Ammon.

He then came together with the princes of the king, even those who were in the first rank when Zedekiah reigned. Then the Prophet adds, that they did eat bread. This phrase intimates that they were received hospitably, and were admitted to the table of Gedaliah. And this kindness and benevolence ought to have induced Ishmael and his associates to spare their host. But it follows, that they rose up. This circumstance, as to the time, enhanced their crime; for it was at the time they were eating that Ishmael slew Gedaliah; and thus he polluted his hands with innocent blood at the sacred table, having paid no regard to the rights of hospitality. Now the Prophet shews that this was fatal to the miserable remnant, who were permitted to dwell in the land. For, first, it could not have been done without exciting the highest indignation of the king of Babylon, for he had set Gedaliah over the land; and it was not expressed without reason, but emphatically, that this slaughter roused the displeasure of the king of Babylon, because the murder of Gedaliah was a manifest contempt of his authority. And then there was another cause of displeasure, for the Chal-deans in Mizpah, who had been given as protectors, were killed. For the Prophet tells us, that they were men of war, that no one might think that Chaldeans were sent there to occupy the place of the Jews, as it is sometimes the case when colonists or some such men settle in a land: they were military men, who had been chosen as a guard and protection to Gedaliah. Thus then was the wrath of the king of Babylon provoked to. vent his rage on the remnant to whom he had shewed mercy. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 41:4-5

4. And it came to pass the second day after he had slain Gedaliah, and no man knew it,

4. Et factum est die postero ex quo occiderat Godoliam, ut nemo sciret,

5. That there came certain from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, even fourscore men, having their beards shaven, and their clothes rent, and having cut themselves, with offerings and incense in their hand, to bring them to the house of the LORD.

5. Et venerunt viri ex Sichem, e Silo et Samaria octoginta rasi barba (vel, rasa barba,) et laceris vestibus, et scissi (vel, laniati) in cute sua; oblatio autem et thus in manibus ipsorum, ut offerrent in domo Jehovae.

The Prophet skews here, that after Ishmael had polluted his hands, he made no end of his barbarity. And thus wicked men become hardened; for even if they dread at first to murder innocent men, when once they begin the work, they rush on to the commission of numberless murders. This is what the Prophet now tells us had happened; for after Gedaliah was killed, he says, that eighty men came from Shechem, from Shiloh, and from Samaria, who brought incense and offering, to present them in the Temple, and that these were led by treachery to Mizpah, there killed and cast into a pit, as we shall hereafter see.

It is not known by what cause Ishmael was induced to commit this cruel and barbarous act, for there was no war declared, nor could he have pretended any excuse for thus slaying unhappy men, who apprehended no such thing. They were of the seed of Abraham, they were worshippers of God, and then they had committed no offense, and plotted nothing against him. Why then he was seized with such rage is uncertain, except that wicked men, as we have said, never set any bounds to their crimes; for God gives theta the spirit of giddiness, so that they are carried away by blind madness. It is, indeed, probable, that they were killed, because Ishmael thought that they carne to Gedaliah, that they might live under his protection, and that he could not have gained anything by the murder of one man, except he obtained authority over the whole land. It was then suspicion alone, and that indeed slight, which led him to such a cruelty. And the atrocity of the deed was enhanced by what the Prophet says, that they came to offer to God incense and offering, {מנחה}, meneche: and he says also, that they had their beards shaven, and their garments torn Such an appearance ought to have roused pity even in the most inveterate enemies; for we know, that there is an innate feeling which leads us to pity wretchedness and tears, and every mournful appearance. The fury then of Ishmael, even if he had before determined to do some grievous thing to these men, ought to have been allayed by their very sight, so as not to be even angry with them. According then to every view of the case, we see that he must have been divested of every sense of equity, and that he was more cruel than any wild beast.

But it may be asked, How did these men come for the purpose mentioned, since the report respecting the destruction of the Temple must have spread everywhere? for they are not said to have come from Persia, or from countries beyond the sea; but that they came from places not afar off. They who answer that the report of the Temple being destroyed had not reached them, only seek to escape, but the answer is not credible, and it is only an evasion. The Temple was burnt in the fifth month; could that calamity be unknown in Judea? And then we know that Shiloh was not far from Jerusalem, nor was Samaria very distant. Since then the distance of these

places cannot account for their ignorance, it seems not to me probable, that these came, because they thought that the Temple was still standing, nor did they bring victims, but only incense and oblation. I then think that they came, not to offer the ordinary sacrifice, but only that they might testify their piety in that place where they had before offered their sacrifices. This conjecture has nothing inconsistent in it; nor is there a doubt, but that before they left their homes, they had put on their mean and torn garments. These were signs, as we have elsewhere seen, of sorrow and mourning among the Orientals.

But here another question is raised, for the Prophet says, that they were torn or cut; and this has been deemed as referring to the skin or body: but this was forbidden by the Law. Some answer that they forgot the Law in their extreme grief, so that they undesignedly tore or lacerated their bodies. But the prohibition of the Law seems to me to have had something special in it, even that God designed by it to distinguish his people from heathens. And we may gather from sacred history, that some artifice was practiced by idolaters, when they cut their bodies; for it is said, that the priests of Baal cut their bodies according to their usual manner or practice. God then, wishing to keep his people from every corruption, forbade them to imitate the rites of the heathens. And then there is no doubt but that God designed to correct excess in grief and mourning. I therefore do not think that anything contrary to the Law was done by these men, when they came to the ruins of the Temple with torn garments and lacerated skin, for there was in them nothing affected, for so lamentable a calamity drew forth such grief, that they spared neither themselves nor their garments.

Jeremiah says, in the first of these verses, that the death of Gedaliah was concealed, so that no one knew it; yet such a deed could have been hardly buried; for many of the Jews were killed together with Gedaliah, and also the guarding soldiers, whom Nebuchadnezzar had given to Gedaliah. But the Prophet means that it was hid, because the report had not yet gone forth. He then speaks comparatively, when he says that it was known to none. We have already stated the purpose for which the eighty men came from Samaria and other places; it was not that they might offer sacrifices, as when the Temple was standing, but only lament the destruction of the Temple and of the city; and that as they had brought from home the greatest sorrow, they might, on their return, humble themselves, after having seen so grievous a punishment inflicted on the people for their sins.

PRAYER

Grant, omnipotent God, that since our life is exposed to innumerable dangers, and thou settest before our eyes what happened to the best and choicest of thy servants, --- O grant, that we may flee to thee, and resign ourselves wholly to thy will, that we may know that thou art the guardian of our life, so that not a hair of our head can fall without thy hidden permission, and that we may also learn to ask of thee the spirit of wisdom and discretion, so that thou thyself mayest guide our steps, as it is not in us to defend our life from those many intrigues by which we are on every side surrounded, the whole world being opposed to us, so that we may proceed in the course of our pilgrimage under thy care and protection, until we shall be removed into that blessed rest, which is laid up for us in heaven by Christ our

Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifty-Fifth

Jeremiah 41:6-7

6. And Ishmael the son of Nethaniah went forth from Mizpah to meet them, weeping all along as he went: and it came to pass, as he met them, he said unto them, Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam.

6. Et egressus est Ismael filius Nathaniae obviam ipsis e Mispath, ambnlans ambulando et fiens; et factum est cum occurrisset illis, tune dixit illis, Venite ad Godoliam filium Achikam.

7. And it was so, when they came into the midst of the city, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah slew them, and cast them into the midst of the pit, he, and the men that were with him.

7. Et factum est cum venissent in medium urbis, tunc jugulavit (vel, mactavit) eos Ismael filius Natha-niae ad medium fossae, ipse et viri qui erant cum eo.

Here Jeremiah relates another circumstance in the nefarious conduct of Ishmael, that by flatteries he enticed simple men, who feared no evil, and while pretending kindness, slew them. The slaughter was in itself very detestable, but added to it was the most abominable deceit, for he pretended to weep with them, and offered an act of kindness, to bring them to Gedaliah, and then he traitorously killed them! We hence see that it was an act of extreme wickedness. In saying that he wept, it was no doubt a sign of feigned piety, [347] He saw these good men in torn garments and in tears on account of the Temple being destroyed, he therefore pretended that he had the same feeling. This was falsely to pretend a regard for God, and his tears were those of the crocodile; for he shed tears as though he lamented the ruin of the Temple and of the city. He thus gained the confidence of the unwary men, and then after having led them into the middle of the city, he slew them. The place also is mentioned, nigh to the middle of the pit, for so I render it, rather than in the middle, for it is not credible that he killed them in the pit itself; but when led to the pit they were killed and were cast into it, as we shall see. [348] He then slew them at the outside of the pit, and immediately cast them in.

It may, however be asked, Whether he could with so few attack with success so many men? for it seems strange, that as they were eighty men they did not resist; they might at least have frightened their enemies. But we must, in the first place, recollect that they were, as we have seen, unarmed; for they had brought only a sacred offering with incense; but the others were armed and well trained for war; they had also been reduced to a state of hopeless despair, so that they had doubtless contracted great ferocity, as those who are continually in danger accustom themselves to acts of cruelty. Ishmael, then, and his companions were armed, but the others were without any arms, and were also simple men and in no degree accustomed to war. Hence it was that they were killed like sheep, while Ishmael and his associates

[347] The words may be thus literally rendered, — And Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, went out from Mizpah to meet them, walking, walking and weeping, etc. He went on foot, and wept as he went out. — Ed.

[348] "At the pit," is the Sept.; "About the middle of the pool," is the Vulg. and the Targum. It was evidently a ditch or a trench made for the defense of the city. See Jeremiah 41:9 — Ed.

were like wolves, altogether ferocious. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 41:8

8. But ten men were found among them that said unto Ishmael, Slay us not: for we have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey. So he forbare, and slew them not among their brethren.

8. Decem autem homines inventi sunt in ipsis qui dixerunt (et dixerunt, copula resolvi debet hoc modo; dixerunt ergo) ad Ismael, Ne interficias nos, quia sunt nobis opes reconditae in agro, triticum et hordeum (sunt pluralis numeri, sed durum esset Latine dicere, tritica et hordea) et oleum et mel: et cessavit (vel, destitit,) et non occidit eos in medio fratrum suorum.

We here see that the barbarity of Ishmael was connected with avarice, he was indeed inflamed with ferocious madness when he slew simple and innocent men; but when the hope of gain was presented to him, he spared some of them. Thus then we see that he was a lion, a wolf, or a bear in savageness, but that he was also a hungry man, for as soon as he smelt the odor of prey, he spared ten out of the eighty, who, it is probable, thus redeemed their life and returned home. So in one man we see there were many monsters; for if he hated all those who favored Gedaliah, why did he suffer these to escape? even because avarice and rapacity prevailed in him.

It is then added, that he slew them not in the midst of their brethren, that is, when they were exposed to death and were mixed with the others, so that their condition seems to have been the same. The Prophet says, that they were spared, even because Ishmael sought nothing else but gain. And it is probable that in a state of things so disturbed he was not furnished with provisions and other things. As, then, want urged him, so he became moderate, lest his cruelty should cause a loss to him.

Here also is set before us the inscrutable purpose of God, that he suffered unhappy men to have been thus slain by robbers. They had left. their houses to lament the burning of the Temple. As then the ardor of their piety led them to Jerusalem, how unworthy it was that they should become a prey to the barbarity of Ishmael and his associates? But as we said yesterday, God has hidden ways by which he provides for the salvation of his people. He took away Gedaliah; his end indeed was sad, having been slain by Ishmael whom he had hospitably entertained. Thus God did not suffer him to be tossed about in the midst of great troubles. For John, the son of Kareah, who yet was a most faithful man, would have become soon troublesome to the holy man; for he became soon after the head and ringleader of an impious faction, and ferociously opposed Jeremiah. Had then Gedaliah lived, he would have been assailed on every side by his own people. It was then God's purpose to free him at once from all these miserable troubles. The same thing also happened to the seventy who were slain; for the Lord removed them to their rest, that they might; not be exposed to the grievous evils and calamities which afterwards soon followed; for none could have been in a more miserable state than the remnant whom Nebuchadnezzar had spared. We have then reason in this instance to admire the secret purpose of God, when we see that these unhappy men were killed, who yet had gone to Jerusalem

for the sake of testifying their piety. It was, in short, better for them to have been removed than to have been under the necessity of suffering again many miseries. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 41:9

9. Now the pit wherein Ishmael had cast all the dead bodies of the men, whom he had slain because of Gedaliah, was it which Asa the king had made for fear of Baasha king of Israel: and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with them that were slain.

9. Fovea autem in quam projecit Ismael illuc (sed abundat [349]) omnia cadavera hominum, quos percussit in plaga Godeliae (vel, propter Godoliam, ut alii vertunt) ipsa est quam fecerat rex Aza propter Baaza regem Israel; hanc replevit Ismael filius Nathaniae interfectis.

The Prophet tells us by the way that the trench was made by King Asa, when he fortified the city against the attack of Baasha, as it is related in the sixteenth chapter of Second Chronicles. For Baasha, having collected an army, made an attack on the land of Judah and began to build the city, that he might thus keep the Jews as it were besieged, and make thence daily incursions, and where he might safely take his forces together with the spoils. Asa then hired the king of Syria, and induced him to break the treaty which the two kings of Syria and Israel had made with one another. Thus Baasha was forced to leave the work unfinished, and thence Asa is said to have carried away the gathered stones, that thereby the trench might be formed. There is indeed no mention of the trench; but we may conclude that it was then formed, in order that it might interpose between the enemy and the city. But it may seem strange that the trench was in the midst of the city, except perhaps that Asa built a fortress within the town, that if he was overcome by his enemy, he might take refuge there with his men of war, as we know that citadels are often built in the middle of cities as fortresses, as places of refuge. Asa then built this trench, that should the king of Israel take the city, he might not penetrate farther, but be kept back by the interposing trench. But only in things uncertain are conjectures to be allowed.

But the Prophet increases the indignity of the deed, when he says, that the trench was filled with the slain It was formed for a very different end and purpose, even that the king of Judah, when reduced to the greatest straits, might have the trench as a defense against the violence of his enemies, so that he might protect his kingdom and his subjects. But now the slain were cast into the trench, not the Syrians nor the Israelites, but Jews themselves and God's pious worshipers. What then had been made for the public benefit of the people, was made by Ishmael a place for the slaughter of good men. And hence, as it has been said, the atrocity of the deed was more enhanced. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 41:10

10. Then Ishmael carried away captive all the residue of the people that were in Mizpah, even the king's daughters, and all the people that remained in Mizpah,

[349] It is not redundant, for it is the idiom of the language: and so it is in Welsh, though the present version is not correct, which ought to be as follows, — "A'r clawdd (not pydew) yr hwn y bwriodd Ishmael iddo," etc. — Ed.

whom Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had committed to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam: and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah carried them away captive, and departed to go over to the Ammonites.

10. Et captivum cepit Ismael quod residuum erat populi, quod erat in Mispath, nempe filias regis, et totum populum qui relictus fuerat in Mispath quem commiserat Nabuzardan princeps interfectorum Godoliae filio Achikam (vel, cui residuo populi praefecerat Godoliam, eodem sensu, filium Achikam:) accepit ergo Ismael filius Nathaniae, et profectus est ut transiret ad filios Ammon.

It is not known whether Ishmael had this design at the beginning, or whether, when he saw that he had no power to stand his ground, he took the captives with him, that he might dwell with the king of Ammon. It is, however, probable that this was done according to a previous resolution, and that before he slew Gedaliah, it was determined that the remnant should be drawn away to that country. Perhaps the king of Ammon wished to send some of his own people to dwell in Judea; thus he hoped to become the ruler of Judea, and also hoped to pacify the king of Babylon by becoming his tributary. It was, however, a great thing to possess a land so fertile. However this may have been, there is no doubt but that the king of Ammon hoped for something great after the death of Gedaliah. And it is probable that for this reason the people were drawn away, to whom an habitation in Judea had been permitted.

The Prophet now tells us, that Ishmael took the remnant of the people captives. And it appears that in a short time he had a greater force than at the beginning; for he could not with a few men collect the people, for the number of those who had been left, as we have seen, was not inconsiderable: and they were dispersed through many towns; and Ishmael could not have prevailed on them by his command alone to remove to the land of Ammon. But after he had killed Gedaliah, his barbarity frightened them all, and no doubt many joined him; for an impious faction ever finds many followers when any hope is offered them. All then who were miserable among the people followed him as their leader; and thus he was able to lead away the whole people as captives.

But here again a question arises, that is, respecting the daughters of the king; for the poor and the obscure, who were of the lowest class, had alone been left; and the royal seed, as we have seen, had been carried away. But it is probable that some of the king's daughters had escaped when the city was besieged; for Ishmael himself was of the royal seed, but he had escaped before the city was taken. Nebuchadnezzar then could not have had him as a captive. The same was the case with the daughters of the king, whom Zedekiah might have sent to some secure places. And Ge-daliah afterwards brought them together when he saw that it could be done without danger or hazard of exciting suspicion: he had indeed obtained this power, as we have before seen, from Nebuzaradan. Though then Gedaliah ruled over the poor and those of no repute, yet the daughters of the king, who had been removed to quieter places, afterwards dwelt with him; and so Ishmael, and John the son of Kareah, and other leaders of the army, came to him: the reason was the same.

But it is again repeated, and all the people that remained in Mizpah, whom Nebuzaradan had committed to Gedaliah, or, over whom he appointed Gedaliah, as we

have before seen. But the repetition was not made without reason; for Jeremiah expressed again what was worthy of special notice, that the fury and violence of Ishmael were so great that he did not see that the mind of Nebuchadnezzar would be so exasperated as to become implacable; but his madness was so furious that he had no regard for himself nor for others.

He then says that he took away captive the people, and went that he might pass over to the children of Ammon Thus their condition was much worse than if they had been driven into exile; for the Ammonites were in no degree more kind than the Chaldeans; nay, they were exposed there, as we shall hereafter see, to greater reproaches; it would indeed have been better for them and more tolerable, had they been at once killed, than to have been thus removed to an exile the most miserable.

It hence appears that Ishmael was wholly devoid of all humane feelings, having been thus capable of the impiety of betraying the children of Abraham. For where there is ambition, it often happens that a lust for empire impels men to deeds of great enormity; but to draw away unhappy people to the Ammonites was certainly an act more than monstrous.

As to the people, we shall hereafter see that they deserved all their reproaches and miseries; and this calamity did not happen to them except through the righteous providence of God. For though they were freed, as we shall see, by the son of Kareah, yet they soon went into Egypt, notwithstanding the remonstrances of the Prophet, and his severe denunciations in case they removed there. Though then the base and monstrous cruelty of Ishmael is here set before us, let us yet know that the Jews deserved to be driven away into exile, and to be subjected to all kinds of miseries.

Oh, miserable sentence! when it is said, that there were slain seventy men in the hand of Gedaliah [350] Some render ``hand,'' as I have noticed, ``on account of Gedaliah;'' and others, ``in the place of Gedaliah.'' But as this explanation seems forced, we may take hand for stroke or wound; and this seems the most suitable meaning, as hand is often so taken in Scripture. They were then slain in the wound of Gedaliah, that is, they were slain in like manner with him, as it were in addition to the wound he received. Let us now proceed, ---

Jeremiah 41:11-12

11. But when Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, heard of all the evil that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had done,

11. Et audivit Joannes filius Kareah et omnes duces copiarum, qui cum eo erant, omne malum quod perpetraverat Ismael filius Nathaniae;

12. Then they took all the men, and went to fight with Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and found him by the great waters that are in Gibeon.

12. Et sumpserunt omnes homines, et profecti sunt ad proeliandum cum Ismael filio Nathaniae, et invenerunt (vel, assecuti sunt) ipsum ad aquas magnas (alii

[350] This is in the ninth verse. The words are omitted in the Sept.; "on account of Gedaliah," is the Vulg. and the Targum.; which is the same with our version. "Along with Gedaliah," is Blayney's. The word "hand,' often means power, authority, dominion. (Genesis 9:2; Judges 1:35) Then the rendering would be, "on account of the power of Gedaliah;" and this would give the passage the most emphatic meaning: Ishmael smote them because he envied the power given to Gedaliah, which these men, by coming to Mizpah, acknowledged and supported. — Ed.

vetrunt, multas, sed non placet) quae sunt in Guibeon.

Here the Prophet informs us, that Ishmael did not attain his wishes; for he had resolved to sell; as it were, the people to the king of Ammon, but he was intercepted in his course. But he says first, that John the son of Kareah had heard the report, and that he, together with other leaders, went to meet him in order to intercept him in his journey. He says also that he collected all the men, even those who had been dispersed. All then they could have got, they enlisted, and went to fight with Ishmael. And the Prophet adds, that they found him at the great waters And I think they were so called because they were either a lake or a pool. I doubt not, then, but that it was a common name. Some say that the waters were then abundant, because there had been constant rains. But this conjecture is not probable. The simpler meaning is, that these waters were thus called, because in that part the abundance of water was not great in comparison with the lake. [351] Ishmael then was found there. It is now added by the Prophet, that the captives rejoiced when they saw John, and immediately came over to his side. he therefore says, ---

Jeremiah 41:13-14

13. Now it came to pass, that when all the people which were with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, then they were glad.

13. Et accidit cum vidisset populus, qui erat cum Ismael, Joannem filium Kareah, et omnes duces copiarum, qui erant cum eo, tunc laetati sunt.

14. So all the people that Ishmael had carried away captive from Mizpah cast about and returned, and went unto Johanan the son of Kareah.

14. Et conversus est totus populus quem abduxerat Ismael e Mispath, et reversi sunt et profecti sunt cum Joanne filio Kareah.

The people readily passed over to John and his army, because John, and other leaders of the forces, came to them sufficiently armed, and they were, as we have before seen, men trained up for war. And Ishmael could not have been equal to them, when the people went over to John and his associates. Thus we see that the impious man failed in his base purpose, for he thought to render himself very acceptable to the king of Ammon by bringing so many captives to dwell in his land, that he might take possession of Judea. He had then formed many plans for himself, but God frustrated them. But it was God's will that he should remain alive; for he fled, as it appears from what follows, ---

Jeremiah 41:15

15. But Ishmael the son of Nethaniah escaped from Johanan with eight men, and went to the Ammonites.

15. Et Ismael (Ismael autem) filius Nathaniae servatus est (vel, evasit) cum octo hominibus a facie Joannis, et pro-fectus eat ad filios Ammon.

He indeed met with bad success; he fled before his enemy, when the whole people forsook him, when he lost his soldiers; and he could not come without the greatest disgrace before the king of Ammon. It seems, however, very strange that he was

[351] There was a pool in Gibeon, mentioned in 2 Samuel 2:13; and it must have been large, otherwise it would not have been called “great waters.” — Ed.

allowed to flee away; for how was it that God did not execute those well-known sentences, ---

``He who smites with the sword shall perish by the sword;'' ``Whosoever sheds man's blood, his blood shall be shed?'' (Matthew 26:52; Revelation 13:10; Genesis 9:6)

Ishmael had not only killed a man, but the governor of the people, and that governor by whose protection and favor a remnant had been preserved as a seed; and he had also killed all whom he had found with him; and lastly, he had killed seventy men, with whom he had no strife, no war, no quarrel. As, then, Ishmael had so polluted himself with innocent blood, and with so many murders of good men, how was it that he was suffered to escape?

As we have before said, God does not now observe an equal, or the same course in his judgments; for he often extends the life of the most wicked, that they may be exhibited, as it were, as a spectacle; nor does the truth of the words, ``Whosoever sheds man's blood, his blood shall be shed,'' become evanescent; but God has various ways by which he renders a just reward to murderers and assassins. And we ought to notice what is said in the book of Psalms,

``Slay them not, lest my people should forget.''
(Psalm 59:11)

The Psalmist there asks God not to destroy immediately the wicked; for an oblivion of a remarkable punishment might easily creep in, if God executed it suddenly and instantly. But when God impresses a mark of his curse on the impious and the wicked, and prolongs their life, it is the same as though he placed them in a theater to be looked on leisurely and for a long time. Conspicuous, then, are the marks of God on the impious, when God pursues them slowly and by degrees, and summons them, in a manner, day by day before his tribunal. There is, therefore, no doubt but that God thus executed vengeance on the barbarity of Ishmael.

For how was it that he killed Gedaliah? even because he was of the royal seed, and foolish pride still filled his heart, though God by his powerful hand had broken down whatever dignity that once belonged to the royal seed, sea, he had completely torn it to pieces; and yet this man cherished his own ferocity. Hence God executed on him a two-fold punishment, by depriving him of his company; for he went to the king of Ammon, whom he had no doubt flattered with great promises, and from whom he also expected no common rewards, --- he went there a fugitive with his eight companions, and also filled with confusion, and he saw no hope of a return. Thus, then, it happened that he was despised and reprobated; and this was, no doubt, more bitter to him than if he had suffered ten deaths.

Let us then learn not to form our judgment according to the present appearance of things; but let us patiently wait while God makes openly known to us the various ways he adopts in punishing the wicked; nay, this ought especially to serve as a confirmation to our faith, when we see the godly cruelly slain, and the wicked remaining in security; for it hence follows that we are to look for another judgment of God, which does not yet appear. For if God rendered to each his just reward, then the Sadducees would have some ground to boast that there is not another life; but

when things are thus in a state of confusion in the world, we know that God's judgment is suspended and deferred to another time. Then this variety or confusion, if you please, confirms our minds in the hope of the last judgment, and of a blessed resurrection. I cannot now proceed further.

PRAYER

Grant, omnipotent God, that as this world is filled with the filth of the wicked, and as we are on every side surrounded with enemies, --- O grant, that we may learn to flee under thy protection, and so hide ourselves under the shadow of thy wings, that we may look nowhere else for safety but from thy defense; and that we may also know that as to everything that happens to us, our life and our death are so ordered by thy wonderful providence, that all events help forward our salvation, so that we may go onward, not only through many calamities, but, if need be, through the midst of slaughters, until we shall come to that blessed rest, which thine only-begotten Son has obtained for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifty-Sixth

Jeremiah 41:16-18

16 Then took Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah, after that he had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, even mighty men of war, and the women, and the children, and the eunuchs, whom he had brought again from Gibeon:

16. Et sumpsit Joannes filius Kareah et cuncti principes (duces) copiarum qui erant cum eo omnes reliquias populi, quas reduxerant ab Ismaele filio Nathaniae e Mispath, postquam percusserat Godoliam filium Achikam, viros fortes, viros belli (hoc est, bellicosos,) et mulieres et pueritiam et eunuchos quos reduxerat a Guibeon:

17. And they departed, and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham, which is by Bethlehem, to go to enter into Egypt,

17. Et profecti sunt et sederunt (vel, substiterunt) in Geruth-Chimcham, quae est prope Bethlehem, ut proficiscerentur ad ingrediendum in Aegyptum,

18. Because of the Chaldeans: for they were afraid of them, because Ishmael the son of Nethaniah had slain Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, whom the king of Babylon and made governor in the land.

18. Propter Chaldaeos, quia timebant ab ipsis (ad verbum, a facie ipsorum,) quia percusserat Ismael filius Nathaniae Godoliam filium Achikam, quem praefecerat rex Babylonis in terra.

The Prophet now shews, that though some kind of virtue appeared in John the son of Kareah, he was not yet of a right mind. He was an energetic and a discreet man, but he discovered his unbelief, when he led the remnant of the people into Egypt, while the Prophet was forbidding such a thing. He already knew that this was not lawful, but his obstinacy was two-fold more, when the Prophet repudiated his project, as we shall see. This passage then teaches us, that though the leaders of the forces, who had put Ishmael to flight, and avenged his perfidy, were men of courage, and shewed regard for the public good, they were destitute of faith: there was thus wanting in them the chief thing, that is piety and the fear of God.

Then the Prophet says, that John and the rest took the remnant of the people whom they had recovered from Ishmael, from Mizpah, not that they were recovered from that place, but that Ishmael had brought the unhappy people captives from Mizpah, as we have seen; but they had all been recovered at Gibeon, according to what is said at the end of the verse. But he says that they were valiant men, {גברים}, geberim, (he so calls them on account of their courage, for an explanation follows,) and men of war, {אנשי} {המלחמה}, anushi emelecheme. He then calls them valiant or brave, and afterwards he explains what that virtue was, even because they were warlike men. He says further, that there were women mixed with them, and children, and eunuchs, who once lived in the king's court; and as we have before seen, there were among them the king's daughters. Gedaliah then had collected together a considerable number of men, not only from the lower orders, but also from the higher class, whose wealth and rank were not common while the kingdom was standing.

But the Prophet immediately adds what the purpose was which they had all formed. They dwelt, he says, in Geruth; some render it, ``in the peregrination;'' but it seems to me to be a proper name, and I agree with those who so render it. [352] But it is called the Geruth of Chimham, of whom mention is made in 2 Samuel 19:31, 37. he was the son of Barzillai, who entertained David when a fugitive from his kingdom, and entertained him bountifully. When David wished to remunerate his kindness, the good man made his age as an excuse, and said, that he was old, so that he could not enjoy the things of this life; but he presented his son to David, and it is probable that this place was given to the son as a reward. It was hence called Geruth-Chimham, the name of its possessor being attached to it. And he says that it was nigh Bethlehem. It is also probable, that when David wished to remunerate his host, he chose a place nigh his own city, where he was born.

It is added, to go, etc. Then the Prophet shews that this was not a settled habitation, but that they intended to go into Egypt They knew that this was forbidden by the Law of God, and the Prophets had often pronounced a curse on such a design. Notwithstanding God's prohibition, they prepared themselves for the journey. Fear was the cause; but how much so ever they might have justly feared, they ought yet to have considered what God permitted: for if a sick man takes poison instead of medicine, he must suffer the punishment that necessarily follows his own presumption and madness; so they who seek to provide for themselves contrary to God's will, gain only their own destruction. This was done, as the Prophet tells us, by the remnant of the people.

He then says, that they were there for a time, but that they looked forward to Egypt, on account, he says, of the Chaldeans, because they feared them, and for this reason, because Ishmael had killed Gedaliah, whom Nebuchadnezzar had set over the land This fear was not without reason; but they might have sent persons to the king of Babylon, and have thrown the blame on the right person, and cleared

[352] It is given as a proper name in the Sept.; the idea of peregrination is given in the Vulgate and Targum. If it be a common noun, its proper meaning is not peregrination, but habitation or dwelling, or rather dwellings, it being in the plural number. Blayney takes it as a proper name. — Ed.

themselves; and the matter might have been settled. They might then have easily obtained pardon from King Nebuchadnezzar; but as no fear of God prevailed in them, they did not consider what was lawful, and were by a blind impulse led into Egypt. Thus fear was no alleviation to their crime, for there was another remedy at hand, which God would have blessed. But when they disregarded God's word, and followed what their own feelings dictated to them, they contrived in a very bad way for themselves. But far worse is what follows.

Jeremiah 42

CHAPTER 42

Jeremiah 42:1-3

1. Then all the captains of the forces, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people from the least even unto the greatest, came near,

1. Et accesserunt cuncti duces copiarum, et Joannes filius Kareah, et Jezaniah filius Ozamae, et totus populus a parvo usque ad magnum,

2. And said unto Jeremiah the prophet, Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be accepted before thee, and pray for us unto the LORD thy God, even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us:)

2. Et dixerunt ad Jeremiam prophetam, Cadat Agedum precatio nostra coram facie tua, et ores pro nobis Jehovam Deum tuum pro omnibus reliquiis istis, quia relicti sumus exiguum e magno, sicuti oculi tui vident nos;

3. That the LORD thy God may shew us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do.

3. Et annuntiet nobis Jehova Deus tuus viam, per quam ambulemus, et rem quam faciamus.

I have said that John, and his associates, and the whole people acted much more culpably by coming to the Prophet, than if they had not done so, and had gone directly to Egypt: for they either came dissemblingly, and thus designedly spoke what was false, or they were extremely stupid, and hypocrisy had wholly deprived them of their understanding. They came to the Prophet to ask counsel; nay, that he might be to them God's interpreter, and that thus they might know what to do; and they promised to obey, as we shall hereafter see. However this may have been, they sought an oracle in which it was their duty to acquiesce, except they resolved openly to shake off the yoke and to show themselves to be gross and profane despisers of God. They came to the Prophet, when yet it was their fixed purpose, as we shall see,

to go to Egypt.

He who asks counsel, ought first to see that he bring no prejudice, but be free and honest: but it is, however, a fault too common, that men deliberate and ask counsel, when they have already settled what to do; nay, nothing is more common than this; for those who consult do not, for the most part, wish to learn what is right, but that others should fall in with their own inclinations. He who has resolved on this or that point, pretends that he is in doubt, and held in suspense; he asks what ought to be done: if the answer be according to his wishes, he embraces what is said; but if he who is consulted, disapproves of what he has already resolved to do, he rejects the counsel given. Such was the dissimulation described by the Prophet, when the leaders of the forces and the whole people came to him.

He mentions, first, the leaders of the forces, and then John the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah the son of Hoshiah He adds these two last; but it was to give them honor, as when the angel said,

``Go and tell his disciples and Peter.'' (Mark 16:7)

He did not put aside Peter, as though he was inferior to all the rest; but for the sake of honor he mentions his name, after having spoken generally of them all. So also here, the Prophet names generally the leaders, but as John the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah were the chief men, he expressly gives their names. He adds, the whole people, from the least to the greatest This does not refer to age; but what he means is, that all, of every grade, came with one consent to Jeremiah. It was not then the conspiring of a few men, but all from the least to the greatest had resolved to go to Egypt; and yet they came, as though with an honest purpose, to the Prophet; wherefore? They wished their own perverse design to be approved by God, and thus to subject God to their own will and humor; for they did not suffer themselves to be ruled by his Spirit, but audaciously disregarded his word. The Prophet then shews that they were all implicated in the same sin.

It is added, that they said, as though they were ready to obey, Let our prayer fall before thee. This, as we have said, when addressed to God, is an evidence of humility; but it is applied here to man; and when the Hebrews make a humble request, they say, ``Let my prayer fall before thee,'' that is, Hear what I suppliantly and humbly ask. Pray, they said, to Jehovah thy God for us They called him the God of Jeremiah, not that they intended to exempt themselves from his authority; they did not mean that they were alienated from God; but in this way they extolled Jeremiah, and acknowledged him to be God's true and lawful Prophet. In short, this saying refers to the prophetic office, as though they had said, that Jeremiah had hitherto confirmed his vocation, so that it was clearly evident that he had been sent from above.

We hence see why they called Jehovah the God of Jeremiah, not as though they had rejected God, and as though he was not their God in common with Jeremiah, but they allowed that the Prophet possessed a higher honor, and that his faithfulness and integrity were beyond controversy.

But this admission justly recoiled on their own head; for if Jeremiah was God's Prophet, why did they not instantly obey him, after knowing that what he faithfully

told them he had received from God? and why did they insolently and ferociously resist him and accuse him of falsehood? Their own admission then was not sincere, but a fallacious flattery, as is the case with all hypocrites, who never speak in sincerity and truth.

They afterwards added, Pray for all this remnant, for we are left, a few from many This they added to produce pity, in order that they might more easily obtain from Jeremiah what they asked; nor was that difficult; but as they felt conscious of wrong, they sought the favor of the Prophet by flatteries, Had they asked him without disguise, they knew that he was of himself disposed to seek the well being of the people; but as they were of a double mind, they set before him their miserable state, which might; have roused the Prophet still more to make intercession to God for them. And for this reason they added, as thine eyes see us And they set before him this sad spectacle, to create sympathy in the Prophet. And it then follows, And may Jehovah thy God shew us the way in which we are to walk. They now explained more clearly why they wished prayer to be made for them, even that God might answer and shew what he wished them to do.

They came then, as it has been stated, as though they were ready to obey; and then they professed humility, because they did not wish to do anything rashly, but only to follow where God called them. Had they spoken from the heart, it would have been a rare virtue thus to-have fled in perplexities to God, and to have allowed themselves to be ruled by his word; but we shall see that it was all a pre-tence. We have then here set before us the hypocrisy of that people, so that we may learn that whenever we ask what pleases God, we should bring a pure and sincere heart, so that nothing may prevent or hinder us immediately to embrace whatever God may command us. But their hypocrisy is discovered to have been still baser, when the Prophet adds,

Jeremiah 42:4

4. Then Jeremiah the prophet said unto them, I have heard you; behold, I will pray unto the LORD your God according to your words; and it shall come to pass, that whatsoever thing the LORD shall answer you, I will declare it unto you; I will keep nothing back from you.

4. Et dixit illis Jeremias Propheta, Audivi, ecce ego orabo Jehovam Deum vestrum secundum sermones vestros, et erit quemcunque sermonem responderit Jehova vobis, annuntiabo vobis, non celabo a vobis quicquam.

In order to prepare them to obey, he testified that he would be a faithful messenger of God; for there is no doubt but that the Prophet, as we shall see, regarded them with suspicion. That he might therefore have them teachable and obedient to the answer expected from God, he said beforehand, that he would honestly and faithfully perform his office as a Prophet.

I have heard, he says; here he shews how ready he was to attend, and how he neglected nothing conducive to their well being. I have heard, he says, Behold, I will pray according to your words There is no doubt but that he thus intimated that he wished well to them; and it might have rendered them more attentive to the oracle to know that the Prophet was influenced by love. Nor is there a doubt but that

the Prophet testified his love towards them, that his doctrine might afterwards have more weight with them.

By saying, Whatever your God will answer, he did not mean that the oracle would be revealed to all, for the words could not be otherwise explained than through the Prophet, who would openly make known to the whole people what he heard from God's mouth. But he says, that the answer would be given to them, because God would give the answer which was to be communicated to all, as it is said that God spoke to Moses, and also to all the people, for the doctrine was intended for all. Moses did not receive the law, nor its interpretation, in his own private character, but in order that the people might know what was right. So Jeremiah did here; the answer he received from God he made known as belonging in common to all the people.

But in calling God their God, he did not mean to flatter them or to praise their piety, but to exhort them to surrender and devote themselves wholly to God, as though he had said, that they had to do with God, who had bound them to himself when he adopted them as his peculiar people, and then favored them with so many blessings. Since then God had made himself known to them, they could not reject his counsel with impunity, for there was no pretext of ignorance. We hence see what weight there is in this, your God; for Jeremiah reminded them that they could not with impunity trifle with God, for they were not their own, but had been chosen to be God's people, and on this condition, to be wholly subject to his authority. Then the sum of the whole is this, that the Prophet would faithfully convey to the Jews the answer God would give them; and he said this that his doctrine might have a greater authority among them. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 42:5-6

5. Then they said to Jeremiah, The LORD be a true and faithful witness between us, if we do not even according to all things for the which the LORD thy God shall send thee to us.

5. Ipsi antem dixerunt ad Jeremiam, Erit Jehova inter nos in testem (vel, testis) fidei et veritatis (testis fidelis et verax,) nisi secundum omnem sermonem quem miserit (id est, pro quo miserit) Jehova Deus tuus ad nos, sic facturi sumus;

6. Whether it be good, or whether it be evil, we will obey the voice of the LORD our God, to whom we send thee; that it may be well with us, when we obey the voice of the LORD our God.

6. Sive bonum, sive malum, voci Jehovae Dei nostri, pro qua nos mittimus te ad ipsum, obediemus (audiemus vocem, ad verbum, sed tantundem valet, audire vocem atque obedire voci,) ut bene sit nobis, cum obediverimus voci Dei nostri.

It hence appears that the people understood for what purpose Jeremiah, before he consulted God, assured them of his faithfulness and sincerity; for it was not without reason that they promised to be obedient to God; but as they saw that they were suspected as being not sincere by Jeremiah, and as he had promised to be a true and faithful teacher, they on the other hand declared that they would be sincere disciples, and would receive whatever God might command them. But they soon betrayed their perfidy, for when they heard that what they had resolved to do did

not please God, they not only rejected the counsel of God and the Prophet, but treated him insolently, and even loaded the holy man with reproaches, as though he had told them what was false. Their hypocrisy ought at the same time to be a lesson to us, so that when God is pleased through a singular favor to shew us the way of acting rightly by faithful instructors and competent teachers, we may not be like them, but be teachable and ready to obey, and prove this not only by the mouth but also by our deeds.

The Prophet then says, that they spoke thus, Let God be a faithful and true witness between us. Being not content with a simple affirmation, they dared to interpose the name of God; and thus we see how blind is hypocrisy. For if men duly weigh what it is to profane God's name, surely they would dread and abominate all perjury. As then they rushed on so audaciously to swear, it is evident that they were as it were stupefied; and there is no inebriety which so confuses the minds of men and all their senses as hypocrisy.

They then added, According to whatever word which Jehovah thy God shall send to us, so will we do, that is, whatever Jehovah shall command us by thee; for God is said to send to men, when he sends a messenger in his name to bring his commands. Jeremiah then was, as it were, a middle person to address the people in God's name, as though he had been sent from heaven. They therefore said, that they would do whatever God commanded. A stronger expression follows, Whether good or evil, we will obey the voice of Jehovah our God They did not here charge God's word with being wrong, as though it had anything unjust in it; but they used good in the sense of joyful, and evil as meaning what is sad or grievous, as though they had said, that they asked for no other thing but that God should declare what pleased him, and that they were so submissive as to refuse nothing though contrary to the flesh. Had this declaration proceeded from the heart, it would have been a testimony of true piety; for the minds of the godly ought to be so framed as to obey God without making any exception, whether he commands what is contrary to their purpose, or leads them where they do not wish to go; for they who wish to make a compact with God, that he should require nothing but what is agreeable to them, shew that they know not what it is to serve God. Hence the obedience of faith in an especial manner requires this, that man should renounce his own desires, that he should not set up his own counsels and wishes against the word of God, nor object and say, this is hard, that is not quite agreeable. Whether then it be good or evil, that is, though it may be contrary to the feelings of the flesh, we ought still to embrace what God requires and commands: this is the rule of true religion.

As the Jews spoke feignedly by assuming a character not their own, they profaned God's name. But if we desire to prove our fidelity to God, the only way of acting is, to regard his word as binding, whether it be agreeable or otherwise, and never to murmur, as the ungodly do; for when God would have a yoke laid on them, they complain that his doctrine is too hard and burdensome. Away, then, with all those things which can render God's word unacceptable to us, if we desire to give a sure proof of our fidelity. Hence they said, Whether it be good or evil, what God will lay down we will obey his voice.

They afterwards added, For which we send thee to him [353] Here they still further cast themselves into toils. Jeremiah did not in express words require them to make an oath; they yet did make an oath; and then in various ways still more bound themselves over to punishment, if they became perjurers. They now shew that it would be a two-fold crime, should they disobey God; how? Had the Prophet been sent to them, they might have made excuses; though vain, they might yet have something to allege; but when they of their own accord asked God, when they offered of themselves to do this, and promised to be obedient in all things, it is evident that unless afterwards they acted according to their pledged faith, they must have been more inexcusable, because they tempted God: for who induced them to come to the Prophet? We hence see that God extorted from them what doubled their crime. But the more hypocrites attempt by disguises to conceal their impiety, the faster they bind themselves, and the more they kindle God's wrath against themselves.

They then added, That it may be well with us when we obey the voice of Jehovah By this circumstance also they aggravated their crime. For if the Prophet had promised them a prosperous issue, they might not have believed; in that case they would have indeed sinned; but their wicked-ness would have been more tolerable than when they themselves had spoken, as though they were the organs of the Holy Spirit; they said themselves, It shall be well with us; it will be our chief happiness to follow the voice of God and to obey him. As, then, they thus protested to God and the Prophet, that they might appear to be God's faithful servants, the greater condemnation they brought on themselves; for if they believed that nothing would turn out happily, except according to God's command, how was it that they did not submit to God? why did they despise what was afterwards said by the Prophet? But as we have already said, as they deceived themselves by dealing falsely with God and profaning his holy name, let us learn and know that we can in no other way expect a happy issue in all that we do, but by obeying the voice of God; for whatever men may attempt of themselves, it will be accursed before God. This, then, is our only sure hope, that when we attempt nothing but what is according to God's word, there will be a good and happy issue, though many things may happen otherwise than we hope or think.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are here tossed to and fro, being uncertain and doubtful, except we are ruled by thy word, and are blind in thick darkness, --- O grant, that while thou shinest on us by thy Law and by thy Gospel, we may be illuminated as to our minds by thy Holy Spirit, so that we may wholly surrender ourselves to thee, and never deviate from the right way which thou hast made known to us, but so pursue our course through life, that at length we may come to that blessed life, which has been prepared for us in heaven by Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifty-Seventh

Jeremiah 42:7-10

[353] Our version is, "to whom we send thee," and correctly too: literally it is, "whom we send thee to him," an idiom common in Hebrew and also in Welsh, "yr hwn y danfonwn di atto." The Vulg. is, "to whom we send thee;" and so in the Syriac. and Targum., but the Septuagint tried to imitate the Hebrew, and there is no sense given. — Ed.

7. And it came to pass after ten days, that the word of the LORD came unto Jeremiah.

7. Et fuit a fine decem dierum datus est sermo Jehovae ad Jeremiam.

8. Then called he Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces which were with him, and all the people from the least even to the greatest,

8. Et vocavit Joannem filium Kareah et omnes duces copiarum, qui cum eo erant, et totum populum a parvo usque ad magnum,

9. And said unto them, Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto whom ye sent me to present your supplication before him;

9. Et dixit illis, Sic dicit Jehova, Deus Israel, ad quem misistis me (ad verbum, ad quem misistis me ad ipsum,) ut prosternerem preca-tionem vestram coram facie ejus, ---

10. If ye will still abide in this land, then will I build you, and not pull you down, and I will plant you, and not pluck you up: for I repent me of the evil that I have done unto you.

10. Si habitando habitaveritis in terra hac, tunc, aedificabo vos, et non diruam, et plantabo vos et non evellam; quia poenitet me mali quod intuli vobis (vel, satiatus sum malo.)

Here Jeremiah declares what answer he received from God; and he gave it in his name to the leaders of the forces and to the whole people. The answer was, that they were to continue in the land; for this would be for their good. We shall hereafter see, that they had falsely asked counsel of God, whom they had resolved not to obey, as it has been already stated. But the Prophet shews again more clearly how perversely they acted after God had commanded them to remain quiet, and especially not to proceed to Egypt.

Now he says, that at the tenth day God answered him. He might have done so immediately, but he deferred, that the prophecy might have more weight. Had the Prophet been asked any question respecting the common rule of life, as a faithful expounder of the Law, he might have explained to them what their duty was; but as he had been asked on a special subject, he could not have immediately answered them. And God, as I have said, kept them for a time in suspense; not only that the Prophet's answer might be made without ostentation, but also that. the people might embrace as coming from God what the Prophet would say; for his doctrine could not have been doubted, for he did not instantly bring forth what had arisen in his own head, but prayerfully waited to know what pleased God, and at length announced his commands. We now then perceive the cause of delay, why God did not immediately convey to his servant the answer required.

Let us at the same time learn from this passage, that if God does not immediately extricate us from all perplexity and doubt, we ought patiently to wait, according to the direction of Paul, who, when speaking of doctrine, admonished the faithful to remain contented until what they knew not should be revealed to them. (Philippians 3:15.) Much more should we do so, when we ask counsel as to any particular thing. When God does not immediately make known to us what we ask, we ought, as I have already said, to wait with calm and resigned minds for the time and the season when

it shall be made known to us.

Jeremiah says, that he called John and the other leaders of the forces and all the people, from the least to the greatest This is expressed that we may know that it happened, not through the fault of one or two, that this prophecy was disregarded, but that all the people were united together. The people themselves, then, could not have pretended that they were free from blame; for we see that they were all implicated. The leaders are particularly mentioned, and on the other hand the people, so that the leaders could not object and say that they were forced by a popular tumult, nor could the people throw the blame on the leaders. The Prophet then shews that they all rebelled against God, and that there was no exception.

He then says that he faithfully related to them what God had commanded, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me By this circumstance he shews that they were more bound to obey; for if God had sent his Prophet to them,' they ought to have obeyed his voice; but when they of their own accord came to him and prayed for a favor, and wished God's will to be made known to them, they became doubly culpable when they refused the answer given them in God's name. And he adds, That I might prostrate, or make to fall, your prayer before God We have stated what is meant by this mode of speaking; but there is a difference to be noticed, for he had been requested sup-pliantly to ask God; and he says here that he had not only prayed, but had presented the prayer of the whole people, because he acted for the public; and then he was a middle person between God and the people. On this account he says, that he had been seat to present the prayer of the people to God, for he asked nothing for himself, but acted for them all, and asked God to answer the people.

He now adds, If remaining ye will remain in this land, I will build you up and plant you, I will not pull you down nor root you up Here the Prophet testifies that the counsel he gave them in God's name would be for their good; and what is good or useful is deemed by men, when they theorize, as they say, to be of great value. The simple authority of God ought, indeed, to be sufficient; and had God only commanded them in one word to remain, they ought to have acquiesced. But God here accommodated himself to their infirmity, and was pleased, in a manner, to let himself down in order to promote their well being, and did not require obedience according to his authority and sovereign power, as he might have justly done. We hence see how kindly God dealt with this people, as he did not demand what he might, but gave his counsel, and testified that it would be good and useful to them.

Now when orators adduce what is useful in order to persuade, they have recourse to conjectures, they state human reasons; but the Prophet here promised in God's name, that that if they remained it would be for their good. God's promise, then, is brought forward here instead of conjectures and reasons. Therefore the obstinacy of the people was without excuse, when they rejected the authority of God; and then despised his counsel, and also disbelieved his promise. Then to the contempt of God was added unbelief: and we know that no greater reproach can be offered to God than when men do not believe him.

The metaphors here used occur often in Scripture. God is said to build up men

when he confirms them in a settled state; and in the same sense he is said to plant them. This we have already seen, and it is especially evident from Psalm 44:2, where God is said to have ``planted'' in the land of Canaan the people he had brought out of Egypt. He then promised that the condition of the people would be secure, and safe, and perpetual, if only they did not change their place. When he adds, I will not pull down nor pluck up, he: follows what is done commonly in Hebrew. Neither the Latins nor the Greeks speak in this manner; but negatives of this kind in Hebrew are confirmations, as though the Prophet had said, ``God will so plant you that your root will remain. There will then be no danger of being plucked up when you have been planted by God's hand; nor will he suffer you to be subverted or pulled down when he has built you up by his own hand.'' What then they ought to have especially sought, God freely promised them, even to be safe and secure in the land; for this especially was what the Prophet meant.

It afterwards follows, For I repent of the evil which I have brought on you. The verb {נחם}, nuchem, sometimes means to repent, and often to comfort; but the former sense comports better with this passage, that God repented of the evil. If, however, we prefer this rendering, ``For I have received comfort,'' then the meaning would be, ``I am satisfied with the punishment with which I have visited your sins;'' for they to whom satisfaction is given are said to receive comfort. As then God was content with the punishment he had inflicted on the Jews, the words may be rendered thus, ``For I have received satisfaction from the evil,'' or, ``I am satisfied with the evil,'' etc. The other meaning, however, is more generally taken, that God repented of the evil. [354] But this mode of speaking is, indeed, somewhat harsh, yet it contains nothing contrary to the truth; for we know that God often transfers to himself what peculiarly belongs to man. Then repentance in God is nothing else than that having been pacified, he does not pursue men to an extremity, so as to demand the punishment which they justly deserve. Thus, then, God repented of the evil which he had brought on the people, after having sufficiently chastised their sins, according to what we read in Isaiah, when God says, that he had exacted double for their sins. (Isaiah 40:2.) He called the punishment he had inflicted double, not that it exceeded a just measure, but he spoke according to his paternal feeling, that he had treated his people in a harder way than he wished, as a father, who is even displeased with himself when he has been very severe towards his children.

We now, then, perceive what is meant by the reason here given, that the Jews were not to fear if they dwelt in the land, because God had sufficiently chastised them, and that he was so pacified that he would not further pursue them with severity. Jeremiah at the same time reminds us, that whatever evils happen to us, they ought to be ascribed to God's judgment, and not to adverse fortune. We hence see that by these words the people were exhorted to repent; for as they were bidden to entertain good hope, because their safety was in God's hand, so also the Prophet shews that as to the time past they had suffered nothing by chance, but that they had been punished because they had provoked God's wrath. It follows, ---

[354] The phrase often occurs, and has ever this meaning; and it is the meaning here, no doubt, though the Sept. and the Vulg. adopt the other sense. The versions often give different senses to the same phrases, which render them unsafe guides. — Ed.

Jeremiah 42:11-12

11. Be not afraid of the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid; be not afraid of him, saith the LORD: for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand.

11. Ne timearis a facie regis Babylonis, quem vos timetis a facie ejus (hoc est, a cujus facie vos timetis) ne timeatis ab ipso, dicit Jehova; quia vobiscum ego sum ad servandum vos, et ad eripiendum vos e manu ejus;

12. And I will shew mercies unto you, that he may have mercy upon you, and cause you to return to your own land.

12. Et dabo vobis misericordias, et miserabitur vestri et habitare faciet in terra vestra.

The Prophet obviates the doubt which might have grieved or agitated the minds of the people. They ought, indeed, to have recumbed on God's promise alone; but it was difficult to be without doubts in a state of things so uncertain and confused; for the king of Babylon, as it has been stated, was grievously offended when the governor of the land was slain. The king had received wrong from the people, and the heat of war since the late victory had not cooled. They then justly feared, being conscious of the evil that had been done; and then they had to do with a proud and cruel enemy. God therefore removed from them this doubt; and thus he confirmed the paternal care which he had shewn towards them by kindly freeing them from every fear, and taking away every ground of terror.

Though Nebuchadnezzar had been offended, and might avenge the wrong done to him, yet God promised to prevent this, and declared that he would not suffer him to do any evil to the Jews. ``Ye fear,'' he says, ``Nebuchadnezzar, but cease to do so; let this fear be dismissed, for he will not hurt you.'' And the reason is added, Because I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand Here he bade the Jews to entertain good hope, because, while relying on his protection they would be safe: for there is no more any reason for doubting, when God declares that he will stand on our side. For if he is ours, we may be confident, as David was, when he said,

``I will not fear what man may do to me; for thou, God,''
he says, ``art with me;''

and also,

``I will not fear though hosts surrounded me oft every side.''
(Psalm 23:4; Psalm 27:3)

We ought then to feel wholly assured, that the help of God is above that of all creatures. Thus were the whole world to rise up against us, we might as from a secure and safe place look down with indifference on all attempts, forces, and preparations. This is then the sum of what is here said; and it is according to what Christ says,

``My Father, who has given you to me, is greater than all.''
(John 10:29)

Had there then been a grain of faith in the Jews, they would have laid hold on this promise; and then had they tenaciously held it, as though it were a plank in a shipwreck, it would have led them safe to the harbor. It ought then to be sufficient to shake off all cares, to drive away all fears, and to put to flight every diffidence, when

God promises to stand on our side. I am, he says, with you to save you, and he adds, to deliver you He expresses the way and manner of saving them; for they might still have objected and said, ``What will be this salvation? for Nebuchadnezzar is like a furious lion; how then can we be saved, since we cannot think otherwise than that he will be enraged against us?'' To this God answers, by pointing out the manner, for he would deliver them from his hand.

He confirms the same thing in other words, I will shew mercies to you Some explain this as meaning, that God would be merciful towards them; and I allow that this is the first reason why they ought to have entertained hope; but I doubt not but that the Prophet refers here to Nebuchadnezzar, as though he had said, ``I will turn the heart of the king of Babylon to mercy, so that he will deal mercifully with you.'' For God is said to shew mercies, when he forgives, and when he reconciles those who have sinned to himself; but he is said also to shew mercies, when he inclines the hearts of men to mercy. For this reason Jacob says,

``God will shew you mercies before the man.''
(Genesis 43:14)

But I abstain from other proofs on a point which ought to be well known.

The sum of what is said then is, that Nebuchadnezzar would be humane and merciful towards the Jews, because it was in God's power to change his heart. For we know that God turns as he pleases the hearts of men; and he often changes wolves into sheep. The meaning then is, that though Nebuchadnezzar boiled with hatred towards the people, and was prepared wholly to destroy the remnant, there yet would be a remedy in God's hand, for he could soften his hardness, pacify his wrath, and from a savage wild beast make him a father, merciful, as it were, towards his children.

Now this passage teaches us, that the hearts and purposes of men are governed by a power from above, so that enemies, even the worst, while they rage against us, are moved not only by their own feelings, but also by the hidden working of God, and according to his counsel, as he would have them thus to try our faith. For if God moderates those who boil with anger and wrath, and renders them placable to us; so also he lets loose the reins to those who rage against us, and not only so, but he also stirs them up, when his purpose is to punish us for our sins, according to the doctrine taught us everywhere in Scripture. So in Psalm 106, it is said that God turned the hearts of the heathens to hate his people. But here, on the other hand, God promises, that Nebuchadnezzar would be kind and humane, so as to spare the Jews, because he would control his heart, and shew them mercy by inclining the king to forgive the people.

This then ought to be carefully noticed; for when we see ourselves surrounded on every side by the ungodly whom Satan drives to madness, so that they seek no other thing than to tread us under their feet, especially when they have the power to destroy us, except we feel fully assured, that their hearts, feelings, and all their thoughts are in God's hands, we must necessarily be wholly disheartened. Hence to mitigate all our fears, it avails us much to hear that men's hearts are turned and ruled according to the will of God. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 42:13-17

13. But if ye say, We will not dwell in this land, neither obey the voice of the LORD your God,

13. Quod si dixeritis vos, Non habitabimus in terra hac, non obediendo voci Jehovae Dei vestri;

14. Saying, No; but we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall see no war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor have hunger of bread; and there will we dwell:

14. Dicendo, Non, quia (vel, sed) in terram Aegypti ibimus (nam {יכ} potest adversative capi,) ubi non videbimus proelium, et vocem tubae non audiemus, et ad panem non esuriemus, et habitabimus illic:

15. And now therefore hear the word of the LORD, ye remnant of Judah; Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; If ye wholly set your faces to enter into Egypt, and go to sojourn there;

15. Nunc propterea audite sermonem Jehovae, residuum Jehudah, quia sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Si vos ponendo posueritis facies vestras ad ingrediendum Aegyptum (ut ingrediamini in Aegyptum,) et ingressi fueritis illic ad peregrinandum;

16. Then it shall come to pass, that the sword, which ye feared, shall overtake you there in the land of Egypt; and the famine, whereof ye were afraid, shall follow close after you there in Egypt; and there ye shall die.

16. Erit (accidet) ut gladius quem vos timetis ab eo (hoc est, a quo metuitis) illic apprehendat vos (vel, occurrat vobis illic, nempe) in terra Aegypti, et fames a qua extimescitis (hoc est, propter quam estis anxii, (vel, quam expaveseitis, nam {גאד} utrunque significat) illic apprehendet vos (vel, adhaerebit vobis, sed ad verbum, apprehendet post vos, vel, persequetur vos, nempe) in terra Aegypti, et illic moriemini.

17. So shall it be with all the men that set their faces to go into Egypt to sojourn there; they shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: and none of them shall remain or escape from the evil that I will bring upon them.

17. Et erunt omnes viri qui posuerint facies suas ut veniant in Aegyptum ad peregrinandum illuc morientur gladio, fame et peste, et non erit illis superstes aut evasor (id est, qui evadat) a facie mali quod ego adduco super eos.

God having promised, that the counsel he gave to the Jews would be good and safe, now, on the other hand, threatens them, that if they disobeyed, everything they would attempt would end miserably. They had not expressly asked whether it would be for their good to go into Egypt, or whether it would be pleasing to God; but God, who penetrates into all hidden purposes, anticipated them, and declared that their going would be unhappy, if they fled into Egypt. We hence see how the Prophet, or rather God himself, who spoke by his servant, tried by all means to keep them in the way of duty.

He then says, If ye say, We shall not dwell in this land, it shall be ill with you, he says: but before he denounced punishment, he shewed that they deserved to be destroyed, if they went to Egypt; for had the thing been in itself lawful, yet to attempt such a thing against the express will of God was, as we know, an impious

and a diabolical presumption and rashness. God had forbidden them specifically in his Law ever to set their hearts on Egypt, (Deuteronomy 17:16;) and he had often confirmed the same thing by his Prophets, (Isaiah 30:2; Isaiah 31:1;) and now again he seals the former prophecies, as he expressly forbids them to go to Egypt. The Prophet then sets this crime before their eyes: ``If ye flee into Egypt, what is it that compels you? even because ye will not obey God.'' There is then great weight in these words, Nor obey the voice of Jehovah your God; as though he had said, that they could not think of Egypt, except they designedly, as it were, rejected the authority of God, and resisted his counsel.

He adds, Saying, No; for we will go into the land of Egypt, where we shall not see war, etc. here the Prophet discovers the very fountain of rebellion, namely, that they paid no regard to God's favor. They were indeed exposed to many dangers in their own land, which produced fear and trembling, and its desolation also might have filled them with horror and weariness; but as God had declared that their safety would be cared for by him, how great and how base an ingratitude it was to deem as nothing that aid which he had freely promised! The Prophet then, in condemning their disobedience, shews at the same time the cause of it, even that unbelief led them away from rendering obedience to God. If, then, ye say, No, --- this word was a proof of their obstinacy; but he adds, We shall go into Egypt, where we shall not see war, where we shall not hear the sound of the trumpet, as though, indeed, the promise of God were false or void. But the Prophet here discovers their hidden impiety, that they did not recumb on God's promise. They promised then to themselves a peaceable life in Egypt. Was it in their power to effect this? and God, what could he do? he had declared that they would be safe and secure in the land of Canaan. It was to charge God with falsehood, to hope for rest in Egypt, and to imagine nothing but disturbances in the land where God bade them to remain in quietness.

We now then see why he says, We shall go into Egypt, where we shall not see war, nor hear the sound of the trumpet, nor hunger for bread They promised to themselves an abundance of all blessings, for the land of Egypt was fruitful. But could not God afflict them with want? The Egyptians, we know, had also been sometimes visited with famine. We hence see why God so much condemned the design of the people as to their going into Egypt; for they entertained vain hopes, and at the same time charged God indirectly with falsehood.

He adds, Hear the word of Jehovah, ye remnant of Judah Jeremiah, by thus addressing them, no doubt endeavored to lead them to obedience. We indeed know that men in prosperity are in a manner inebriated, so that they are not easily induced to obey sound counsels. For whence comes it that kings and princes of the world indulge themselves so much, and allow such license to their lusts? even because the splendor of their fortune inebriates them. So also private men, when all things succeed according to their wishes, they lodge in their own dregs; hence it is that they are difficult to be ruled. The Prophet, on the other hand, shews that there is no reason for them to be proud. Ye are, he says, a small number, and God has wonderfully saved you. Hear, then, ye remnant of Judah In short, they are reminded of their humble and miserable condition, that they might be more teachable. But this also

was done without any fruit, as we shall hereafter see.

This saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel Of these words we have spoken elsewhere. God is often called the God of hosts on account of his power: so by this term God sets forth his own greatness. Afterwards when he is said to be the God of Israel, we know that the benefit of adoption was thus brought to the recollection of the people; for God had them especially as his people, and bound them as it were to himself. This ought then to have been a most holy bond of faithfulness and obedience. It was not, then, by way of honor that the Prophet thus spoke, but in order to reprove the Israelites for their hardness and ingratitude towards God. If, he adds, ye set your faces to go into Egypt, and ye enter in there to sojourn, it shall be that the sword which ye fear shall meet you, etc. Here is their punishment described, and there is nothing obscure in the words. God shows that they were greatly deceived, if they thought that they would be prosperous in Egypt; for no prosperity can be hoped except through the favor and blessing of God; and God pronounced a curse on all their perverse counsels when he saw that they would not be restrained by his word. If, then, we attempt anything contrary to the prohibition of God, it must necessarily end unsuccessfully; and why? because the cause of all prosperity is the favor of God, and so his curse always renders all issues sad and unhappy: and however prosperous at first may be what we undertake against God's will, yet the end will be wretched and miserable, according to what the Prophet teaches here.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast not once only shown to us the way and the end to which we ought to proceed, but art pleased daily to stretch forth thy hand to us, and dost by thy constant exhortations invite and stimulate us to go onward, --- O grant, that we may attend to thy voice, and so renounce all the corrupt desires and lusts of our flesh, that nothing may hinder us wholly to submit to thee, and so to follow whithersoever thou mayest call us, that we may at length come to that blessed rest, which thou hast prepared for us in heaven through Christ our Lord --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifty-Eighth

Jeremiah 42:18

18. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; As mine anger and my fury hath been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so shall my fury be poured forth upon you, when ye shall enter into Egypt: and ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach; and ye shall see this place no more.

18. Quoniam sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Sicuti fusa est iracundia mea et excandescentia mea super habitatores Jerusalem, sic fundetur excandescentia mea super vos cum veneritis in Aegyptum; et eritis in execrationem et in stuporem et in maledictum et in probrum; et non videbitis amplius locum hunc.

The Prophet confirms what he had already said, by an example of God's vengeance, which had lately been shewn as to the Jews; for though the destruction of the city and the Temple had been often predicted to them, they yet had become torpid as to God's threatenings. God, however, after having delayed for a long time,

at length executed what he had threatened. They had titan seen that dreadful example, which ought to have filled them, and also their posterity, with fear. Then the Prophet, as he saw that they were so tardy and stupid that they thoughtlessly derided God's threat-enings, reminded them of what they had lately seen. ``Ye know,'' he says, ``how God's fury had been poured forth on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, such also will be poured forth on those who will flee into Egypt.''

Now Jeremiah was able to speak with authority, as he had been the herald of that vengeance now mentioned. If any other had declared in God's name what had happened, they might have objected and said, that they had indeed been justly punished by God, but that it did not hence follow flint what he said was true; but as the Prophet had for forty years often and constantly denounced on them what at length they had really and by experience found to have been predicted to them from above, he was able to repeat a similar judgment of God with the highest authority, as he now does.

Thus saith Jehovah, he says, as my fury was poured forth, etc. The similitude is taken either from water or from metals: hence some give this rendering, ``As my fury flowed down;'' but the verb used by Jeremiah means properly to pour forth. It may, however, as I have said, be applied to water, which spreads when poured out, or to metals, which being liquid spread here and there. He then means, that all who should go to Egypt would be wretched and miserable; for wheresoever they might try to withdraw themselves, the vengeance of God would yet find them though exiles, for it would spread like a deluge over all the inhabitants, so that they would in vain seek hiding-places. We now see the design of the Prophet. The meaning is, that as the Jews had by their calamity known him to have been a true and faithful servant of God in foretelling the destruction of the city and Temple, so would they find now, except they repented, that the message by which he threatened a second destruction, had come also from God. Poured forth, he says, shall be mine indignation on you when ye come into Egypt

He afterwards adds a passage from the Law, which often occurs in the Prophets, that they would be an execration, an astonishment, a curse, and a reproach The word {אלה}, ale, which we have rendered ``execration,'' means properly an oath; but as imprecation is often added, when we wish to be believed, it is also understood as an execration. He then says that they would be an execration, that is, a formula of execration, as we have elsewhere explained. Whosoever then had a wish to express a curse, they would, as the Prophet says, use this form as a common proverb, ``May God curse thee as he did the Jews,'' --- ``May I perish as the Jews perished.'' In short, he intimates that the punishment would be so horrible that men would turn it to a common proverb, he adds, And an astonishment, that is, that God's vengeance would be so dreadful, that all would be filled with amazement. He further adds, And a curse and a reproach The sum of what is said is, that God would inflict on the Jews not a common punishment, but such as would be remembered among all the heathens, in order that it might appear that their wickedness in obstinately rejecting the prophetic word was not light.

He lastly adds that they should never see their own land; for it was not the design

of the Jews to dwell perpetually in Egypt; for they pretended that they remained firm and constant in their dependence on God's promise, and boasted that they had a hope of a return, because God had fixed seventy years for their exile. As they then thus foolishly gloried, that they hoped in God for the promised favor, he says that they were shut out as to any hope of a return; for though God would restore the other captives dispersed throughout the East, yet the Egyptian guests were doomed to die in their exile. This then was to cut off from them every hope, in order that they might know that they were wholly rejected, and would have a place no more among- God's people, however they might wish to be deemed the first. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 42:19-21

19. The LORD hath said concerning you, O ye remnant of Judah; Go ye not into Egypt: know certainly that I have admonished you this day.

19. Loquutus est Jehova contra vos, reliquiae Jehudah, Ne eatis in Aegyptum; sciendo sciatis quod contestatus fuerim vos hodie:

20. For ye dissembled in your hearts, when ye sent me unto the LORD your God, saying, Pray for us unto the LORD our God; and according unto all that the LORD our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it.

20. Quoniam fefellistis animus vestras (aut, fallaces fuistis in animabus vestris) quando misistis me ad Jehovam Deum vestrum, dicendo, Ora pro nobis Jehovam Deum nostrum; et secundum omnia quae locutus Jehova Deus noster fuerit, sic annuntia nobis et faciemus.

21 And now I have this day declared it to you; but ye have not obeyed the voice of the LORD your God, nor any thing for the which he hath sent me unto you.

21. Ego autem annuntiavi vobis hodie, et non audivistis vocem Jehovae Dei vestri, et secundum omnia propter quae misit me ad vos.

Here the Prophet explains more fully their sin; for their punishment might have appeared extreme, had not their impiety been more clearly unfolded. He then says that this punishment ought not to be regarded as too rigid, because God had not once only protested against the Jews and admonished them in a solemn manner and before witnesses; but they to the last not, only despised his counsel and warnings, but proudly rejected them. And he adds, that they dealt falsely and perfidiously with God, because they pretended that they would be obedient as soon as the will of God was known; but they shewed that in reality they had no such purpose; for their own vanity and deceit took full possession of them when the Prophet answered them in God's name; nor had they a desire to obey God.

Let us now consider the words: Jehovah hath spoken against you, the remnant of Judah He again calls them a remnant, in order that they might remember that they had no reason any more to be proud. We know how the Jews while in prosperity disregarded the Prophets; for they were inebriated with their good fortune. But God had dissipated this pride, with which they were previously filled. The Prophet had also set before them the favor through which they had been liberated, that they might learn hereafter to submit to God and his word. For this reason then he called them a remnant, even to render them more attentive and teachable. But it was done without any benefit; for though their affairs were nearly hopeless, and they

were reduced almost to nothing, yet they had not laid aside their high spirits. They were then still swollen with false confidence. But this warning, however, availed to render them more inexcusable.

If ye enter into Egypt, he says, knowing know ye, or, knowing ye shall know. The verb is in the future tense, though it may be taken as an imperative. But the future tense is the most suitable, knowing ye shall know, that is, the event itself will teach you, but too late, as the foolish are never wise till after the evil has taken place. Knowing ye shall know that I have protested against you this day. God says that he had left nothing undone to bring the Jews to a right mind; for a protest is usually made in a solemn manner, witnesses being called in, so that no one can plead that. he has gone astray through ignorance. To take away then every ground of excuse, witnesses were wont to be called. Hence God speaks according to the common practice and in a forensic sense, and says that he had protested against the Jews, lest they should by chance offend through want of knowledge. It then follows, that they knowingly perished, as though they had sought their own destruction.

He now adds another circumstance, that they had sent him under the pretense of rare piety, as though they were in every way ready to render obedience to God. But he first says that they had deceived themselves, or had been deceived. The verb {תעה}, toe, from which the Hithpael comes, means to err or go astray. But interpreters do not agree; for some give this explanation, that they deceived the Prophet in their hearts, that is, that they craftily retained their perverse design of going to Egypt, and at the same time professed that they were ready to obey. But as the Prophet's name is not mentioned here, this explanation seems unnatural. I therefore prefer the other explanation, that they deceived themselves; and {ב}, beth, is here redundant, as in many places: Ye deceived, then, your own souls, when ye sent me, he says, to Jehovah The Prophet intimates that when they sought to act craftily they were deceived; for God is wont to discover the astute, and when they devise this or that, they only weave snares and toils for themselves; and we see that craftiness ever brings the ungodly to ruin. The Prophet, according to this sense, derides that perverse affectation of astuteness, when the ungodly seek to deceive God; and he says that they deceived themselves, as we see also daily. Then he says that they themselves had been the authors of the evil, for they had brought themselves to ruin by their astute and crafty counsel, when they sent him to Jehovah. The {כי}, ki, is to be taken here as an adverb of time, When ye sent me to Jehovah your God, saying, Pray for us. [355]

[355] All the versions and the Targum differ as to the construction of these two verses, the 19th and the 20th, and modern authors too. I offer the following rendering, — 19. The word of Jehovah to you, the remnant of Judah, is this, Enter not into Egypt; knowing, know (or, surely know,) that I make this pro- 20. test to you this day. Verily, ye do go greatly astray against your own selves; for ye sent me to Jehovah your God, etc., etc. The first clause is according to the Vulg. The express message was, not to enter into Egypt. What they were to know and remember was the protest he made to them. Then in verse 20th, he charges them with inconsistency, that they went astray from their own professions, and afterwards he specifies what they had promised. There is, according to this view, a consistency in the whole passage. The word soul is often taken for the person: “against your own selves,” is literally “against your own souls.” The meaning of the phrase is, that they belied themselves, as it is evident from what follows. The past tense in Hebrew may often be rendered by the present, as it refers to time up to the present and including the present. The future also in Hebrew may be rendered by the present, because it refers often to what is now and continues to be. — Ed.

He reproves them not only for perfidy, but also for sacrilege, because they wickedly profaned the name of God. For it. was not to be endured that they should pretend a regard for religion, and testify that they would be obedient to God, and should at the same time cherish in their hearts that perverse intention which afterwards they discovered. And hence he not only relates that he had been sent, but that he had also been solicited to intercede for them. It was then a twofold sacrilege, for they had asked what would please God, and afterwards disregarded the prophecy, --- and then they offered a prayer, and when God gave them an answer by his servant., they counted it as nothing! We now perceive why Jeremiah so expressly mentioned these two things.

Pray for us to our God, and according to all which Jehovah our God shall say, relate thou to us: the people seemed to act with wonderful sincerity; they exhorted the Prophet to dissemble nothing, to add nothing and to diminish nothing'. What better can be wished than that men should lay aside all ambiguity and all evasions, and not wish God's words to be corrupted? And this the Jews expressed in high terms, Whatever Jehovah our God shall answer, declare thou to us Here they seemed to have more zeal than Jeremiah himself; for they enjoined a law, that he should add nothing and diminish nothing, but that he should be a faithful interpreter of God's will. They seemed then to be half-angels. They afterwards testified that they would do whatever God should command them.

He at length adds, And I have this day declared it to you Here he sets forth his own fidelity, not for the sake of boasting, but that their impiety might be reproved, who at length despised the oracle of God, which they had boasted that they would obey. Ye have not hearkened, he says, to the voice of Jehovah your God, and according to all the things on account of which he hath sent me to you. The Prophet again confirms the truth, that it was their own fault that the Jews did not follow what was right, and also what was for their good, for he had faithfully delivered to them what God had commanded. He now adds, ---

Jeremiah 42:22

22. Now therefore know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go and to sojourn.

22. Et nunc sciendo scitote (hic {תדעו} imperative sumendum est sine controversia) quod gladio et fame et peste moriemini in loco ad quem appetitis ire, ad peregrinandum illic.

The Prophet at length concludes his discourse, after having mentioned the reasons why God would deal so severely with them, even because their perfidy, impiety, ingratitude, and obstinate contempt were unsufferable. After having then shewn that they had no reason to expostulate as though God were extremely rigid, he at length declares what end awaited them, even that they should die by the sword, famine, or pestilence, that is, that there would be no hope of safety to them, because if they escaped from the sword, they should be beset with famine, and if they evaded the famine, they should be destroyed by pestilence. It is a common mode of speaking with the Prophets, as it is well known, that when they intimate that the ungodly in vain hope for impunity, they represent God as having at his command all

kinds of punishment.

Ye shall then, he says, die in that place which ye seek for your sojourn, he again shews the object of the people, for they did not intend to dwell perpetually in Egypt, but only for a time, until there was liberty to return to their own country. In short, they wished to be restored, as it were, against God's will; and yet they ceased not falsely to put forward the name of God, as hypocrites, who mock God, always do. Now follows, ---

Jeremiah 43

Chapter 43

Jeremiah 43:1-3

1. And it came to pass, that when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking unto all the people all the words of the LORD their God, for which the LORD their God had sent him to them, even all these words.

1. Et factum est quum finiisset Jeremias loqui ad totum populum cunctos sermones Jehovae Dei ipsorum, pro quibus miserat ipsum Jehova Deus ipsorum ad ipsos omnes (inquam) hos sermones;

2. Then spake Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, saying unto Jeremiah, Thou speakest falsely: the LORD our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there:

2. Tune dixit Azarias filius Ozaiae, et Joannes filius Kareae, et omnes duces, et omnes viri superbi, dicentes Jeremiae, Mendacium tu loqueris, non misit to Jehova Deus noster ad dicendum, Ne eatis in Aegyptum ad peregrinandum illic:

3. But Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us, for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon.

3. Sed Baruch filius Neriae incitat to contra nos, ut tradat nos in manum Chaldaeorum ad interficiendum nos et transferendum nos Babylonem.

Here the Prophet proceeds with the remaining part of the narrative. He says that the whole people obstinately persevered in their wicked design, so that he effected nothing by his warning and protest. Now this stupidity of the people was monstrous; for they had found out by experience the fidelity of the Prophet for many years; and further, they had gone to him because they believed that he was a faithful and an approved servant of God. He had not merely answered them in God's name, but as he knew their hardness, he added protestations which might have moved even stones. But he addressed the deaf; and it hence appears that they were wholly

fascinated by the devil. And thus let us learn not to mock God, nor bring a double heart when we inquire as to his will, but to suffer ourselves to be ruled by his word.

Now he says, that when he had finished speaking to the whole people, as God had commanded, then John the son of Kareah, and Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, being the first among them, spoke against him. As to Azariah, we cannot know with any certainty what he was. But we have here in John the son of Kareah an example deserving of notice. We have seen that he was a bold, wise, and prudent man, and also of an upright mind. In short, when we consider what the Prophet has before said of him, we cannot but think he was by nature a heroic man; nay, when he is compared with Gedaliah, who, at the same time, was an excellent man, and whom the Prophet has adorned with high commendations, he yet far excelled him. Gedaliah, indeed, had a kind disposition, he was courageous in protecting the people, he was a man of integrity; and, besides, he was a father to the people, and so conducted himself when things were in a hopeless state, that, beyond the expectation of all, he gathered together the remnant of the people; and we have also seen that by his efforts the Prophet had been delivered from instant death. But John the son of Kareah had been a remarkable helper to him, having come to him of his own accord, and offered to him his assistance; and further, he faithfully and prudently warned him to beware of the perfidy of that unprincipled man, by whom he was afterwards killed. Gedaliah fell through extreme credulity. John, then, the son of Kareah, had a greater appearance of excellency than Gedaliah had exhibited. But what does the Spirit of God now declare respecting him and his associates? They are said to have been proud and obstinate. We hence see that some men excel in greatness of mind, and are yet of a refractory disposition; and this is for the most part the case during' a disturbed state of things. For some come forth wonderfully courageous; but when things do not fall in with their wishes, they become ferocious and rebel against God and men, and besides, they will never bear to be brought under submission. Such, then, was John the son of Kareah: at one time he manifested extraordinary virtue, but at length it appeared what he really was.

The Prophet, with the authority of a judge, declares that he and his associates were proud: then Azariah the son of Hoshaiah, and John the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, said, A falsehood dost thou speak. This was extremely insolent and reproachful; for they had lately testified that they regarded Jeremiah as God's faithful servant, and that they would receive whatever he might bring as God's true oracle; but now they charge him with falsehood! how great was this presumption! But it hence appears how deep and various, and how tortuous are the recesses which are in the hearts of men; for at one time they announce honied words, and afterwards they utter nothing' but virulence. So from the same mouth, as it were, almost in the same moment, comes forth what is sweet; and what is bitter.

Let us hence learn that the heart of man is full of every kind of deceit, until it be cleansed by the Spirit of God. We also see, when once impiety boils up, to what extremes it will proceed; for these men were not only insolent and reproachful towards Jeremiah, but also towards God himself. And they did not now make evasions as before, nor did they raise objections; but they openly raved against the Prophet.

Thus hypocrisy has indeed for a time its coverings, but when the ungodly are urged by God, then they observe no bounds: Thou speakest what is false

They afterwards throw the blame on Baruch, who had been the Prophet's faithful servant. As they could not find out any reason why Jeremiah should speak falsely, they turned their fury against Baruch. They did not then spare Jeremiah for honor's sake, but as they had no reason whatever to speak evil of him, they fixed the blame on Baruch, who yet was as innocent as Jeremiah. Baruch, they said, excites thee against us Had Jeremiah so prophesied through the influence of another, yet his crime might have been at least extenuated. Now they said that he was mendacious, and brought forth nothing but impositions; but the ungodly do not regard what they say, for the devil drives them on headlong. And they charged Baruch with a very great crime, that he wished to betray them to the Chaldeans, and then to expose them to slaughter, and to deliver them that they might be driven into exile. All this would have been the greatest cruelty.: But then if we consider what sort of man Baruch had been, and how innocently he had conducted himself, how he had endangered his life in defending the true worship of God and prophetic doctrine, there was surely no reason for loading him with so great a reproach.

But we see that God's servants have been always exposed to extreme reproaches, even when they have exhibited the greatest integrity. If then, at this day, we hear of evil reports, after having labored to act uprightly, it ought not to appear to us a hard or a new thing to bear them with patience. We must, indeed, do what we can to stop the mouths of the malevolent and the wicked; nor ought we to give occasion, as Paul admonishes us, to the malignant. But when we have done our duty faithfully, if yet dogs bark at us, if we be loaded with many reproaches and crimes, let us learn patiently to endure them. This, then, ought to be done by us, since we see that Baruch was accused of extreme perfidy and cruelty.

What now had Baruch to do with the Chaldeans? Had he fled to them? Was he anxious to gain influence for himself? or to procure favor for himself? There was no such thing; he always followed Jeremiah wherever he went. Jeremiah had indeed obtained some favor; but this was to be attributed to the gratuitous kindness of God. Baruch, then, had got leave from the Chaldeans to remain with the Prophet; for the condition of both was the same. But yet he had not followed the Chaldeans, when his option was given to him. For when the Chaldeans offered quietness and rest to Jeremiah, Baruch might have also gone to that fertile country; but he chose to remain in the land. We hence see that he had removed from himself every suspicion, and yet he could not stop the mouths of the malevolent, but they slandered and. calumniated him. Let us then know that God's servants prove their firmness and constancy, when they are assailed on every side by the calumnies of men, and yet are satisfied with the testimony of their own conscience, and go on in their course, and look forward to the judgment of God, and care not what men think or speak, provided God approves of them, and is their judge in heaven.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since we see what thou didst formerly threaten to all the despisers of thy word, we may learn to suffer ourselves to be ruled by thee, and

so surrender all our powers and faculties to thy will, that we may receive immediately without any dispute whatever thou commandest, and so prove our sincerity, that our deeds may correspond with our words, and that our life may shew that we do not falsely profess thy holy name, but declare what we have in our minds and what thou thyself knowest, until the last day shall at length appear, when the books shall be opened, and all the thoughts of men shall be revealed, so that we may then appear upright in thy sight, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Fifty-Ninth

Jeremiah 43:4

4. So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, and all the people, obeyed not the voice of the LORD, to dwell in the land of Judah.

4. Et non audivit Joannes filius Kareah, neque omnes principes (duces) copiarum, neque torus popu-lus, vocem Jehovae, ut habitarent in terra Jehudah.

The Prophet had sufficiently shewn that John the son of Kareah and the rest had not in good faith inquired of the Prophet what the will of God was; for when they saw that God's counsel did not harmonize with their wicked and foolish desire, they rose up against the Prophet. But he now more clearly condemns their obstinacy in not obeying God; and it is said emphatically, that they did not obey the voice of God, because they denied that God had spoken. Though then they sought to evade, Jeremiah on the other hand declares, that he was a true interpreter of God's will, that he had announced nothing but what had come from God. He then brings them all in as guilty, the leaders and the whole people, that no man might think it strange that innocent men, willing to submit to God, were driven into Egypt. Hence the Prophet shews here that they were all implicated in the same sin, since the leaders alone did not resist the oracle, but also the whole people. It now follows,

Jeremiah 43:5-7

5. But Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, took all the remnant of Judah, that were returned from all nations whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah;

5. Et assumpsit Joannes filius Kareah et cuncti duces copiarum reliquias Jehudah, quae reversae fuerant e cunctis gentibus, ad quas illuc expulsae fuerant (sed abundat illuc) ad habitandum in terra Jehudah;

6. Even men, and women, and children, and the king's daughters, and every person that Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch the son of Neriah.

6. Nempe viros et mulieres (assumpsit tam viros quam mulieres,) et pueritiam et filias Regis, et omnem animam, quam reliquerat Nabuzardan, princeps interfectorum, apud Godoliam filium Achikaro, filii Saphan, et apud Jeremiam Prophetam, et apud Baruch filium Neriae:

7. So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the LORD: thus came they even to Tahpanhes.

7. Et venerunt in terram Aegypti, quia non obedierunt voci Jehovae, et venerunt usque ad Taphnees.

The Prophet now gives us a narrative of what he had briefly touched upon. He

then says that John and the rest of the leaders took the remnant of the people, who were there alive, and those who had returned from various countries; for many had become fugitives among the Moabites and the Idumeans, when they saw the city surrounded by the forces of King Nebuchadnezzar. Then they fled here and there, as it usually happens, and waited for the issue of the war. But after Nebuchadnezzar had departed, and a permission had been given to Gedaliah to collect what remained of the people and to place them in cities and towns, many returned into the land, now desolate; for they had dwelt with aliens, and had been miserably treated. As then they could not settle out of their own land nor find any quiet habitation, they returned, as it is usual with men reduced to want, who have no settled dwelling. They then returned, that they might live under the protection of Gedaliah.

Now the Prophet says, that they were taken by John and brought into. Egypt. This then was the way in which they shewed their obstinacy. We hence see how audacious must these leaders have been, that they hesitated not to go into Egypt, though it was shewn to be a fatal step. There was not indeed at that time any army of Nebuchadnezzar in Judea, though his vengeance might have been dreaded. And then, having fled to: Egypt, they might have been ill-treated there, and not hospitably received.: But we hence perceive, that when men once shake off the yoke of God, they are hurried on by a diabolical madness, so that there is nothing insurmountable to them. Had they been asked whether they acted rightly, they might have raised a thousand arguments as excuses; but when they followed their own propensity, they in a manner, so to speak, leaped over the clouds. Impiety then is always full of rashness and audacity. But as we see that the ungodly thus rush headlong into ruin, even when God pronounces a curse on their counsels and proceedings, let us learn to take encouragement ever to obey God; for he promises a joyful and blessed issue at all times when we follow the ways pointed out by him. John then and the other leaders of the forces took the remnant of the people

And then he shews how little those exiles consulted their own good, who had returned to dwell in the land of Judea; for they might have still rested in safety among the nations who had in kindness received them; but in Egypt God soon executed his judgments on the natives as well as on strangers. But they deserved such a reward, because they preferred to obey the command of the perverse and obstinate, rather than to obey the voice of God speaking by his Prophet.

The Prophet also mentions particularly who they were; they were men and women and children Some render the last word ``puberty,'' which I do not approve, since Scripture speaks thus of children. Then John and his associates took childhood, or children; and he adds, the daughters of the king We have before inquired who these daughters of the king were: the probability is that they were his daughters by his concubines; and that they had been put in some safe place, so that if any great evil happened, they might not fall into the hands of enemies. Then these daughters of the king had returned with the other exiles, but were afterwards carried into Egypt.

At last he adds, all the souls which had been left by Nebuzaradan with Gedaliah, with Jeremiah, and with Baruch This had not been expressed elsewhere, that is, that Jeremiah and Baruch were joined with Gedaliah as rulers over the remnant of the

people. But it was not the design of Jeremiah to relate everything that then took place. Now then, when an occasion occurred, he says that he and also Baruch were made governors in connection with Gedaliah. He then adds, that they all came into Egypt, or that they entered into Egypt,. For the word first used, {ויבאו}, vaibau, may be rendered, ``and* they entered into Egypt;'' and then he adds, -{עד} {ויבאו} {תחפנחס}, vaibau od-tachephnuches, ``and* they entered (or penetrated) as far as Tachephnuches.'' It was formerly one of the chief cities of Egypt; but its name has perished together with is wealth; for in heathen writers hardly the name of this city is found. They indeed mention the city Taphnim, but speak not of Taphnees. It is then probable, as changes take place in a country, that this city became by degrees forsaken, so as to become obscure and mean, and that other cities were built which exceeded it in wealth. He then says that they came to Taphnees It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 43:8-10

8. Then came the word of the LORD unto Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying,

8. Et fuit sermo Jehovae ad Jeremiam in Taphnees, dicendo,

9. Take great stones in thine hand, and hide them in the clay in the brickkiln, which is at the entry of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah;

9. Sume in manu tua (accipe in manu tua) lapides grandes (vel, magnas,) et absconde eos in luto (vel, caemento,) in fornace laterum, (vel, lacuna, unde sumitur materia ad formandos lapides,) qui locus (vel, quae fornax) est in porta domus Pharaonis in Taphnees, in oculis hominum Judaeorum;

10. And say unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them.

10. Et dices ad eos, Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Ecce ego mitto (mittam,) et assumam Nabuchadnezer regem Babylonis, servum meum, et ponam solium ejus super lapides istos, quos abscondi, et extendet tenterium suum super ipsos.

This passage shews that the Prophet was by force drawn away with others, so that he became an exile in Egypt contrary to his own wishes; for he did not go there of his own accord, inasmuch as we have seen how strictly he forbade them all to go down to Egypt. He was, however, compelled to go there, as though he had been bound with chains. He did not then go there designedly, nor did he through despair follow those miserable men; for he would have preferred to die a hundred times through famine and want in the land of Judah rather than to have sought in this way the lengthening of his life. It then appears that he was driven there as it were by enemies.

But as nothing happens except through God's purpose, so from this prophecy it appears that God ordered the going down of his servant, and that he was not so subjected to the will of the wicked, but that he was always guided by the hidden influence of God; for it was God's will to have his herald even in the midst of Egypt, that he might declare to the Jews what, was to be. His doctrine, indeed, was not of

any benefit to them; but it was God's purpose to drive them as it were into madness, inasmuch as their wickedness was wholly irreclaimable; for it is a harder thing for the wicked to hear God's voice when he threatens vengeance, than to feel his hand. When, therefore, the unbelieving avoid the word of God, they are still constrained, willing or unwilling, to hear what they willfully reject, even that God will be their judge. The Prophet then was sent, according to the hidden purpose of God, into Egypt, that he might there perform his wonted vocation and proceed in the discharge of his office, and there carry on his prophetic work.

But this prophecy was greatly disliked; for as the Jews had been already much exasperated, this threatening was still more calculated to kindle up their fury; and Jeremiah did also create danger to himself from the Egyptians, for he not only threatened the Jews, but also the whole kingdom of Egypt. We hence perceive how invincible was his courage, for he marched through certain deaths, and was yet terrified by no dangers, but performed the office entrusted to him by God. Some think that he was on this account stoned by the Jews; but this is not probable, nay, it may be gathered from other places that he died a natural death. However this may have been, his perseverance and firmness were wonderful, for he struggled to the end, and without weariness, with those wild beasts, whose savageness he had more than enough experienced.

Let us now see what this prophecy is: The word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah; and the sum of it is, that the Prophet was bidden not only to proclaim the vengeance of God, but also to confirm it by a visible symbol, as it was necessary to arouse unbelieving men. For so great was their stupidity, that unless God roused all their senses, they would have never attended; they were deaf. Then the Lord set before their eyes what they were unwilling and refused to hear. For this reason the Prophet was bidden to add an outward sign to his prophecy; according to what we have stated in other places, signs were often connected with the doctrine on account of the tardiness, or rather the stupidity of men.

He was then commanded to take great stones, and to hide them in the clay, or cement, in a brick-kiln, that is, in a kiln where bricks were burnt, or in a place where they were usually made, or where materials were taken to form them. And this place was not far from the palace of the king in the city of Taphnees, as the Prophet expressly declares; nay, he says that it was nigh the gate. As, then, this place was near the palace, the Prophet was bidden to hide there the stones, and in the sight of the Jews. This was the symbol. Now, it is shewn for what end God would have the stones to be fixed in the clay or cement; for if the stones were only rolled there with great labor by the Prophet, there would have been no instruction; and all signs we know are unmeaning and without any importance without the word. It is God's word, then, that in a manner gives life to signs, and applies them for the benefit and instruction of men. Therefore God's command is added, that he was to speak to the Jews: Thou shalt say to them, Thus saith Jehovah. He brings in God as the speaker, that the threatening might be more effectual, as it has been stated elsewhere; for if he had only related the words of God, he could not have thus arrested their attention, which was very tardy. This, then, is the reason why he speaks in the person of God

himself.

Behold, I, --- the particle demonstrative and the pronoun are both emphatical, {הנני}, enni; Behold, I send, he says, to bring Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne on these stones We now understand the drift of the whole, even that these stones were thrown into the cement, that God might build up a throne for Nebuchadnezzar. The time, indeed, for building the throne had not yet come; but God's purpose was to lay the foundations, so that they might be hid until the time arrived. The Prophet, then, built a throne for Nebuchadnezzar, when he cast; these stones into the place of the brick-kiln.

We must now examine each particular in order. God says that he would send to bring Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon. This mission must not be understood otherwise than that of the secret providence of God; for he had no attendants by whom he might send for Nebuchadnezzar, but he called him, as it were, by his nod only. Moreover, this mode of speaking is borrowed, taken from men, who, when they wish anything to be done, intimate what their object is; and then, when they give orders, they issue their commands. This is what earthly kings do, because they can by a nod only accomplish whatever comes to their minds. But God, who needs no external aids, is said to send when he executes his own purpose, and that by his incomprehensible power. And further, God intimates that when Nebuchadnezzar came, it would by no means be by chance, but to take vengeance on the perverse Jews, who hoped for a safe retirement in Egypt, when yet God promised them a quiet habitation in the land of Judah, had they remained there. Then God declares that he would be the leader of that march when Nebuchadnezzar came into Egypt, as though he had said that the war would be carried on under his banner. Nebuchadnezzar did not from design render obedience to God; for ambition and pride led him to Egypt when he came, and for this reason, because the Egyptians had so often provoked him, so that without dishonor to himself he could no longer defer vengeance. It was, then, for this reason he came, if we look to his object. But God declares that he overruled the king as well as all the Babylonians, so that he would arm them when he pleased, and bring them into Egypt, and by their means carry on war with the Egyptians.

For the same reason he calls him his servant; not that Nebuchadnezzar was worthy of so honorable a name, for he had nothing less, as we have said, than a design to serve God; but he is called God's servant, because he executed what God himself had decreed: for the Scripture sometimes calls even the devils the servants of God; but in strict language, angels and the faithful are alone his servants. Kings and prophets are also, for a special reason, called God's servants, to whom is committed the authority to rule or to teach. But in this place, as in many other places, the Scripture calls those God's servants whom he employs to effect his purpose, even when they themselves have no such design. But the Prophet, no doubt, had also in view the Jews, so that they might know that this war was approved by God; for Nebuchadnezzar would not have come except he had been brought there by God.

It then follows, and I will set his throne This, also, is what God claims for himself, even the erecting of the throne of the King Nebuchadnezzar before the palace of

the king of Egypt. The king of Babylon, doubtless, thought that the war was carried on through his own efforts and valor, and the courage of his soldiers; moreover, he sacrificed to his own fortune, as heathens use to do; and hence it is said in Isaiah of the Assyrian,

``He will not think so.'' (Isaiah 10:7)

But God designed this to be declared to the Jews before the time, that they might then know that the just reward of their obstinacy would be rendered to them, for they were to be taught, as we have said, for their good and benefit. But as they were already inexcusable, it was God's purpose to shame them more and more, so that they might know that a just punishment would be inflicted on them, because they had so obstinately rejected all the counsel of God.

I will, then, erect his throne on the stones which I have hidden The Prophet here speaks irregularly, now in God's name, then in his own; but this was not done without reason. We have stated why he introduced God as the speaker, even that he might make the Jews more attentive; for he knew that all his threatenings would be derided except God's majesty was set before them: but now he connects himself with God, as though he had said that he had nothing apart from God. This is the reason why he said, upon the stones which I have hid God had not hidden the stones, but the Prophet speaks, nevertheless, in the person of God. But, as I have already said, this connection shews that the prophetic word is so connected with the hand and power of God, that when the Prophet speaks, it ought to be counted the same, as though God openly thundered from heaven. And this mode of speaking ought to be carefully noticed, so that we may learn reverently to receive whatever faithful teachers declare in his name, while performing the duties of their office; for they are not to be looked upon as men, for otherwise whatever proceeds from them may be disregarded; but we ought to receive the doctrine proclaimed by their mouth as though God himself had descended from heaven to speak to us.

He afterwards adds, and he shall extend his tabernacle or his tent; for {שפריר}, shepherir, is taken from a word which means beauty, and properly means here a royal tent. [356] The hebrews do not give this name to the tents of shepherds, but only to those tents which excel in magnificence and splendor, according to what we say in French, Le pavillon du Roy. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 43:11

11. And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, and deliver such as are for death to death; and such as are for captivity to captivity; and such as are for the sword to the sword.

11. Et veniet et percutiet terram Aegypti; qui ad mortem, ad mortem; et qui ad exilium, ad exilium; et qui ad gladium, ad gladium.

He confirms the former verse by what he says here and in the two following verses to the end of the chapter. As Egypt had cities well fortified and deemed impregnable,

[356] It is rendered by the Sept. and Syr., “arms;” by the Vulg., “throne;” by the Targum., “tent.” Strange that there should be such a difference. It was something to be stretched out or extended, for such is the meaning of the verb; and it was something beautiful, for so the word means. It was probably a canopy erecton over the throne, which was to be set on the stones. — Ed.

the Jews never thought that the Chaldeans could so easily penetrate into them. For, first, that country is situated in a plain; and, secondly, in the midst of lakes: and it is in part surrounded by the Nile and the Red Sea. As, then, Egypt was on every side so well fortified, they thought that there would be there a quiet nest for them. But God declares that King Nebuchadnezzar would become the conqueror of the whole land; and he removes all objections when he says, ---

Those for death, to death; those for captivity, to captivity; those for the sword, to the sword; as though he had said, ``Were Egypt ever so populous, yet the immense multitude of men will avail nothing, for they shall be conquered by their enemy; for some shall perish by the sword, and some by various kinds of death, and some shall be driven into exile; and Egypt shall be destroyed, as though no one stood up in its defense.'' We hence see that this was added, that the Prophet might shake off the false confidence of the Jews. To the same purpose are the two following verses.

Jeremiah 43:12

12. And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them, and carry them away captives: and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment; and he shall go forth from thence in peace.

12. Et accendam ignem in aedibus deorum Aegypti; et comburet eas (vel, ipsos deos) et captivos abducet et involvet terram Aegypti, quemadmodum involvere solet pastor vestem suam; et egredietur illinc in pace.

He goes on with the same subject; and he ascribes to God the kindling of the fire, that the Jews might know that the war would be conducted by a divine power, and that Nebuchadnezzar would not come except through God's providence. For though, as it has been said, he had his own reasons, yet God, by his wonderful power, led him, as it were, by the hand, to punish the Egyptians. They, indeed, deserved such a destruction, because they had by their fiat-teries deceived the miserable Jews, and had corrupted them. Besides, their allurements had been very ruinous, for through them the aid of God had been despised, and all the prophecies rejected. As then they had been the authors of all kinds of evils to the Jews, we hence infer that they deserved a dreadful vengeance; and this had been in due time made known to the Jews, but they did not believe it. Then the Prophet fully confirms what had been declared in his former prophecies.

I will kindle a fire, says God, in the temples of the gods of Egypt And he mentions temples, that the Jews might understand that no part of the land would be safe or secure from destruction: for it often happens that when the cruelty of enemies rages greatly, the temples are spared; for religion commands respect, and honor has been given also to idols, so that their temples have often remained untouched, when enemies have wholly overthrown all other things. But it is probable, that the Chaldeans had so great a presumption and pride, that they wished to destroy all the temples, that there might be no religion anywhere except among themselves. And some also among the Persians had this barbarity, as Xerxes, who, when he entered into Greece, and some parts of Asia, burnt and destroyed all the temples, and said also in derision, that all the gods in Greece were taken captive, and were shut up

in the temples, and that he accomplished everything through his own valor. There is, indeed, no doubt but that Xerxes thus arrogantly triumphed over the gods of the Greeks; and such was probably the insolence displayed by the Chaldeans. However this may have been, yet God shews, that no place in Egypt would be held sacred: for the Chaldeans would even burn their temples. But at the same time he meant to cast a reproach on the obstinacy of the Jews, because they went down to Egypt, whose safety depended on idols. God then shews that they were more than blind, and wholly beside themselves, as though they were brute animals, when they hoped for a quiet port in Egypt, which was under the protection of false gods. God then says, that he would kindle a fire by which the temples of the gods of Egypt would be burned.

And he adds, and it or he will burn them This may be applied to the fire; but he, no doubt, speaks of the King Nebuchadnezzar, for it immediately follows, and shall carry them captives, and shall roll up the land of Egypt, as a shepherd his garment The verb properly means to cover, but it means also sometimes to gather up. It may be rendered here to roll up, as we say in French, trousser et entortiller. He intimates, that Nebuchadnezzar would, according to his own will, so rule in Egypt, that he would heap together all the wealth of the whole land: and as a shepherd, when he leads his flock to another place, collects his utensils, and rolls up his garments, or folds himself in them; so Nebuchadnezzar, says the Prophet, would gather together, or roll up the whole land of Egypt He mentions land, as signifying the wealth which Nebuchadnezzar accumulated. At length he adds, and thence shall he depart in peace He shews that the conquest would be complete, for the Egyptians would not dare to mutter, nor dare to follow their enemy on his departure; for he would be as though he were in a peaceable place, and in his own kingdom. [357]

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast not only once shewn to us the way in which we are to walk, but also daily exhortest us to continue in it, and ever to go forward towards the right mark, --- O grant, that we may never turn aside, but suffer ourselves to be ruled by thy voice; and though temptations may drive us here and there, may we ever follow thy command, and so persevere in obedience to thee, that we may at length, by experience, find that it is our happiness to commit ourselves to thee, and to follow thee as our leader, until thou bringest us into that celestial kingdom, which has been prepared for us by thine only-begotten Son.-Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Sixtieth

Jeremiah 43:13

13 He shall break also the images of Bethshemesh, that is in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire.

13. Et conteret statuas Beth-semes (vel, Heliopolios) quae est in terra Aegypti, et

[357] The first verb is rendered in the third person, by the Sept., the Vulg., and the Syriac., "He will kindle;" but in the first by the Targum., "I will kindle." The third person runs better with the context; but if a causative sense be given to the verb, it will be equally the same, "And I will cause him to kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt, and he will burn them, and carry them away captive; that is, he will burn the parts made of wood, and carry away the gold and the silver; "and he will put on the land of Egypt as the shepherd puts on his coat," that is, he will put on the spoils of the land with the same ease and facility as the shepherd puts on his coat, and carry them away, no one molesting or hindering him. — Ed.

domos deorum.Aegypti (hoc est, templa) exuret igni.

WE stated yesterday why Jeremiah spoke especially of the temples of the gods, even that the Jews might understand that nothing would escape destruction: for even the cruel-est enemies have usually withheld their hands from the temples of gods. If sanctity and religion would not preserve the temples, what then would become of private houses? He intimates, in short, that such would be the ruin of Egypt, that no part would escape.

But as Heliopolis was then in the greatest repute, he says, that the statues of all the gods in that city would be broken, for there the gods were especially worshipped. All heathen writers call it Heliopolis, to which the Hebrew word corresponds; for Bethsemes means the city of the sun; and Heliopolis means the same. As then this was the chief place where the gods of Egypt were found, the Prophet, in order to shew that the ruin of the whole land would be extreme, says that no temple would be there inviolate. So also Isaiah says, when speaking of the ruin of Egypt,

``Behold, God will come into Egypt, and will cut down before him all the idols.'' (Isaiah 19:1)

He spoke of God's coming, because, under his guidance it was, that Nebuchadnezzar led there his army, as it has been stated. God did not, indeed, appear from heaven, but the army of Nebuchadnezzar was a living representation of God's power, when he punished the Egyptians. Now, he says, that when God came there armed, and carried on a warlike expedition, all the idols would be destroyed; for God would thus shew that the gods in whom the Egyptians trusted were false, that they were mere fictions, which could give no help when things came to an extremity. Now follows, ---

Jeremiah 44

CHAPTER 44

Jeremiah 44:1-7

1. The word that came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews which dwell in the land of Egypt, which dwell at Migdol, and at Tahpanhes, and at Noph, and in the country of Pathros, saying,

1. Sermo qui fuit ad Jeremiam ad omnes Judaeos qui habitabant in terra Aegypti, qui habitabant Magdali et in Taphneis et Memphi et in terra Pathros, dicendo,

2. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Ye have seen all the evil that I have brought upon Jerusalem, and upon all the cities of Judah; and, behold, this day they are a desolation, and no man dwelleth therein;

2. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Vos vidistis omne malum quod adduxi super Jerusalem et super omnes urbes Jehudah; et ecce sunt (ipsae) vastitas hodie, et nullus in illis habitans,

3. Because of their wickedness which they have committed to provoke me to anger, in that they went to burn incense, and to serve other gods, whom they knew not, neither they, ye, nor your fathers.

3. Propter malitiam quam perpetrarunt ad irritandum me ut proficiscerentur ad offerendum suffitum et ad serviendum diis alienis, quos non cognoverant ipsi, neque vos, neque patres vestri.

4. Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate.

4. Et misi ad vos omnes servos meos, Prophetas, mane surgens et mittens, dicendo, Agedum ne feceritis rem abominationis hujus quam odi:

5. But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense unto other gods.

5. Et non audierunt et non inclinarunt aurem suam, ut reverterentur a malitia sua, et non offerrent suffitum diis alienis:

6. Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted and desolate, as at this day.

6. Et effusa est excandescentia mea et iracundia mea, et exarsit in urbibus Jehudah et in compitis Jerusalem, et fuerunt in vastitatem et in desolationem (sicuti) secundum diem hunc.

7. Therefore now thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; Wherefore commit ye this great evil against your souls, to cut off from you man and woman, child and suckling, out of Judah, to leave you none to remain;

7. Et nunc dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Quare vos facitis malum hoc grande contra animas vestras ad excidendum vobis virum et mulierem et parvulum et lactantem e medio Jehudah, ut non faciatis residuas vobis reliquias.

Jeremiah had already prophesied against the Jews, who had taken refuge in Egypt, as though there would be for them in that rich and almost unassailable land a safe and quiet retreat. But he now speaks against them for another reason, and denounces on them something more grievous than before, even because they had not only gone into Egypt against God's will, but when they came there they polluted themselves with all kinds of superstition. God, no doubt, designed, in due time, to prevent this, when he forbade them to go into Egypt; for he knew how prone they were to idolatry, and to false and adulterous modes of worship. He was therefore unwilling that they should dwell in that land, where they might learn to pervert his worship. And this had happened, as it appears from the present prophecy. As then they had cast aside every shame, and given themselves up to the superstitions of the heathens, the Prophet again testified, that God would take vengeance on them. But we shall see that he had to do with refractory men; for without shewing any respect for him, they attacked him with impetuous fury. The sum of what is said then is, that the Jews who dwelt in Egypt were unworthy of any pardon, because they had, as it were, designedly rejected the favor of God, and their obstinacy had become altogether hopeless. We shall now consider the words:

A word is said to have been given to Jeremiah to all the Jews But God spoke to Jeremiah not in the same way as to the Jews; for he committed to him the words which he commanded him to deliver to others. Then the word was directly given to Jeremiah only; but as Jeremiah was God's interpreter to the people, the word is said to be given in common to all, which yet at first, as it has been stated, was committed to Jeremiah alone. For he did not favor the Jews with such an honor as to speak to them, but he sent the Prophet as his messenger. He said then to the Jews who dwelt in Egypt, and afterwards he mentions certain places, first Migdol, then Tahpanhes, and thirdly, Noph. The first name some have rendered Magdal. That city was not so much known at the time when Egypt flourished, but it has been mentioned by heathen writers. Of Tahpanhes we spoke yesterday. Noph has been called Memphis; and it is generally agreed that what the Hebrews called Noph was that noble and celebrated city Memphis, which, as they suppose at this day, is called Cairo, Le Caire. He lastly mentions the country of Pathros, which is supposed by some to have been near Pelusia. But on such a matter as this I bestow no great labor; for even

heathen writers have regarded this as an obscure country, of no importance. Pathros is elsewhere mentioned as a city, and some think it to have been Petra of Arabia. But the Prophet no doubt refers here to the country in which Memphis and other cities were situated, in which the Jews dwelt.

But he says these things for this reason, because a question might have been raised, ``As the Jews dwelt in Egypt, so large was the land, that the Prophet could not have announced the commands of God to all. This, then, was the reason why he intimates that. they were not dispersed everywhere throughout Egypt, from one end to the other, but that they were in one part only, and that they were so collected that his word might come to all. This, then, was the reason why he mentioned the places where the Jews sojourned.

He now begins with reproof, because they were so stupid as not to remember the vengeance which God had executed on themselves and on the whole nation. They had been left alive for this end, that they might acknowledge God's judgment, and thus return to a right mind. Here, then, the Prophet upbraids them with their insensibility, that they had profited nothing under the scourges of God. They commonly say that fools, when they are beaten, become wise. As then the Jews had not repented, after having been so grievously chastised, it was a proof of extreme perverseness; for if the remnant had a grain of a sound mind, they would have been humbled at least by the final destruction of their nation, and when the city and the temple were demolished. Since then they followed the same wicked courses, for which God had inflicted so grievous a punishment, it was evident that they were wholly irreclaimable and destitute of reason and judgment. This is the import of all the words of the Prophet which we have read.

He says first, Ye have seen what great evils I brought on you and the land. ``Then ye know that you have justly suffered all the evils which have happened to you; for ye have not sinned through want of knowledge, but when I had sedulously warned you by my Prophets, ye continued ever obstinate; ye have therefore fully deserved such punishments. Now when God spared you, and wished that a small number should remain, to preserve as it were a seed, how is it that these evils which are still as it were before your eyes, are not remembered by you?'' We now then understand the design of the Prophet.

But it may be well to examine every part; Ye have seen, he says, all the evil which I have brought (evil here means calamity) on Jerusalem, and on all the cities of Judah; and, behold, they are now a waste, and no one dwells there. There is here an emphatical comparison between Jerusalem and Memphis, between the cities of Judah and Heliopolis and the whole country of Pathros. If then God had not. spared the holy city which he had chosen, if he had not spared the cities of Judah which were under his protection, how foolish it was for the Jews to think that they would be safe in the cities of Egypt? By what privilege could these be secure, since the cities of Judah had been reduced to a waste? We now then perceive why the Prophet mentioned Jerusalem and the cities of Judah; it was, that he might expose the stupidity of the Jews, because they thought, themselves safe in Egypt, a land which God had ever held in abomination.

He afterwards adds, For the evil which they did to provoke me. He refers to the sins by which the Jews had provoked the wrath of God; for the people whom Jeremiah addressed had relapsed into those superstitions which had been the cause of their ruin. Had the Prophet spoken generally and said, that it was strange that the Jews had forgotten the punishment which had been inflicted by God on the whole nation, his doctrine would not have been so impressive. But when he now points out as by the finger how they had procured for themselves such calamities, he presses and urges them more forcibly to acknowledge their madness, because they thus continually provoked God, and sinned not through ignorance, but offended him by the same sins for which yet they had suffered punishment so grievous and dreadful. This is the reason why the Prophet says, For the evil which they did to provoke me, even to go, he says, to offer incense and to serve alien gods. To go here intimates the care and diligence they exercised in false worship. God had shewn to the Jews a certain way in his Law which they ought to have followed: had they then continued in the doctrine of the Law, they would have kept in the right way, and gone forward to the right end. But they are said to go, because they disregarded the Law and went here and there, as those who wander at random, and know not where they are going. There is then to be understood a contrast between going and remaining under the teaching of the Law. To go, in short, is to weary one's self by an erratic course, when the word of God is neglected, and the way which it points out is forsaken. This is one thing.

Then he adds, to offer incense and to serve alien gods. Incense here is mentioned as a particular thing, then that which is general is added; for incense, as it is well known, was an evidence of worship. Then the Prophet under one thing condemns the idolatry of his own nation. But at length he shews that they were given to other abominations, that they had devoted themselves to the false worship of alien gods.

This passage, and those which are like it, are entitled to particular notice; for we hence learn that men depart from God and alienate themselves from the true worship of him, whenever they mingle with it something of their own, and dream of this and that according to their own will, the very thing intended, as we have said, by going as used by the Prophet. As soon, then, as men devise for themselves some new modes of worship, it is the same thing as though they turned backward or willfully wandered, for they keep not in the right and legitimate way. We also learn from the second clause that idolaters in vain adduce pretences to excuse themselves. For if they transfer to another what peculiarly belongs to God, and what he claims for himself, it is more than a sufficient proof of idolatry; and incense, as I have said, was a symbol of divine worship. As then they offered incense to their idols, they robbed the true God of his own honor, and chose new gods, and adorned them with the rights of the only true God.

In vain, then, and foolishly do the Papists at this day seek evasions when we object to them and say, that gross idolatries prevail among them: ``He! it is not our intention to transfer the worship which peculiarly belongs to the only true God to saints, to images; but we apply all this to God.'' Since they burn incense to saints, images, and pictures, since they offer incense even to the dead, there is surely no

further need of disputing the point; and when they try to evade whatever they can bring forward, it is confuted by this one expression of the Prophet, for when he speaks of incense, he condemns the Jews for their idolatry.

But as I have said, he speaks afterwards generally, and says, and to serve alien gods. Then it follows, whom they knew not, neither ye nor your fathers Here the Prophet amplifies the sin of his own nation, because they had devoted their attention to unknown gods. There is here again a contrast to be understood, that is, between God, who had revealed himself by his Law, by his Prophets, by so many miracles and blessings, and the fictitious gods, who had, without thought and without judgment, been invented and contrived by the Jews. Now, it was an evidence of a base and an intolerable ingratitude, that the Jews should have forsaken the true God after he had made himself known to them. For had the Law never been given, had God suffered them, as other nations, to be entangled in their own errors, their offense would have been lighter. But God had made himself to be so familiarly known to them, that he was pleased to give them his Law, to be a certain rule of religion; he had also exercised his miraculous powers among them. As, then, the knowledge of the true God had been made so remarkably clear to them, how great and how base was their ingratitude to reject him and to depart from him, in order to run after idols! when they contrived for themselves vain gods and nothing but fictions! Had any one inquired what sort of god was Baal, or what were their Baalim, they would have said, that they had Baalim as their patrons, who obtained favor for them with the supreme God. But whence had they derived their vain notion? It was nothing but superstition founded on no reason.

This ought to be carefully observed; for at this day were any one to ask the Papists by what right they have devised for themselves so various and so many modes of worship: devotion alone they say will suffice, or a good intention. Let us then know that religion, separated from knowledge, is nothing but the sport and delusion of Satan. It is hence necessary that men should with certainty know what god they worship. And Christ thus distinguishes the true worship of God from that of vain idols,

``We know,'' he says, speaking of the Jews, ``whom we worship.'' (John 4:22)

He then says that the Jews knew, even those who worshipped God according to what the Law prescribes, --- he says that they knew whom they worshipped. He then condemns all good intentions in which the superstitious delight themselves, for they know not whom they worship. And I have said that religion ought not to be separated from knowledge; but I call that knowledge, not what is innate in man, or what is by diligence acquired, but that which is delivered to us by the Law and the Prophets.

We now, then, understand why the Prophet says that the Jews devoted themselves to alien gods, whom they had not known, nor their fathers.

Now follows a circumstance by which their impiety was still further enhanced, that God had sent them Prophets who stretched forth their hands to them to draw them from their errors. For had they never been warned, their condemnation would have been just; for God had once shewn to them by his Law what was right. The teaching, then, of the Law ought to have been sufficient for all ages. But when God had never

ceased to send Prophets, one after another, it was a sign of hopeless obstinacy to reject so many and so constant warnings. God then added this circumstance that it might appear that the Jews were wholly inexcusable, and worthy of a hundred and of a thousand deaths, because they had so perversely despised all the means of salvation.

But God says, that he had sent to them all his servants What is universal has its own peculiar importance; for if one or two Prophets had been sent, the Jews would have been proved guilty; for the law does not require more than two or three witnesses to condemn those who have done wrong. (Deuteronomy 17:6.) But God shews here that there had been a vast number of those, through whom, had they been believed, the Jews might have been preserved in safety. They might, then, have been proved guilty, not only by three or four witnesses, but even by a great number; for the Prophets had continually succeeded one another. And thus had been fulfilled what God had promised in the Law,

``A Prophet will I raise up from the midst of thy brethren, him shalt thou hear; and every one who will not hear that Prophet shall be cut off from his people.'' (Deuteronomy 18:18, 19)

For God shews in his proclaimed Law, that this would be one of his chief blessings, ever to keep the Jews in the knowledge of their duty, by never leaving them destitute of Prophets and faithful teachers, here then he shews that he had ever really performed what he had promised by Moses; for he does not say that he had only sent a few, but, as I have said, that there had been a copious abundance; for in every age there were several Prophets, and some, when it became necessary, succeeded others. But what had been the fruit? He afterwards complains that all the Prophets had been rejected.

But to render their sin still more heinous, he says, rising up early and sending Of this kind of speaking an explanation has been elsewhere given. (Jeremiah 7:13; Jeremiah 11:7) It is a metaphorical language; for God rises not nor does he change places; but here he applies to himself what peculiarly belongs to men. For he who is attentive to business, does not wait till the sun rises, but anticipates the morning dawn. So also the Prophet says, that God had been vigilant, for he had been solicitous concerning the wellbeing of the people.

We further learn from this mode of speaking how invaluable is the benefit which God bestows when he raises up honest and faithful teachers; for it is the same as when the head of a family rises early from his bed, calls up his children, and takes care of them. Let us, then, know that teaching, when it is communicated to us, is an evidence of God's paternal solicitude, because he would not have us to perish, but comes down to us and sees what is needful, as though he were present with us, and as a father towards his children, he takes care of us and of our affairs. This is the meaning.

He now adds the substance of his message, Do not the thing of this abomination which I hate God intimates, in short, that it had not been through him that the Jews did not return from their errors to the right way, because he had stretched forth his hand to them, and had, as it were, sup-pliantly requested them to provide better for

themselves, and not knowingly and willfully to seek their own destruction, having acted as though he were a husband, who, being anxious to preserve the fidelity of his wife, might thus say to her, --- *``Behold,* thou knowest that I cannot endure unchaste-ness; beware, then, lest thou shouldest prostitute thyself to adulterers.'' So God shews here that he had testified by all his servants, that all kinds of idolatry were displeasing to him, in order that the Jews might keep themselves from idolatry.

And he adds, But they hearkened not, nor inclined their ear to turn from their wickedness, to burn no incense to alien gods Here God charges the Jews with irreclaimable obstinacy, for the teaching of the Law did not retain them in obedience, nor did they attend to it, though often and at different times warned and admonished by the Prophets. And their perverseness he still more clearly sets forth by the second clause, when he says that they did not incline their ear Had he said, ``They have not hearkened,'' it would have been quite sufficient; but when he adds, ``They have not inclined their ear,'' he expresses, as I have said, something worse than contempt, even that they designedly rejected the teaching of the Prophets, that they disdained to hear the Prophets or to listen to their admonitions, but became willingly deaf, nay, closed up their ears, as rebels do, who are said elsewhere to harden their heart. We now then understand the import of this verse.

Now he adds, On this account has my wrath and my fury been poured forth, and has burned through the cities of Judah, and through the streets of Jerusalem; and this day they are a waste and a desolation The word {שממה}, shimme, sometimes means amazement, as it has been before stated; but when it is connected with {חרבה}, cherebe, as here, it means desolation. As at this day; a dreadful waste was then at that time apparent, he again refers to this truth, that the Jews ought to have been so touched by that remarkable and memorable instance of God's displeasure, as not to abandon themselves afterwards to new idolatries; they ought to have remembered so recent an example of punishment. As, then, they still persevered in their hardness, it was an evidence of extreme impiety. The Prophet says that the perverseness of the Jews had not been unpunished, for God's wrath had been poured forth against the cities of Judah, nay, against Jerusalem itself, the sanctuary of God, so that all things had been reduced to desolation. The Jews then ought, on the one hand, seriously to have considered how inexcusable had been their impiety in having so perversely despised God; and then they ought on the other hand, to have entertained fear and dread, since they saw that God had taken such vengeance on those who had despised his teaching and violated his worship.

He then adds, Why then do ye now this great evil against your own souls, to cut off from you man and woman, child and suckling, from the midst of Judah, that nothing may remain for you? here at length the passage is finished; for what we have hitherto read would have kept the reader in suspense, had not this been added. He then says, ``Since the sin of your fathers ought to have been detested by you, and since God's judgment had been dreadful, and that punishment ought at this day to fill, you with fear, how is it, that ye seek to bring on yourselves again the vengeance of God?'' Why then, he says, now, etc. This now is emphatical, that is, after so many and so remarkable examples, after so many admonitions, after the most grievous

punishment inflicted on the obstinate. He says, against your own souls; and by this he touched them very sharply, reminding them that what they were doing would be to their ruin, as though he had said, that God would receive no loss from their wickedness, but that they would become the authors of their own destruction, he indeed intimates, as I have already said, that their impiety would not be without its punishment; but he shews at the same time that God could, if he thought proper, look down with indifference on their impieties; for he would remain perfect even if they were the worst. For when God is robbed by men of his just and legitimate worship, there is nothing taken away from his greatness; for he ever remains the same, and is neither advanced nor diminished through the will of men. Then the Prophet shews that the Jews were acting madly for their own ruin, when he says, that they did evil against their own souls

And this he explains more fully by adding, To cut off man and woman, child and suckling, from the midst of Judah He intimates that God still manifested his mercy, while there was any remnant. They might have remained in Judea, even in their own inheritance; and the country might have been inhabited till the time of seventy years had elapsed, which God had fixed for the exile. Now the Prophet shews that they fought as it were against the goodness of God, for they sought to extinguish their own name, so that nothing should remain of that people, to whom God had still left some seed, that they might not wholly perish.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou ceasest not continually to shew to us thy paternal love and care, --- O grant, that we may not be so insensible as to turn a deaf ear to thy teaching and admonitions; but as thou watchest for our safety, may the constancy of our faith and obedience so respond to thee, that we may reverently receive thy word, suffer ourselves to be ruled by it, and follow the way which thou hast set before us, until we shall attain complete salvation, and enjoy that blessed inheritance which has been prepared for us in heaven by Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Sixty-First

Jeremiah 44:8

8. In that ye provoke me unto wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense unto other gods in the land of Egypt, whither ye be gone to dwell, that ye might cut yourselves off, and that ye might be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth?

8. Ad provocandum me in operibus manuum vestrarum, ad offerendum suffitum diis alienis in terra Aegypti, ad quam vos profecti estis, ut habitetis illic, ut excidium paretis vobis (vel, ut excidatis vos,) et ut sitis in maledictum et probrum inter cunctas gentes terrae.

I was in the last Lecture obliged to cut short the subject of the Prophet; for this verse depends on the foregoing, and is to be read together with it. The Prophet asked why the Jew's willingly cut off from themselves every hope of safety, and were seeking their own ruin. He now expresses the matter more fully, even that they were provoking God's wrath by their superstitions. He then points out the cause of all evils, --- the pollution of God's true worship by idolatries.

We here see that there is no end of sinning, when men despise God and allow themselves every license in doing evil: God was unwilling that the Jews should go to Egypt; for he had promised to cherish them as it were under his own wings; and thus he intended to shew them mercy, so that they might remain in safety, though in a country then miserable and desolate. But against his command they went into Egypt. When they came there, in order to gain favor with the Egyptians, they polluted themselves with vain superstitions. They might in the land of Judah have worshipped God in purity without any danger. Distrusting the favor of God they fled into Egypt; and the fear of men led them to deny their religion. We hence see how one evil proceeds from another; when the Jews coveted the favor of that heathen nation, they polluted themselves with many ungodly superstitions.

This is the sin which the Prophet now refers to, --- To provoke me, he says, by the works of your hands There is here to be understood a contrast between the works which God had commanded, and those which men had devised for themselves. The altar and the whole Temple were indeed works done by the hand and art of men; but as God had commanded the altar to be made and the Temple to be built, the Temple was not, properly speaking, a human but a divine work, it having been commanded. But whatever men devise of themselves for the purpose of worshipping God, is what is called the work of their hands; for they invent things themselves, and follow only their own fancies; they attend not to what pleases God, but give license to their own imaginations, so that according to their own will they mingle together any sort of worship they please. This, then, is the reason, and according to this sense it is, that the Prophet says, that the Jews provoked God by the works of their hands: they corrupted his lawful worship and departed from true religion, when they attached themselves to heathen Actions and corruptions.

He then adds, To offer incense to alien gods Under one particular thing, as it has been already said, the Prophet includes what is general, for the Jews did not only sin by offering incense, but also through various other superstitions. But by stating a part for the whole, he clearly intimates that they denied the true God when they worshipped idols. And then he adds, in the land of Egypt, into which ye have entered, that ye might dwell there. he takes away the excuse which they might have made, that they were constrained by fear, because they were unhappy exiles, and saw that their own religion would not be tolerated by that proud nation. The Prophet says that they had come into Egypt when God commanded them to remain in the land of Judah. That plea, then, could not have been admitted, that being terrified by danger they sought to please the Egyptians, for they brought themselves into that bondage, when they might have been at liberty in the land of Judah to worship God in purity. This is the reason why he says that they came into Egypt to sojourn there.

He at length adds, to cut you off. The construction is indeed different, but the meaning is clear. He intimates, in short, as he said in the last verse, that they willingly, and as it were designedly, rushed headlong into their own ruin. He then adds, and ye shall be a curse and a reproach among all nations By which words he means that their destruction would be memorable; and this was harder than if their memory was buried with their life. But the Prophet says that their death would be such an

example as that they would be deemed execrable by all. In short, he declares that they would be exposed to all kinds of reproaches even after their death. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 44:9-10

9. Have ye forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and the wickedness of the kings of Judah, and the wickedness of their wives, and your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they have committed in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem?

9. An obliti estis malorum patrum vestrorum, et malorum regum Jehudah, et malorum uxorum ejus, et malorum vestrorum, et malorum uxorum vestrarum, quae fecerunt in terra Jehudah et in cornpitis Jerusalem?

10. They are not humbled even unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes, that I set before you and before your fathers.

10. Et non humiliati sunt (vel, attriti) usque ad hunc diem, et non timuerunt, et non ambulaverunt in lege mea et in statutis meis, quae posueram coram facie vestra, et coram facie patrum vestrorum.

The Prophet now sets forth how extremely shameful was the insensibility of the Jews, in not acknowledging that God had most severely and grievously punished the superstitions to which they had previously been addicted. At the same time, if we regard the word used, he seems not to understand punishments by evils, but raffler the wicked deeds by which they had provoked God. And this ought to be observed, for some interpreters give this rendering, ``Have you forgotten your evils and those of your fathers;'' that is, how severely God had afflicted you? But there is no doubt but that the Prophet means by {רעות}, rout, their sins, by which they had exposed themselves to God's judgment; for it immediately follows, which they did, or committed, in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem But though he means by this word the sins of the people, there is yet no doubt but that he includes also the punishments by which they ought to have known that the impiety in which they continued most obstinately had displeased God.

When therefore the Prophet says, Have ye forgotten your evils and those of your fathers? he takes it for granted that it was sufficiently known that God had taken vengeance on them for their sins; for he does not address the Jews in their prosperity, but when they were fugitives from their own land and under the curse of heaven. As, then, they were evidently condemned by God, the Prophet justly asks them, ``Have ye forgotten that you have been condemned for the sins of your fathers and those of your kings, even for those which they had committed?'' This he asked, because it was a horrid stupidity, that though the city had been overthrown and the temple burnt, they did not yet leave off their superstitions, especially when so singular a vengeance of God ought to have retained their posterity in fear and obedience even for ten ages. Thus we see that punishment is linked with sins.

He says, of the kings of Judah and of their wives The relative is singular, ``his wives;'' but no doubt it refers to the people. Some read, ``of every one of them;'' but there is no need, it being a singular number, referring to a collective noun, Judah. he afterwards adds, which they did This ought not to be confined to the women, (nor

is it suitable,) but it refers to all the Jews as well as to kings of Judah, and also to the women, --- which then they did in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem

When he mentions the streets of Jerusalem, he exaggerates their wickedness. For we know that city to have been as it were the earthly sanctuary of God. It, was then a most disgraceful impiety to pollute that place which God had consecrated for himself. The whole land of Judah was indeed under his authority and power, but he had favored the city, and especially Mount Sion, with singular privileges. Then the Prophet amplifies the greatness of their sin, when he says that Jerusalem had been polluted by their superstitions.

He afterwards mentions how great had been the perverseness of that people, They are not humbled, he says, to this day, though they had been most severely smitten by the rods of God. Even fools, when smitten, become wise, as the old proverb says. As the Jews then had been so grievously chastised by God's hand, and had experienced extreme rigor, ought they not to have considered what they had deserved? But the Prophet shews that their wickedness was past remedy, for though broken down they were not yet humbled, like those who are of a perverse disposition, who could not be reformed were they broken down a hundred times. Then the Prophet upbraids the Jews with their obstinacy, for not even the greatest calamity had brought them to obedience.

They were not then humbled to that day, nor did they fear Fear ought also to be referred here to the calamities which they had experienced, for God had sufficiently shewn that he had been grievously offended with their impiety. As then God's dreadful judgment had been made conspicuous to all, the Prophet here condemns their dullness, because they had not been brought back to a sound mind so as to fear God. He now adds another instance of obstinacy, that they had not walked in the Law of God and in his commandments. Then he shows that their obstinacy was twofold, that they had profited nothing by his teaching, and that they had disregarded his punishments. The Law itself was to them a rule according to which they were to worship God, nor ought they to have sought elsewhere what they were to do. As, then, they had in the Law a revelation as to true religion, it was an intolerable contempt to depart from it of their own accord, and to abandon themselves to all kinds of errors. But the Prophet shews that they had been extremely unteachable, because they had not only cast aside every regard for the Law, but they had also despised God's hand, and refused to be corrected by any punishments.

That he might shew still further that they had sinned through sheer wickedness, he says, They have not walked in my Law nor in my statutes This second clause seems to be superfluous; but the Prophet here commends the clear teaching of the Law, as though God had said that he had not only shewn in a brief manner what was true and right, but that he had also by many statutes taught the Jews, so that they had no pretext for their ignorance. And he confirms the same thing in other words, when he says that he had put these statutes before their face; for by these words he intimates that there is nothing obscure in the Law, and that the Jews therefore had not gone astray through want of knowledge; for men always extenuate by evasions their sins, when their impiety is condemned. The Prophet then says that the Jews

were inexcusable, because the rule of true religion had been set before their eyes.

Now this passage testifies that the teaching of the Law is not doubtful, as some profane men say, who hold that Scripture may be turned anyhow like a nose of wax. But God declares that he had not spoken ambiguously. Since, then, the Prophet affirms that the Law had been set before the eyes of the Jews, that they might surely know the will of God, we ought to maintain at this day, that in the Gospel, clearly discovered to us by the coming of Christ, there is nothing obscure, but that the treasures of all knowledge have been made known to us, as far as it is necessary, so that they who now go astray in vain pretend that they do so because the will of God is hid from them; for in no other way can they err than by dissembling and willfully closing their eyes, lest the brightness of the sun should reach them. Let us yet know that the more plainly God is made known to us, the more grievously we sin when we turn aside from his true worship and service; for he has omitted nothing in his word which is necessary in order to worship him acceptably. Since, then, we have before our eyes the rule of a godly life, except we follow it this reproof belongs to us, that God has set before our eyes his statutes. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 44:11-12

11. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah.

11. Propterea sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Ecce ego pono faciem meam contra vos in malum et ad excidendum totum Jehudah;

12. And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, and fall in the land of Egypt; they shall even be consumed by the sword and by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach.

12. Et tollam reliquias Jehudah, quae posuerunt faciem suam ut venirent in terrain Aegypti ad peregrinandum illic, et consumentur omnes in terra Aegypti, cadent in gladio, fame consumentur a parvo usque ad magnum; in gladio et fame morientur, et erunt in execrationem et stuporem et in maledictum et in opprobrium.

He again denounces punishment on the obstinate; nor is it a wonder that these threatenings were so often repeated, since he had to do with men so ferocious and refractory. The reason then why he denounced on them God's judgment, was because they boldly derided him; and it will become more evident from what follows how necessary was such vehemence.

And first, indeed, the Prophet briefly shews that all those would perish who had yet falsely imagined that they could not otherwise be safe than by fleeing into Egypt. Then Jeremiah here reproves and condemns their false and vain confidence. And then he explains the manner when he says, I will take away all the remnant of Judah, who have set their face to come to Egypt, etc. By these words and the following, God intimates that the Jews had in vain sought hiding-places in Egypt, because there he would inflict on them the punishment which they had deserved. He names the sword and the famine; the third kind he omits here, but he will mention it presently. Then he says that they were to perish, partly by the sword and partly by famine, and in

order to speak more emphatically, he uses different words, They shall be consumed by famine, they shall fall by the sword, they shall all be consumed, and then he says, from the least to the greatest.

At length he adds, And they shall be a curse. We have said elsewhere that the word {אלה}, ale, sometimes means a curse, though it properly signifies an oath; and the reason is, because men in swearing often introduce a curse, ``Let God curse me,'' --- ``Let me perish.'' Then he says, that the Jews would become an example of a curse; for in making an oath this would be the common form, ``Let God destroy me as he destroyed the Jews.'' He afterwards adds, an astonishment, because all would be horrified at the very sight of their calamity. It follows in the last place, a curse and a reproach, of which we have spoken before. Let us now proceed, ---

Jeremiah 44:13

13. For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence:

13. Et visitabo super eos qui habitant in terra Aegypti, quemadmodum visitavi super Jerusalem, in gladio et fame et peste (hic exprimitur tertia species.)

He confirms in this verse what he had said in the last, that he would again take vengeance on impiety, as he had done previously. The Jews were before visited with a very grievous calamity, when inebriated with prosperity; but now, when God would have shaken from off them their torpor, the Prophet justly reminds them of the calamities which they had suffered: As, then, I visited Jerusalem, so will I visit those who dwell in Egypt But the argument is also from the greater to the less; for if God had not spared the holy city, in which he had chosen a habitation, how should he spare Egypt? for Egypt was not worthy that God should regard it. We know that it was a profane and an accursed land. It was, then, the greatest madness for the Jews to hope to be safe in Egypt, when they could not have been so in the holy land, which was God's sanctuary, which was their heritage, which was even God's rest.

We now see the object of the Prophet; for he set before · them the ruin of the city and of the land of Judah, that they might know that they could not escape the hand of God while they dwelt in Egypt contrary to his command, for God would be a severer judge to them there than he had been before in the land of Judah. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 44:14

14. So that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to the which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape.

14. Et non erit qui evadat (qui sit residuus) inter reliquias Jehudah quae venerunt ad peregrinandum hic (nam erat Propheta in Aegypto) nempe in terra Aegypti, et ad revertendum in terram Jehudah, ad quam ipsi elevant animam suam (vel, elevant animas suas) ad revertendum ut habitent illic, quia non revertentur nisi qui evaserint.

The Prophet seems to be inconsistent with himself; for at the beginning of the verse he says that there would be no residue, but at the end he adds an exception, that there would be few alive, who would flee, and, by some miracle, escape from

death. Some take this view, that none of the ungodly despisers would remain, but that some would yet be preserved alive, even those who had been drawn there against their own will, such as Jeremiah, Baruch, and such as were like them. But this explanation may seem forced at the first view; and yet if the Prophet is speaking of the Jews who had fled into Egypt, it is necessary so to take it; otherwise there would be a manifest inconsistency and contradiction. But we may also refer what he says at the end of the verse to the exiles in Babylon; for they who had concealed themselves in Egypt thought that it was all over with all others, because they had been led away into a distant country. As, then, a return to their country was closed up against them, they thought that they themselves would become the sole heirs of the land; for as Egypt was not far from the land of Judah, a return was easy, and also free, because they had made a treaty with the Egyptians; and further, they had gone to them as friends to partake of their hospitality. They, then, who dwelt in Egypt thought that the land of Judah would be their own.

But God says that none would return into that land except those who should escape, even those to whom permission to return would be given at the end of their captivity and exile. I take then the word {פלטים}, pelethim, at the end of the verse, as referring to the remnant which God would at length gather, when liberty to return was granted to the Jews by the edict of Cyrus, at the end of the seventy years, which the Prophet had before mentioned. And this seems to me a simpler meaning, that. is, that none would remain of that remnant which had gone down to Egypt, who came, as it is expressed, to sojourn in the land of Egypt and to return to the land of Judah, for this was their purpose. [358]

He then adds, To which they lift up their souls to return there The Prophet here exposes the confidence by which the Jews still deceived themselves; for the lifting up of which he speaks, means to aspire or to hope, and denotes pride and presumption. So by saying that they lifted up their souls, he reproves them, because they were still inflated with a foolish hope, and persuaded themselves that a return would soon be open for them, as the land was without any possessors. As, then, they were cherishing themselves with such delusions, they were to know that they were never to return there, They shall not return, he says. And then follows an exception, Except those who escape, even those of whom the Jews in Egypt despaired, who thought that they did well, and had taken a prudent counsel, because they had for a time a quiet hiding-place in Egypt. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 44:15-16

15. Then all the men which knew that their wives had burnt incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying,

15. Et responderunt Jeremiae om-nes viri, qui sciebant quod suffitum offerrent

[358] The easiest way to reconcile this seeming inconsistency is as follows: He threatens the fugitives to Egypt with the sword; this sword was that of Nebuchadnezzar, as he foretells in Jeremiah 46:15, etc. None would escape this sword except those who might have escaped in the meantime into the land of Judah. We see the same thing referred to in Jeremiah 46:28; and that verse may be thus rendered, — And those who shall escape the sword (who shall have returned from the land of Egypt to the land of Judah) shall be few in number; but all the remnant of Judah, who have gone to the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know the word, which shall stand, what is from me or from them. — Ed.

uxores ipsorum diis alienis, et omnes mulieres quae adstabant, coetus magnus, et totus populus qui habitabant in terra Aegypti, in Pathros, dicendo,

16. As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the LORD, we will not hearken unto thee.

16. In sermone (subaudiendum est in, vel, quoad sermonem) quem locutus es ad nos in nomine Jehovae, nos audivimus to.

Here is more fully seen the irreclaimable obstinacy of that nation; for Jeremiah had given them more than sufficient evidences of his integrity. They ought then to have been fully convinced that he was a true Prophet of God. Though they had disregarded him for forty years and more, he had yet given full proof of his legation when he had constantly, even to the last, prophesied of the destruction of the city and the Temple. They had, then, learnt by their own calamities that Jeremiah was an instrument of the Holy Spirit, and a true interpreter of God's will. And it hence appears how blind they were when they rejected all his admonitions, and counted his threatenings as fables. Thus, as in a mirror, the Holy Spirit of God sets before us how great the madness of men is when Satan once takes possession of their minds. But let us, at the same time, learn that this is the reward rendered to obstinacy, when God's Prophets are despised. It was, indeed, a monstrous and most disgraceful thing, when they dared so insolently to repudiate the holy Prophet, while, at the same time, they had been reduced to the greatest extremities, and when spoiled of all things, had fled into Egypt, and lived there, as we have seen, in a servile and miserable condition. Inasmuch, then, as they were still ferocious and still arrogant towards God's Prophet, it hence appears that they were untamable.

He then says, that all the men to whom the impiety of their wives was known, answered Jeremiah By these words the Prophet intimates that the beginning of idolatry was from the women. Things then had not as yet gone so far that all the men openly worshipped idols; but the women had taken this liberty, and the men readily indulged them. But why then did the Prophet before reprove them, as though they all made incense to idols? We doubtless learn from this passage, that they are not only guilty before God who openly do what is wicked, but also those who by connivance tolerate them; for the men ought to have interfered so as to restrain their wives from polluting themselves with ungodly superstitions; but this they patiently endured. Then their consent was the same as the deed, as we may rightly conclude from the words of the Prophet. He then says, that the men offered incense, not indeed openly and with their own hands, but that they knew of their wives, and that this impiety was done by the women with their consent. The rest I cannot now finish, I will proceed with it to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou wouldest prove our faith by many trials, we may constantly persevere in the pure worship of thy name, and in calling on thee in sincerity and truth, and that as we are surrounded and beset on every side by many pollutions, we may preserve ourselves pure and devoted to thee, both in body and soul, and thus proceed through the whole course of our life, so that at length we may appear unpolluted before thee, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Sixty-Second

WE began yesterday to explain what the Prophet says of the answer given him by the men and women. The sum of it was, that they would not do what the Prophet commanded them, though he spoke to them in the name of God. They did not answer distinctly, that the word of God or his oracle to them was of no account, but impeached the fidelity of Jeremiah, as though he had alleged the name of God falsely.

But he says that the men who knew that their wives burnt incense to alien gods, answered him; and he afterwards adds, and the women who stood by; some read, ``In the great assembly.'' But I have no doubt but that the Prophet means, that the answer was given in common by the men and by the women. He then says, that the women were at the same time present. He afterwards adds, a great assembly. What follows is an explanation, the whole people who dwelt in the land of Egypt, who dwelt in Pathros in the land of Egypt, and especially in that part. We have elsewhere spoken, of Pathros.

We see, in short, that God's Prophet was rejected; and yet there is no doubt but the Jews pretended some religion, but they did not think that they were bound to obey the command of man. And whence was this contempt? even from nothing but perverseness; for however hypocrites may dissemble and say that they do not despise God and his word, and address their words to ministers, yet their impiety betrays them when, on the one hand, they pretend that they worship God, and on the other they repudiate those furnished with his commands whom he would have them to hear. But God will not and cannot have himself separated from his word. Let us now go on ---

Jeremiah 44:17

17. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil.

17. Quirt potius (vel, quia, est par-ticula causalis, sed accipitur interdum adversative) faciemus quicquid (ad verbum, omnem sermonem) qui egredietur ab ore nostro, ut suffitum offeramus reginae (vel, machinae) coelorum, et libemus ei libamina, quemadmodum fecimus nos, et patres nostri, reges nostri et duces nostri in urbibus Jehudah, et in compitis Jerusalem, et saturati sumus panibus, et fuimus boni (hoc est, hilares, feelices,) et malum non vidimus.

Here they shew more openly their obstinacy; for having said that they had no faith in Jeremiah, as he had not been sent by God, they now add that they would indeed be the worshippers of God, but according to their own will. We have here discovered to us the fountain of all superstitions. This passage sufficiently proves whence these flow, and from what source proceed all the corruptions by which religion has been vitiated in all ages, even from the willfulness and pride of men. While therefore men arrogate so much to themselves as to make a law respecting the worship of God, all things must necessarily go wrong. It was for this reason I said that this is the origin of

all errors. How then is religion to remain pure? even by depending on God's mouth, by subjecting ourselves to his word, and by putting a bridle on ourselves, so as not to introduce anything except what he commands and approves. The right rule then as to the worship of God is, to adopt nothing but what he prescribes. On the other hand religion becomes vitiated and degenerates into superstition as soon as men seek to be legislators for themselves, when they say, Doing we shall do every word that cometh forth from our mouth.

This willfulness is indeed what humble men will condemn if they only consult common sense; but it is an evil innate in all, to seek to worship God as it seems good to them. But Jeremiah here paints for us as it were on a tablet the beginning of all superstitions: men set up their own will and fancies in opposition to the commands of God.

He afterwards adds, To offer incense to the frame-work of the heavens. Interpreters differ as to the meaning of this clause. We have stated some things already in the seventh chapter; but as a great part of you were not then present, it is necessary to repeat what was then said. Some derive the last word but one from {מלך}, melek, which means to reign; and hence they give this rendering, ``to the queen of the heavens;'' and this is the explanation of Jerome. But others derive the word from {לאך}, lak, and render it ``work;'' and some more rashly, ``ministry;'' and others, ``framework,'' or, fabric, (machina.) There are also those deduce the word from {הלך}, elek, which is to walk; and they think that all the stars or planets are included in this term; and we indeed see that walking or motion is what belongs to all the stars. But if the word comes from the verb to reign, ``the queen of the heavens'' must be taken for the principal star, as the Chaldee paraphrase regards it.

But some consider that the sun is intended, and some the moon. The sun in Hebrew is of the feminine gender; therefore the sun may properly be called a queen in that language. But if we take it as meaning frame-work, one of the radical letters {א}, aleph, is wanting, as in the seventh chapter. The Prophet, however, seems to mention here the whole machinery of the heavens, as though the unbelieving had said, that as wonderful glory appeared there, their worship was doubtless pleasing to God, when his majesty was adored in the stars and in the whole frame-work of the heavens. I do not therefore consider that one starts meant, but the very heavens or all the stars; and though the word is in the singular number, yet it means what is commonly called the hosts of heaven.

They then said, ``We shall go on in our usual manner; for we have hitherto offered incense to the fabric (or the frame-work) of the heavens, and poured libations; we shall not then desist from what we have usually done: ``and they further said, ``So have we done, we, and our fathers, and our kings, and our princes.'' Here they set up the authority of fathers in opposition to the authority of God, as it was usually done.

We see also in our day that the Papists superciliously boast of the Fathers and the Catholic Church, when the plain truth is brought forward. They think that darkness overspreads the Word of God, and that whatever is adduced from the Law, from the Prophets, and from the Gospel, is reduced to nothing when they object and say that

it is otherwise, that the fathers have spoken otherwise, that it was otherwise understood in old times. We hence see that the Papists of this day fight with the same weapons as idolaters formerly employed; and though the devil transforms himself in various ways, yet superstitious men ever adopt this principle, that whatever is handed down from our forefathers ought to be held sacred; and hypocrites do especially harden themselves in this error, when they can boast of kings and princes, as was the case in this instance; for they said, that they followed what had been done, not only by the common people, but even by kings and princes. They took it as granted that kings and princes could not have fallen into ignorance. The truth is, that greatness and splendor cover the ignorance and folly of kings. So when simple men speak of kings, their eyes are blinded or dazzled by the magnificence displayed, so that they think kings to be without dispute wise and endowed with the best understanding. Hence it is that Satan is wont often to use such masks for the purpose of deceiving men. Let us therefore learn to render to God altogether the honor of prescribing by his word the law as to religion; and thus let no altitude or dignity be allowed to overshadow the authority of God; but on the contrary, let kings and princes be constrained to submit when God appears.

They afterwards added, In the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem And they mentioned these places in order to sanction their own superstitions; for the holiness of Jerusalem was to them a cover for all vices, as we see to be the case at this day with respect to Rome, which is boastfully extolled by the Papists, as though the hypocrisy which sends forth the most nauseous filth through the whole world, were the most perfect holiness. Whatever then comes from Rome, they would have to be counted as a heavenly oracle. In the same manner the wretched Jews dared to set up Jerusalem in opposition to God. Great, indeed, was the dignity of the city, not such is that of Rome at this day; for the Papists have not taken from God's word the encomiums, by which they extol that city, which is really a foetid and an abominable brothel. Jerusalem had its dignity from God himself; but the Jews in their folly degraded Jerusalem when they corrupted the Law and instituted fictitious worship, according to their own will. And yet we see that they armed themselves with this name, as a weapon, against the Prophet, as though they brought God to fight against himself. Jerusalem had no dignity but that with which God himself had favored it; but they boasted that it was a holy city, that whatever was done in it was to be deemed holy and lawful, and not to be disputed, as though God's Law had been lying buried under the dignity of the city. Now Jerusalem had derived its splendor and all the dignity it had from the Law only. But this, as I have said, was the wickedness of men, that they corrupted and perverted the benefits of God.

They then added, that they were satisfied with bread, when they burned incense to the work or workmanship of the heavens It has ever been a common thing with the despisers of God, that they have been inebriated with earthly things, so as to disregard God himself, and to think that all their superstitions would go unpunished. But whence comes this error? even because men deceive themselves, when God patiently bears with them. God does not immediately take vengeance on the profanation of his name, he does not immediately punish hypocrites and idolaters, he

does not immediately fulminate against ungodly and spurious modes of worship: his forbearance seems to be taken as an inducement to sin, as an excitement to licentiousness. When, therefore, the Jews adduced this defense, that they were satisfied with bread, it was the same thing as though they had said, ``As long as God spared us, and suspended his judgment, it was well with us.'' But they ought not to have abused the forbearance of God, and thus to have heaped on themselves judgment, as Paul says. Now there was also another cause of error, for when God drew men back from error by chastising them more severely, as they deserved, after seeing they were still obstinate, they then began so to regard God's judgment, as foolishly to think that the cause proceeded from religion being changed. So, at the beginning of the Gospel we see that there were similar complaints among all the ungodly, as the ancients have recorded, and especially Tertullian, in his apologies: ``If the Tiber inundated, if any calamity happened, if hail or frost, the fault was ascribed to the name of Christ and his doctrine. From the time religion has been changed, we have not ceased to be miserable.'' But they did not consider as they ought to have done, that when they were blind and sunk in errors, God for a long time bore with them, and that after the doctrine of the gospel had shone forth, they still wickedly followed their accustomed impiety, which before might have been excused on the ground of ignorance: from the time God had shewn to them the way of salvation, they had resisted it, as it were designedly and willfully, so that they deserved a heavier punishment.

Such was the impiety of the ancient people according to this answer, We were satisfied with bread when we poured out libations to the frame-work of the heavens; that is, as God did not immediately punish their impiety, they were happy and saw no evil. And yet it is certain that they said what was untrue, for God had often chastised them, and at the time they were sedulous and devoted to their false worship. They had gone astray to idolatry before Jeremiah was born; nay, before Isaiah had commenced his office as a Prophet: and we know how severely at that time God punished them for their wickedness; for in the time of Isaiah the kingdom of Israel was distressed, and then wholly destroyed. Jerusalem, as Isaiah says, became like a cottage, and the whole country was laid waste; and at this time they poured out libations to the workmanship of heaven and burnt incense. We know how great was the zeal of Ahaz, and of other wicked kings. Hezekiah, indeed, and Josiah labored to restore the pure worship of God; but Manasseh, the son and successor of Hezekiah, immediately subverted everything. While then they were so fervid in their superstitions, did all things succeed according to their wishes, as they now boasted? By no means, for God pursued them with the sword, with famine, and with pestilence.

What then did this boasting mean, that they were satisfied with bread, and were happy, and saw no evil, at the time they poured out libations? The truth is, that madness so drives on headlong the ungodly, that they perceived not God's hand, when stretched forth against them. But even had they truly said, that they were happy at the time they pro-stituted themselves to idols, yet they could not have hence inferred, that their false worship was approved by God; for when he bears with men for a time, he does not yet cease to be their judge; for he will at length, in his own time, sum-. mort to his tribunal the ungodly whom he has long spared.

In short, hypocrites at first trifle with God, and thus turn his mercy to an occasion of sinning, as though there were no punishment; this is one thing: and in the second place, they are not roused by the scourges of God, but remain stupid when God chastises them. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 44:18

18. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her, we have wanted all things, and have been consumed by the sword and by the famine.

18. Ex quo autem desiimus suffitum offerre artificio coelo-rum et libare ei libamina, desti-tuti (vel, privati) fuimus omnibus, et gladio et fame sumus consumpti.

Here he enlarges on their ingratitude, that they attributed to God the fault of all their calamities, when yet God would have drawn them, as the Prophet will hereafter tell us, as it were out of darkness into light, had they been reclaimable. They ought to have been restored, by punishments, to their right mind. But this had been so far from being the case, that the effect of God's scourges had been to render them more and more obstinate.

They then said, that from the time they left off to worship idols, they had been miserable, that they had labored under the want of everything, and had been consumed by famine and the sword. They had before been consumed, as it is well known, by the famine and the sword, and as we have said, they had before suffered many calamities. Why then did they not refer to these punishments which they had suffered for having so often, and for so long a time, rebelled against God? But they willfully covered over God's judgments: and yet they said that they had been in every way miserable, since they had ceased from false worship. But was it for this reason they became miserable, because they no longer poured out libations to stars and idols? Nay, the reason was very different, as the Prophet will presently answer them. But we must repeat all their words; we shall come afterwards to the refutation given by the Prophet.

Jeremiah 44:19

19. And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink offerings unto her, without our men?

19. Et quando nos suffitum fecimus artificio coelorum, et libavimus ei libamina, an absque viris nostris fecimus ei placentas ad exhilarandum illud (aliivertunt, simulaehrum,) et etiam libando ei libamina?

They brought forward another argument, that they were not a small portion, but the whole people, who then flourished in prosperity, when they offered incense to idols. We know that but a few remained of that large multitude, which lived when the kingdom as yet existed. They said then that they were not the sole authors of this superstition, but that it was practiced by a large number of men, even the whole people, when Jerusalem was full of inhabitants, and the whole country.

Some explain this of the women, but improperly, as I think. The masculine gender is sometimes applied to women, but seldom, and it is harsh, and then it agrees not with this passage, where the whole context shews that men are spoken of; but one

reason only leads them to think so, and that is frivolous. It is said, Have we done this without our men? When, therefore, they said that they had not acted without the men, it has immediately occurred to inter-prefers that the women spoke; but the word is in the masculine gender. It is well known that {אנשים}, anushim, mean sometimes the aged, and also the princes who bear rule, as it is evident from other passages. But here that small band which remained brought forward the consent of a large multitude, as though they had said, ``We here are many against thee who standest alone; but if thou comparest the ancient condition of the city and of the land with our miserable state, when the kingdom flourished, when the city remained in safety, when the whole country was full of inhabitants, did they not all then, with one consent, worship the stars and the workmanship of the heavens? Since, then, this religion has been approved by the consent of so many, what meanest thou in attempting to take it away from us?''

We now, then, perceive the design of the Prophet, or rather we understand the meaning of those whom he has introduced as the speakers. They then said that they did not offer incense and pour out libations without their men, that is, without that large multitude, which afterwards perished or was consumed; and thus they set up against him, as a cloud, a large number of men, as the Papists do at this day, who, by means of consent, only fight against the truth, of God for the purpose of overwhelming it. In like manner did these wretched men contend with Jeremiah; and this pretext was their shield, that the whole people, before the city was demolished, followed these superstitions: We have, then, not done this without our men, pouring out libations and offering incense. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 44:20-23

20. Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men, and to the women, and to all the people which had given him that answer, saying,

20. Et dixit Jeremias ad totum populum, ad viros et mulieres, et ad totum populum, qui responderant ipsi sermonem, dicendo,

21. The incense that ye burned in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye, and your fathers, your kings, and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the LORD remember them, and came it not into his mind?

21. An non suffitus quem vos suffiebatis (vel, adolebatis) in urbibus Jehudah et compitis Jerusalem, vos et patres vestri, reges vestri et duces vestri, et populus terre, eorum (hoc est, ejus suffumigationis, vel, harum omnium superstitionum) recordatus est Jehova, et ascenderunt in cor ejus?

22. So that the LORD could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day.

22. Et non potuit Jehova amplius ferre propter malitiam operum vestrorum, propter abominationes quas fecistis, et redacta est terra vestra in vastitatem et in stuporem et in maledictum (vel, execrationem,) ita ut nemo sit habitator, sicut dies haec (hoc est, sicut hodie apparet.)

23. Because ye have burned incense, and because ye have sinned against the LORD, and have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, nor walked in his law, nor in his

statutes, nor in his testimonies; therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day.

23. Propterea quod suffitum fecis-tis et peccastis Jehovae (vel, impie gessistis contra Jehovam,) et non audivistis vocem Jehovae, et in lege ejus et statutis et testimoniis non ambulastis, propterea accedit vobis malum hoc, sicut dies haec (hoc est, sicut hodie apparet.)

The Prophet refutes the impious objections by which the Jews had attempted to subvert and to render contemptible his doctrine, he then turns against them all that they had falsely boasted. They had at the beginning said, ``Our kings,* our princes, and our fathers, had before used these rites; and they have been delivered to us, as it were, by their hands.'' To this Jeremiah answers, ``This* is certainly true, and for this reason it was that God became so severe a judge of their impiety, when he took away your fathers from the world, when he wholly destroyed the kingdom itself, when he demolished the city, and when at length he afflicted you with all kinds of evils: for except your kings, and your fathers, and your princes, had been impious towards God, he would have never treated them with so much severity; for he has promised to be a Father to the children of Abraham. God, then, must have been grievously offended with you, and your fathers, and your kings, when his wrath thus burned against them.''

There is, then, here a retort; for as we see that the Prophet turns against them what they had adduced against him. This is the sum of what is said.

He says that he spoke to the whole people, both men and women, and he repeats the whole people, because all had subscribed to the impious calumny. Then God says, ``For this reason have I destroyed your city and you, even because ye burnt incense to-your idols.'' The truth of what they had boasted is allowed, but it is turned to a meaning different from what they thought. For, as their fathers and their kings had imbibed superstitions, they supposed that they were doing right in following them; for, as we have said, hypocrites consider use and custom as sufficient reasons for disregarding the Law. Then, as to the fact itself, the Prophet admits that what they said was quite true, that this had been the cause of all their evils; for had not the kings and the whole people provoked the wrath of God, the temple would not have been demolished, nor the kingdom destroyed; God, in short, would not have alienated himself from his own people whom he had adopted. This is the meaning.

The incense, he says, which ye have burnt in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem, ye and your fathers, your kings, and your princes, and the whole people of the land, has not Jehovah remembered them? Whence, he says, has this dreadful calamity proceeded, which has destroyed all your race? Even from the wrath of God, for it has not happened to you by chance, for God had by his servants predicted what afterwards has been really fulfilled. It then follows, that your city has been destroyed through the righteous judgment of God. And what has been the cause of so great and so grievous a vengeance? Even your incense.

And hence he adds, Jehovah could not endure the wickedness of your works and the abominations which ye have done: therefore, he says, your land has been reduced to a waste The Prophet, in short, shews that had they not been justly exposed

to God's judgment, they would not have been destroyed. For he assumes this principle, that God is not angry without reason; and then he assumes another principle, that as God had chosen the seed of Abraham, and had been always propitious even to the unworthy, they would have been made partakers of his kindness, had not God been wholly alienated from them. It then follows, that God's vengeance had not been thus kindled by some slight offense, but by many and daily offenses, so that it could no longer be deferred: for the atrocity of punishment shews the atrocity of sin; and hence he says, Jehovah could not endure the wickedness of your works, and the abominations which ye have done: therefore, he adds, your land has been made a waste, an astonishment, and a curse, or execration, so that there is no inhabitant

He at length explains more clearly, in other words, the same thing, on account of your incense, he says, and because ye have done wickedly, etc. By naming incense especially, stating a part for the whole, he refers to all false and corrupt modes of worship, as it was stated yesterday; but he declares all of them to have been abominable. Then he says, Ye have acted impiously against God He now exaggerates their sin, for they had despised all godly admonitions, ye have not hearkened, he says, to the voice of Jehovah I apply this to the discourses of the Prophets, by which God continued to exhort them to repentance; for he daily and constantly addressed them, in order to restore them to the way of salvation. Then the Prophet condemns them, because they hearkened not to the words of the Prophets.

Then he adds, Nor walked in his Law, nor in his statutes, nor in his testimonies, he shews by these words, that even if Prophets had not been sent, one after the other, the Law ought to have been sufficient for them. But he was not content with mentioning the Law only, but added, statutes and testimonies: by which words he intimates, as we said yesterday, that the doctrine of the Law was clear and plain.

he at length adds, Therefore has all this evil happened to you, as it appears at this day. The Prophet, in short, intimates that their guilt was sufficiently proved, because God had been so angry with them, and they had been so severely afflicted; for if his judgments are right, it follows that the punishment he inflicted on the Jews was right. It may also be hence inferred, that they had been rebellious, because they had perverted and corrupted his true worship.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast not only in thy Law prescribed to us what is right, and shewed to us the way of a godly life, but hast also more clearly revealed thy will to us by the light of thy Gospel, where Christ thy Son shines forth as the Sun of righteousness, --- O grant, that we may submit ourselves wholly to thee, and from the heart render thee obedience, and to this apply all our efforts and direct all our doings, so that having finished the course of this life, we may at length come into that blessed rest which has been prepared for us in heaven by Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Sixty-Third

Jeremiah 44:24-26

24. Moreover Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the LORD, all Judah that are in the land of Egypt:

24. Et dixit Jeremias ad totum populum et ad mulieres, Audite ser-monem Jehovae, omnis Jehudah, qui estis in terra Aegypti,

25. Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows.

25. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Dells Israel, dicendo, Vos et uxores vestrae locuti estis ore vestro, et im-plevistis manibus vestris, dicendo, Faciendo faciemus vota vestra, quae vovinus ad suffitum adolendum arti-ficio coeli et ad fundendum ei libamina, stabihendo stabilietis vota vestra, et faciendo facietis vota vestra:

26. Therefore hear ye the word of the LORD, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith the LORD, that my name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord GOD liveth.

26. Propterea audite sermonem Jehovae, totus Jehudah, qui habita-tis in terra Aegypti, Ecce juravi per nomen meum magnum, dicit Jehova, si erit posthac nomen meum invoea-tum in ore (per os) viri Judaei dicen-tis, Vivit Adohai Jehova in tota terra Aegypti.

Jeremiah pursues the same subject, and not only bitterly reproves the ungodly men who so pertinaciously despised his doctrine, but also shews that they could gain nothing by their audacity, because they would at length be violently broken down, as they could not bear to be corrected, he says at the beginning, Ye and your wives have spoken; the men are also included, Ye have spoken both men and women, and with your hands have fulfilled it; that is, your obstinacy is complete, for, as you have spoken insolently against God, so there has been a performance; for by hands he designates the work done. he then shews that they had advanced to the highest pitch of impiety, for they hesitated not to vomit forth these impious words, We will not obey God, and they joined their hands to their mouth, for they strenuously executed what they had said. The thought itself was sufficient to condemn them; but when they thus spoke with their tongues, and then employed their hands against God, it was a proof of desperate audacity, as though they willfully designed to provoke him.

But he shews what issue awaited these impious men, who so presumptuously rebelled against God. When he bids them to hear what God on the other hand had sworn, he compares God with themselves, as though he had said, ``You* may a hundred times increase in your madness, yet God will be the conqueror; for he is an adversary who will surely subvert all schemes and efforts.'' But before he comes to this, he mentions what they said, Doing we shall do our vows which we have vowed, to burn incense,* etc. Here Jeremiah relates what we have before seen, that the Jews, under the pretext of doing what had been before done, continued thus rebellious against God. We perceive this by the word vows; and the superstitious, when they are pressed, are wont always to flee to this pretext, that to persevere in one's resolution is a great virtue. While, then, they avoid the charge of fickleness, they harden themselves against God.

The same thing we see at this day under the Papacy: The older any one is, the more obstinate he is. ``What! have I not learned during forty or fifty years what religion is, and how to worship God? I have been thus taught from a child, and have by a long habit followed this way: it would be now a disgraceful thing for me to change my course and to relinquish the faith which I have professed for so many years.''

There is, then, no doubt but the Jews made a pretense of this kind against Jeremiah, when they said that they had vowed. For hypocrites make no distinction when they vow anything, but indiscriminately obtrude on God whatever comes to their minds; they afterwards stand fixed in their foolish fancies, and say that a. vow is inviolable, a sacred thing. Such was the excuse of the people. But we see from the Prophet's answer how vainly they did bring forward in opposition to God their vows, which had been made without judgment and without reason.

And this passage ought to be carefully noticed; so that we may especially know, that it is a folly in no way pleasing to God, when men indiscriminately vow whatever they may dream according to their own fancies. God then would have sobriety and regard to his will to be observed as to vows. But when any one has made an inconsiderate vow, pertinaciously to persist in it is no less displeasing to God than the vow itself. The Jews had vowed; the warning of the Prophet ought to have constrained them to change their resolution. But while they avoided every kind of fickleness, we see that instead of constancy they set up their own perverseness and diabolical obstinacy in opposition to God. When, therefore, we rashly make vows, disapproved by God, nothing is better than immediately to retract them; for we have already sinned more than enough in having abused the holy name of God. For this reason the Prophet says, that the Jews spoke thus, Doing we shall do the vows we have vowed; and what were these? To offer incense to the stars and to hosts of Heaven. Had they vowed anything to God, they ought not to have broken their pledged faith; but they had made vows to the devil; then they ought to have immediately changed their purpose. When I say that vows made to God ought to be performed, I mean lawful vows; for he who makes a vow without judgment, does not vow to God; but those vows which God sanctions ought to be deemed sacred; and whatever vows God repudiates, ought to be counted as nothing. We hence see that the Jews were justly condemned, for they pertinaciously paid their vows to their own idols.

He adds by way of irony, Confirming ye will confirm your vows, doing ye will do your vows Here the Prophet sharply checks their insolence, because they thus set up themselves against God, as though it were a great virtue to persevere in their wicked purpose; ye cannot change, he says, but confirming ye will confirm your vows!

Hear ye now, he says, the word of Jehovah, etc. By these words, as I have already hinted, he intimates, that they could gain nothing by their insolence, except that they would thereby provoke God, who on the other hand did set up his own power against them. Thus, then, saith Jehovah, Behold, I have sworn by my great name, etc. As they had so often disregarded God speaking to them, he confirmed by an oath what he was going to say. Had he only threatened, they might have as usual disregarded him, as though the Prophet spoke what was vain. This is the reason

why he now introduces God as making an oath. And it ought to be observed, that whenever God confirms his words by an oath, this he does, either because he sees that he has to do with men who are like stones, who cannot be made to feel by simple truth; or when he is pleased to give aid to our infirmity and sloth: for God confirms threatenings as well as promises by an oath. When he thus confirms threatenings, then he indirectly condemns the obstinate wickedness of those whom he addresses. But when he promises anything by an oath, he shews how great our propensity is to indulge doubts, and what weakness there is in our faith; for were such faith in us as ought to be, we should be contented with one little word. As, then, God interposes his own name as a pledge, it hence appears, that we are naturally unbelieving, or that the weakness of our faith is such that it wants this support. But here, as God threatens, he shews that the Jews were so obstinate in their wickedness, that it was necessary to shake them by terror.

Now, God makes an oath by his own great name Men, as the Apostle says, swear by God, (Hebrews 6:16;) because he is called as a witness and a judge when his name is interposed. But it is no superfluous addition, when God not only swears by himself, but by his own great name For he thus intimated, that the Jews were greatly deceived, if they thought that God would not execute vengeance on them, because they indulged themselves. For it is a common thing with hypocrites to measure God by their own judgment; and when they extenuate his power, they think of him as of a child. In order, then, to divest the Jews of this false imagination, he says, by his own great name There is, then, implied here a contrast between the greatness of God's name, which cannot be diminished at the will of man, and the presumption of the ancient people, who rendered God's name contemptible.

He afterwards adds, If my name, etc. It is an imperfect sentence, which, as we have often said, was frequently used in order that a greater reverence may be observed by us, when we swear by God's name. We must now come to what is said, There shall not be a Jew, who is to swear any more in my name God himself makes an oath, and what is the oath which he makes? that no one was to profane his name; for they thought that it was some evidence of religion when they swore by Jehovah. It was yet nothing but an awful profanation of God's name. They contaminated themselves, as it appears, with Egyptian superstitions; but that they might differ from the Egyptians themselves and possess something special, that they, in short, might seem to be a holy nation, they still retained a form of swearing, distinct from what was common among the Gentiles. God declares that he would not suffer his name to be any more irreverently used in Egypt. Not invoked, he says, shall be my name any more by the mouth of a Jew And that he speaks of oaths we gather from the next verse, when he says, Live doth Jehovah in all the land of Egypt For, as it has been said, the Jews as yet boasted that they kept the Law, because God's name was still in their mouth and on their tongue. But God says that it was to be taken away from them, because it was a disgraceful pollution of his name, when they mingled themselves with the Egyptians in all kinds of superstitions, and yet boasted that they were God's people. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 44:27

27. Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them.

27. Ecce ego vigilo super eos in malum, et non in bonum; et consumentur omnes viri (omnis vir, ad verbum) Jehudah, quicunque sunt in terra Aegypti gladio et fame usque dum consumantur (est quidem, aliud verbum, sed ejusdem significationis.)

Here he more dearly expresses what he had said in the last verse, that none of the Jews would remain alive in Egypt. He now then points out the manner, even because he would not cease to consume them until they wholly perished and were brought to final ruin. He had said, No more shall my name be called, nor shall the Jews in Egypt swear, Live doth Jehovah; and why? because I will destroy them all, so that there will be none remaining in Egypt to pollute under a false pretense my name.

I will watch over them, he says, for evil and not for good This mode of speaking we have observed elsewhere, and explained why the Prophets spoke thus, even because hypocrites, though they think God cares not for human affairs, and imagine that he sleeps in heaven, and hence audaciously provoke him, as though they were fugitives and their purpose hid from God, yet boast of God's providence, and pretend that they acquiesce confidently in him. For this reason the Prophet answered, that God watched indeed, but not for good We then perceive the object of the Prophet; he derided the presumption of the people, who thought that God had a care for their safety. He then says, that God indeed does not sleep, but that this would bring no benefit to hypocrites; for though God watches as a father to preserve his own people, he yet watches as a judge to destroy all the ungodly. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 44:28

28. Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine, or theirs.

28. Et qui evaserint e gladio re-vertentur e terra Aegypti in terram Jehudah pauci numero; et cognoscent omnes reliquiae Jehudah, quae ingressi sunt terram Aegypti, ut habitarent illic, sermo quis stabit a me, an ab ipsis.

He at length adds that a few would escape. He had said before, (Jeremiah 44:14) that there would be none, but added at the end of the verse, ``but* such as shall escape.'' We said that this second clause is to be explained of the Jews who had been driven into exile in Babylon. But if it be applied to exiles in Egypt the meaning will be different. For the Prophet then said that none would escape, that none would remain alive: he thus doubtless took away every hope of deliverance with regard to those in Egypt. But he added, ``but such as shall escape,'' that is, such as should stealthily escape from the sword, as though they had never migrated into Egypt. And then in this different sense must necessarily be taken what the Prophet adds now, They who escape shall return* But we must bear in mind that those remaining alive would not be numbered among the exiles, for they must have withdrawn themselves so as no longer to form a part of that people. They had before become fugitives, but when they departed from Egypt, that second flight made them to be no longer a residue

in that land.

When, therefore, the Prophet declares that none of the residue would escape, we must understand the words as meaning, that there would be Jews no more in Egypt, as their memory would be obliterated. But when, in the second place, he mentions evaders, {פליטים}, pelithim, (the word which we have rendered, ``They who shall escape,'') he means that those who escaped had now ceased to be counted among the residue, having in a manner of their own accord separated themselves from them, so that they were no longer to be reckoned among the fugitive exiles in Egypt. Then he says, that those who escape from the sword would return into the land of Judah; an event wholly different from what they looked for, for they expected to return to their own country in a triumphant manner. They intended indeed to dwell in Egypt only for a time; and they hoped to come afterwards into a free possession of the land, when the Chaldeans had gone far away. Thus they had promised to themselves a new kingdom, and were not disposed to return except in great pomp. As, then, such a restoration had been imagined by them, the Prophet says, that a few only would return into the land of Judah; and then that they would return, not to possess the land and enjoy it as their own inheritance, but that they would return, because there would be no safe corner where they might hide themselves. We hence see that this return is set up in opposition to the false imagination in which the Jews indulged; and he says that a few only would return.

And at length he adds, All the remnant of Judah who had entered into the land of Egypt, shall know whose word shall stand, mine, or theirs Here at length the sentence is completed, for I have said that it was the Prophet's object to convince the Jews of their foolish and impious presumption, when in their perverseness they contended against God, as though he had said, ``What do you mean, ye wretched beings? Is the truth of God to give way, or can you frustrate his purpose by your madness and obstinacy? And surely God will prove stronger than you.'' He now then fully explains his meaning. By saying, all shall know, he does not refer to true and sincere knowledge, but to experience, that is, they shall at length really find out whose word is firm, mine or theirs.

This passage deserves special attention; we hence learn that we ought to acquiesce in God's word, and wholly to receive it, and especially to beware of that diabolical obstinacy which the Prophet here condemns; for when we fight to the last, we must at the end necessarily fall; though we may a hundred times complain and clamor, yet God's word will stand firm and will never yield to us. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 44:29-30

29. And this shall be a sign unto you, saith the LORD, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that my words shall surely stand against you for evil:

29. Et hoc vobis signum, dicit Jehovah, quod visitabo ego super vos in hoc loco, ut sciatis quod stando stabunt sermones mei super vos in malum.

30. Thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will give Pharaohhophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuehadrezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life.

30. Sic dicit Jehova, Ecce ego trado Pharaonem Ophra regem Aegypti in manum inimicorum ejus, et in manum quaerentium animam ejus; quemadmodum tradidi Zedechiam regem Jehudah in manum Nabuchadnezer regis Babylonis, inimici ejus et quaerentis animam ejus.

Jeremiah seals his prophecy by adding a sign which yet was to be coincident with it. It was not then, as they say, a premonstrative sign. And doubtless the Jews were wholly unworthy that God should shew them anything extraordinary; but this sign was only added, that they might know that they in vain trusted in the protection of Egypt, and also that every excuse might be taken away.

This brief notice may perhaps be obscure. We shall therefore refer to a distinction that exists: some signs precede the time and order of things, but others are connected with the events themselves. The signs which precede events avail to prepare the minds of the faithful, so that they may not doubt but that God will do what he has promised, as when Gideon sought a sign from God, and it was granted to him; the ground was wet with dew, while the fleece remained dry; and then the fleece remained dry when the ground was wet. (Judges 6:36-40.) By this sign Gideon was encouraged to proceed in his course, when before doubt made him inert Gideon was torpid, but when he saw by this miracle that victory would be given him, he boldly undertook the work assigned to him. The greatest portion of signs are of this kind. But there are other signs which do not precede events, but shew that when the time is fulfilled the events have been truly predicted, as when God said to Moses,

``This sign I give thee, that after ye have come out of Egypt ye shall sacrifice to me in this mountain.'' (Exodus 3:12)

Neither Moses nor the people could know anything by that sign before they had departed from Egypt. But after they were delivered they there gave thanks on the third day to God their Redeemer.

Hence signs refer sometimes to past time, and sometimes to what is future. Those which refer to the future are such as we call premonstrative, as the case was with Gideon, who took up arms with alacrity, because he knew that he was fighting under God's banner; and he was fully persuaded of a victory when he understood that God would be his leader.

This sign then had a reference to what was future. But the sign given to Moses was retrospective, for the people more clearly saw that God had been their deliverer, because it had been predicted to Moses when yet in the desert that the Israelites would come there; and that place, even Mount Sinai, had been already destined for that worship which afterwards was presented to God. The people at the time considered this, and by calling to mind what had been predicted, they were more and more confirmed as to their faith in God's favor. Such was also the sign mentioned here, This shall be a sign, says Jeremiah, even that God would deliver Pharaoh-hophrah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar his enemy

Had any one then asked the Prophet why he spoke of the king of Egypt, he would have said, ``Now indeed this sign remains as it were buried, its use is not seen; but God will in due time shew that I have been entrusted with his commands, for whatever I predict of the king of Egypt shall be fulfilled.'' This sign was also added,

for the thing seemed incredible, that is, that Egypt could be conquered, which was strongly fortified on every side. As, then, there was no entrance open for enemies, especially from Pelusium, the Jews thought that they dwelt, as they say, within the circle of the moon, and that they were placed beyond the reach of danger. Since, then, they confided in the protection of Egypt, and thought the land unassailable, this their confidence was laughed to scorn.

And the Prophet expressly mentions the surname of Pharaoh, which was Hophra, the meaning of which is not known to me; and it is probably an Egyptic word, for there is no such word in Hebrew: and it is not known whence the word Pharaoh has come. We know that all the kings of Egypt had this name, as the emperors of Rome were called Caesars, in memory of Julius Caesar. The kings of Egypt were in the same manner called Pharaohs. But each had his own name to distinguish him from the rest; and this king was called Hophra.

Now what the Prophet predicted, if we believe Josephus, was fulfilled about the fourth year after they had departed into Egypt. For Nebuchadnezzar went down again into Egypt, after having spoiled the Moabites and the Ammonites, and at length took possession of that kingdom. But it was a hateful message, when Jeremiah predicted the ruin of the kingdom. Nor is there a doubt, but that danger appeared before his eyes, when he saw that he addressed ungodly men, who a hundred times wished him to be destroyed. When therefore he dared to prophesy against the king, the whole people, and the land, we hence see how great must have been his firmness and his courage, still boldly to discharge his office; for he was not terrified by danger, but promulgated whatever God had committed to him. We then have here a singular example of magnanimity; for the Prophet hesitated not to risk his own life while obeying God.

By saying, I will deliver the king of Egypt into the hands of his enemies, and of them who seek his life, he intimates that there would be fatal enemies, though he speaks only of one enemy, but he connects the army with its head: I will deliver Pharaoh then into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, as I have delivered Zedekiah into the hand of his enemy and of him who sought his life; as though he had said, ``The condition of the king of Egypt will not be better than that of Zedekiah.'': For Zedekiah occupied that sacred throne of which God had testified, ``Here will I dwell;'' and further, ``On the throne of David shall one of his posterity ever continue.''

We hence see, that the Prophet reasons from the greater to the less; for if God had not spared King Zedekiah, who was, as it were, a sacred person, nothing better could be hoped for as to the king of Egypt, who reigned only in a manner usual and common. The sum of what is said then is, that the Jews had been already sufficiently taught by facts how true his prophecies were; for he had predicted what at length happened to Zedekiah; but his word was not believed. ``It is now the time,'' he says, ``when the Jews must know that I am God's faithful servant, as God had added a proof in the case of Zedekiah, which ought to have remained fixed in their memory.'' Now, if they thought that the king of Egypt was beyond danger, they ascribed great injustice to God, who had not delivered Zedekiah, who had been anointed in his

name, and by his command. This then is the import of the passage.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since by our adoption, thou hast favored us with this honor, that we may call on thy name, --- O grant, that we may with a pure mouth call on thee, that thou mayest be glorified among us, through the whole course of our life; and that whilst we labor to render to thee that sincere obedience which thou requirest, thy truth may be more and more propagated among us, and that the memory of thy name may flourish more and more, until we shall at length come into that glory, which we know is laid up for us in heaven, by Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Jeremiah 45

Lecture One Hundred and Sixty-Fourth

CHAPTER 45

Jeremiah 45:1-5

1. The word that Jeremiah the prophet spake unto Baruch the son of Neriah, when he had written these words in a book at the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah, saying,

1. Sermo quem loquutus est Jeremias Propheta ad Baruch filium Neriae cum scriberet sermones istos in libro ex ore Jeremiae anno quarto Joiakim filii Josiae regis Jehudah, dicendo,

2. Thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, unto thee, O Baruch;

2. Sic dicit Jehova, Deus Israel ad to (vel, de to) Baruch,

3. Thou didst say, Woe is me now! for the LORD hath added grief to my sorrow; I fainted in my sighing, and I found no rest.

3. Dixisti, Vae nunc mihi, quia addidit Jehova moerorem super dolorem meum, laboravi (vel, defessus sum) in gemitu meo et requiem non inveni:

4. Thus shalt thou say unto him, The LORD saith thus; Behold, that which I have built will I break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land.

4. Sic dices ad eum, Sic dicit Jehova, Ecce quae aedificavi ego diruo, et quae plantavi evello, nempe totam terram hanc;

5. And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek them not: for, behold, I will bring evil upon all flesh, saith the LORD: but thy life will I give unto thee for a prey in all places whither thou goest.

5. Et tu quaeres tibi magnifica? Ne quaesieris; quia ego adducam malum super universam carnem, dicit Jehova; et dabo tibi animam tuam in spolium omnibus locis quocunque tu veneris.

We have said that prophetic books were not written by their authors in the order

in which they are now read. But when a Prophet had preached, and committed to writing a summary of his doctrine, he fixed it to the doors of the Temple. And there were scribes who collected the summaries, and the volumes now extant were made from these. I now repeat the same thing, because some one may wonder that the order of time was not observed by Jeremiah: for hereafter he will prophesy of heathen nations; and it is certain, that these prophecies were announced, in part, before the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, some during his reign, and some in the time of Zedekiah. But the reason I have stated ought to be borne in mind, that this book we have now in our hands was not written by Jeremiah himself, but that it contains collected summaries, afterwards formed into one volume.

Here is told us a special prophecy concerning Baruch, who, as we know, was the Prophet's scribe, and not only his scribe or amanuensis, but also his disciple. And here Jeremiah relates, that he was gravely and severely reproved, because he shewed not a mind sufficiently firm, when the book mentioned in chapter thirty-six was to be written. Some think that there was a just reason for his grief, because Jeremiah declared that the ruin of the city and the people was nigh at hand. They then think that Baruch was anxious, nay, oppressed with sorrow when he heard that so dreadful a judgment of God was near; for there is no doubt but that he regarded his country with becoming devotion, and that he was solicitous concerning the worship of God, and for the safety of the people whom God had chosen out of all nations, and adopted. But as we shall hereafter see, he looked rather to himself, and was led to grief and sorrow on his own account; and for this he was severely reproved by the Prophet. Others bring forward an explanation by no means satisfactory, that he coveted the gift of prophecy, when he saw that Jeremiah pronounced, as from on high, words so weighty, and was the instrument of the Holy Spirit, as though he exercised a celestial judgment. They hence think that Baruch was stimulated by a vain desire for the prophetic office, and that he was reproved because he assumed more than what was right. But this fiction, as I have already said, has nothing to support it.

I do not doubt, therefore, but that he apprehended danger to himself, because the message which the Prophet had committed to him was greatly disliked. For we see in the chapter to which I have referred, that the Prophet did not go to the king, but dictated the contents of the book, and gave it to Baruch. When, therefore, he saw that he could not discharge his duty without danger, he began to complain and to murmur; and it was on this account that the Prophet, by God's command, reproved his weakness. The meaning then is, that Baruch, as he feared for his life, was affected with too much grief, so that he wished to be freed from all trouble, and that God was offended with this extreme fear, and gave a command to his Prophet to reprove Baruch, as he deserved. Let us now come to the words.

The word which Jeremiah the prophet spoke to Baruch the son of Neriah. We must notice, that the holy man did not spare his own disciple, whom yet he no doubt loved; for he had employed him, and Baruch had acted faithfully, not only as his scribe, but also as his fellow-helper. As then Jeremiah had proved the fidelity, care, and diligence of Baruch in many things, he wished, no doubt, to treat him with kindness; but as

God would have this fault in Baruch to be corrected, the Prophet performed this duty that belonged to his office. We hence see that he forgot flesh and blood, when he had to do his work for God. The circumstance as to time is added: and hence we may infer what I have already stated, that Baruch, when in danger of his life, was anxious, and complained of his own case, as though God had laid on him a burden too heavy and hard to be borne; for the Prophet says that he received this command when Baruch wrote the words in the book, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim.

We have briefly related how this happened; but it must be added, that Baruch did not fear without reason, because the king was already displeased with Jeremiah. He was not indeed altogether cruel, but he had bad counselors, who were like fans, ready to kindle up his rage; and the issue proved, that this fear was not without cause; for the king took a penknife and cut the book in pieces, and then threw it into the fire: and if Jeremiah could then have been found, no doubt all would have been over with him, as to his life. But Baruch had been warned by kind men to conceal himself together with the Prophet. We hence see that Baruch was frightened, because his message was so disagreeable, and calculated to drive the king to extremities, as it happened. At the same time, he was too much given to care for himself, for he ought to have presented his life as a sacrifice to God. For all who are called to such an office, are in duty bound to undergo all dangers with courage, so as to disregard life when necessary, or at least to commit it to the care of God; and when they see dangers nigh, they ought still to proceed in the course of their office. Though, then, Baruch wished faithfully to serve God, yet in the conflict he was overcome by temptation, so that he was more anxious for his life than animated to proceed in his course. It is to this that the time mentioned by the Prophet refers, when he says, that Baruch was reproved when he wrote the words in a book

The prophecy is afterwards more clearly expressed, Thus saith Jehovah of Baruch. The Prophet sets on him and accosts him, in order that he might fill his mind with holy fear, in order to correct that sinful fear, by which he was impeded in strenuously serving God. Thou hast said, the cause of the reproof is expressed --- thou hast said, Wo is to me now! for Jehovah has added sorrow to my grief Barnch no doubt wished to withdraw from his office, as is the case with those who are too much pressed, when they find that they are unequal to their task; they seek hiding-places and become runagates. Such, then, was the feeling of Baruch when he said, Wo is to me now! It was highly honorable to be a scribe to a Prophet, for it was the same thing as though he received words from the mouth of an angel. It was then unworthy and disgraceful for the holy servant of God to complain of his own misery, when yet it was an evidence of singular favor, that God had been pleased to choose him for such an office. Here then the ingratitude of Baruch is condemned, when he exclaimed that he was miserable, while yet he ought to have deemed it a singular happiness, that God had called him to that work.

He says, Jehovah has added sorrow to my grief Here the ingratitude of Baruch breaks out still more; for he ex-postulated with God, as though he had said, that he was not kindly treated. And there is an implied reproach in this complaint; for it is the same thing as though he called in question God's justice, and charged him with too

much severity. At the same time he complains that there was no end, as though he had said, that he had already suffered too much, and that God was not acting kindly with him, because he added evils to evils, Jehovah, he says, has added sorrow to my grief. It seems that {יגון}, igun, is more than {מכאב}, mecab, for Baruch intimates that he had already suffered grief there being an occasion for it; but that now an addition of sorrow or mourning was made to so many griefs.

We hence conclude, that Baruch did not shrink immediately at the first conflict, as slothful men do; but that he vacillated in the middle of his course. And this ought to be carefully observed; for they who have once courageously performed their office, think themselves endued as with angelic fortitude. Hence it comes that they boldly disregard all dangers, because they believe themselves to be invincible. But we see that Baruch was for a time a strenuous and courageous servant of God; but when there appeared no end, he began to grow faint. Let us then learn constantly to flee to God and to seek of him a new increase of grace, so that he may sustain us by the power of his Spirit, and raise us up, when fallen, for otherwise we cannot but fall every moment, even when our career seems glorious; but let us learn, being mindful of our infirmities, to ask the Lord to hold us up and to stretch forth his hand to us every day. This is what we are to observe in the example of Baruch, when he says, that sorrow was added to his grief.

But he afterwards expresses the same thing more clearly; I have labored in my groaning, he says, and found no rest By these words also, he testifies that he had been exposed to various evils, that his troubles were not as yet alleviated, or that he was not freed from dangers, and that at length he succumbed, for no rest was given him. We hence see what I have already stated, that Baruch was not refractory immediately at starting, but that when he had already made progress, having completed a part of the race, he was overcome with trials and overwhelmed, before he reached the goal.

He afterwards adds, Thus shalt thou say to him, etc. Here the Prophet shews that he was not roused against Baruch through any private displeasure, but that he had only conveyed to him God's message. Behold, what I have built I pull down, and what I have planted I root up. Here it is evident that the cause of the reproof was, that Baruch loved himself too much, and wished to evade dangers when God ordered him to engage in the conflict. Jeremiah sets forth what would be to the whole people. The comparison shews what I have stated, that Baruch, disregarding the public safety, was too cautious, and was thus timid and tender as to his own life. This is the reason why God mentions the whole people, as though he had said, ``Dost thou wish to be deemed of more importance than the whole people? Is thy life of more value than the wellbeing of the whole community?'' It was a disgrace to Baruch to prefer himself to the whole people, and even to the Temple and the worship of God. When, therefore, the severity of God was now ready to fall on the whole people, though Baruch might have endangered his life a hundred times, yet he ought not to have made so much account of his life. Then the Prophet shews here that Baruch was too delicate as to himself; and because he was blinded by the love of himself, he did not consider the public safety of the people, nor did he regard the Temple and the holy

land.

These metaphors of building and planting often occur in Scripture, I shall not therefore dwell on them here. But we must observe, that though God be the creator of the whole world, yet the people of Israel were peculiarly his work, and also the land of Israel. For God had consecrated that land to himself that he might be served in it, and had adopted the people. Hence he often compares that people to a vineyard.

``O my vineyard, I have planted thee.''

(Jeremiah 2:21; Isaiah 5:1-7.)

I will not multiply quotations, for in a thing so easy it would be a foolish ostentation to heap together many texts. God, then, had built his people, because they dwelt there as in their own habitations, and the land was called his rest He had also planted his people. We may remark, in short, that the building mentioned here and also the plantation, refer to those special favors which God had bestowed on that people. For though he had planted the whole world and all nations, yet the people of Israel was especially his planting, as it is said by Isaiah,

``The planting of the Lord is for glory,''

that is, this people had been planted, that God through them might manifest his own glory. (Isaiah 61:3)

Let us come now to what is here declared; he says, I pull down what I have built, I root up what I have planted; as though he had said, ``I have hitherto adorned this people with singular endowments; for I chose them as a heritage to myself, it is a holy race, it is a priestly kingdom, I dwell in the midst of them, I have undertaken the care of defending them, I am their Father, they are to me not only as a son, but also as a first-born; and titan this land is holy, because I have set my name in it: I have therefore built and planted this people and this land; but now, he says, I am pulling down and rooting up.''

It afterwards follows, And seekest thou great things for thyself? We now see clear enough why he reproved Baruch, it was, because he was too careful as to himself, and too timid; and thus it was that he was impeded in his duty. He then says, And dost thou seek for thyself? The particle {לך}, lac, for thyself, is put here emphatically; for here God sets Baruch in the balance, and the whole people together, with the temple and divine worship. ``Dost thou,'' he says, ``outweigh* them? Is thy life of more value than the temple, the safety of the people, and all my gifts which so much excel?'' It was then God's purpose in this way to make Baruch ashamed of himself, because he preferred a frail life to so many things and so glorious. Dost thou,* then, he says, seek great things, {גדלות}, gidalut, for thyself? that is, *``Shall* thy state be eminent while the temple is burnt with fire, while the land is laid waste, while most men perish, and the remnant are driven into exile and captivity? Art thou then alone to be deemed sacred? Art thou alone to be exempt from loss and trouble? See, is all this right?'' Here then he made Baruch himself the judge.

But as Baruch might as yet flatter himself, he immediately restrains him; Seek not, he says, for we know how men from self-love seek their own indulgence. That Baruch then might not persist in his course, God puts a check on all his ambitious feelings; Seek not, he says. He afterwards adds a ground of consolation. Baruch has been

thus far severely reproved, as he deserved, on account of his self-indulgence; but God now forgives him, and adds a comfort which might in part alleviate his sorrow; For behold, he says, I will bring evil on all flesh, and 1 will give thee thy life for a prey in all p1aces whither thou goest Here God frees Baruch from that distressing fear by which he had been debilitated, so as not to possess suitable firmness for his work. he then says, ``Fear not, for thy life shall be safe to thee while all around thee are destroyed.'' Baruch thought that he should perish while the people were safe and secure; but God declares that none of the people would be safe, and that he would be safely preserved while all the rest were perishing.

I will bring evil, he says, on all flesh He speaks indeed briefly, but Baruch must have well considered what he had received from the mouth of the Prophet, for he ought to have been fully persuaded as to the faithfulness and immutable purpose of God. God then assumes this fact, that ruin was nigh as to the whole people and other nations. He afterwards adds, Thy life will I give thee as a prey Of this kind of language we have before spoken. To give one his life for a prey was to deliver him as it were from instant death. As when all things are exposed to plunder, if one snatched this or that and escaped, he would have something saved; or as if one plucked anything from the burning, he would have it preserved; so when all things were thrown into such a confusion, that death would beset men on every side, he who could escape in safety would have his life as a prey when removed from all danger. Then God bids Baruch to be content with the benefit of being safe, while others, as I have said, were perishing. Now follows, ---

Jeremiah 46

CHAPTER 46

Jeremiah 46:1-2

1. The word of the LORD which came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Gentiles;

1. Qui fuit sermo Jehovae (ita ad verbum) ad Jeremiam Prophetam super cunctas Gentes:

2. Against Egypt, against the army of Pharaohnecho king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates in Carchemish, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah.

2. Quantum ad Aegyptum, contra exercitum Pharaonis Necho, regis Aegypti qui erat super flumen Euphratem in Charchamis, quem percussit Nabuchadnezer, rex Babylonis, anno quarto Jehoiakim, filii Josiae, regis Jehudah.

Jeremiah begins here to prophesy against foreign nations, and continues to do so to the last chapter but one, not that he then for the first time began to announce these oracles, but as I have already said, a volume was at length formed, including his prophecies, the order of time being not everywhere observed; for we see in the 25th chapter that he threatened heathen nations with the punishments they had deserved before Jehoiakim was made king. But as I have said, the prophecies respecting heathen nations have been separated, though as to time Jeremiah had predicted what afterwards happened.

He then says that he had prophesied of the destruction of the Egyptian army which King Nebuchadnezzar overthrew in the fourth year of Jehoiakim Jeremiah had then foretold before this time what was to be. It might have been that before Pharaoh-necho prepared his army, Jeremiah predicted what would take place; but it is probable that this prophecy was announced at the time when Pharaoh-necho went forth against the Chaldeans, for he was fighting then for the Assyrians. As they were not equal to the Chaldeans they made a treaty with the Egyptians. They then had come for a subsidy to drive away the Babylonians, and thus to defend the Assyrians against

their forces. But at first the expedition met with success; yet at last what had been predicted by the Prophet was fulfilled.

It is not known whether or not the design was to alleviate the sorrow of the people by this prophecy; and yet I am disposed to receive what the greater part of interpreters have held, that as at that time the people were in the greatest trouble, this prophecy was given in order that the faithful might know that God had not ceased to care for his people. But we must especially attend to the truth of history, for when Pharaoh-necho was induced, as it has been said, by the Assyrians, to lead his army to the Euphrates, the pious king Josiah met him, and he was then a confederate with the Babylonians, because there had been a friendly intercourse between the Chaldeans and the Jews since the reign of Hezekiah. As then Josiah wished to render service to a king who was his friend, he opposed the army of Pharaoh; but he was conquered and slain. Now the expedition of Pharaoh was fortunate and successful for a time, but when he began to boast of victory he was suddenly cast down; for King Nebuchadnezzar not only checked his audacity, but having routed his army, compelled him to return into Egypt, and occupied the whole country from the Euphrates to Palusium. That country had not yet been exposed to those continual changes which afterwards happened, that is, when those robbers who had succeeded Alexander the Great boasted that they were the kings of kings, and when every one strove to draw all things to himself. For hence it happened that now Egyptian kings, and then Asiatic kings, often shook that land as far as they could. This had not yet happened when Jeremiah prophesied, nor had Alexander been yet born, but it yet appears that these regions were even then subject to changes, so that there was nothing fixed or permanent connected with them. We must then bear in mind that the events of wars were dubious, so that, one while, the Egyptians forcibly seized a portion of Asia, and at another time the Assyrians diminished their power, and again the Chaldeans. Pharaoh-necho was then so repulsed that he never dared again to come forth, as sacred history testifies in 2 Kings 24:7.

Let us now come to the Prophecy of Jeremiah. He says that he prophesied against the army of Pharaoh-necho, when it was at Euphrates, that is when he fought there and thought that he would be a conqueror, as he had far and wide desolated a hostile land, and brought under his authority many cities. When therefore he had met with great successes, Jeremiah was then bidden to prophesy against his army, so that the Jews might know that the death of pious Josiah would not go unpunished, because God had purposed to destroy that great army by which Josiah had been killed, and so to break down and lay prostrate the power of Egypt, that King Pharaoh would hereafter remain as shut up in prison as it afterwards happened. The rest to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast been pleased to call us to the spiritual warfare, we may never be wearied; and that, as our weakness is so great that we are unequal to our conflicts, grant, that being supported by the power of thy Spirit, we may persevere in the course of thy holy calling, and never be broken down by anything that may happen to us, but learn so to break through all dangers as to commit our life into thy hands, and be in the meantime prepared to live or to die,

until thou gatherest us into that blessed rest which is laid up for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Sixty-Fifth

Jeremiah 46:3-5

3. Order ye the buckler and shield, and draw near to battle.

3. Preparate scutum et clypeum et accedite ad praelium.

4. Harness the horses; and get up, ye horsemen, and stand forth with your helmets; furbish the spears, and put on the brigandines.

4. Ligate equos et ascendite equi-tes, et state (statute vos) in galeis vestris, abstergite lanceas, induite loricas.

5. Wherefore have I seen them dismayed and turned away back? and their mighty ones are beaten down, and are fled apace, and look not back: for fear was round about, saith the LORD.

5. Quare vidi ipsos fractos, aver-sos retrorsum? et fortes eorum per-cutientur (percussi sunt) et fuga fugerunt, et non respexerunt; terror undique, dicit Jehova.

Jeremiah uses now a form of speaking very common in the Prophets though remote from common use. For the Prophets, when they denounce God's judgments and punishments on the ungodly, do not speak in a simple language, as though they were giving a narrative, but they employed figurative expressions, as though they wished to introduce men into the very scene itself. And that their doctrine might more effectually penetrate into the hearts of men, they bring forward various persons; they at one time introduce God as speaking, and at another they pronounce this or that according to the sentiments of others; and again, they declare the commands of God.

Jeremiah begins here by summoning the Egyptians, as though he were the herald of Pharaoh, and thus borrows the name of another person. He says, Prepare The verb {ערך}, orec, properly means to set in order, but here it signifies to prepare; Prepare, then, the buckler and the shield The word {צנה}, tsane, was a shield of a larger form, and {מגן}, megen, seems to have been a buckler carried by horsemen of light armor. And come near to battle: He then adds, Bind or he the horses The manner of fighting is not the same now as it was formerly; they fought in chariots, as heathen authors abundantly shew. He therefore says, he the horses, that is, join them together that they may draw the chariots. Go up, ye horsemen, stand in your helmets, clean your lances, and put on your coats of mail. The meaning is, that Egyptians would come well prepared with all kinds of arms that they might be formidable to their enemies. And hence the vengeance appeared more clearly, because they had been well furnished, so that they might seem to have gained the victory before they engaged with their enemies. This is the reason why the Prophet enumerates their complete armor, having omitted no material part; he mentions the lances, the helmets, the coats of mail, the chariots, the horses, and the shield, so that victory, according to the judgment of men, was already theirs. This is the first thing.

But we must observe the design of the Holy Spirit; it was his purpose to remove the veil from the eyes of the faithful, which for the most part prevents us to see

as clearly as we ought the power of God; for when we fix our attention on warlike preparations, we do not think that anything is left for God to do; for they who are well prepared seem to be beyond the hazard of losing the day. That the Jews then might know that it would be nothing for God to punish the Egyptians, he records this preparation. And there is a kind of concession when he says, They shall indeed be furnished with a helmet, a coat of mail, a shield, a sword, and a lance; but all this would avail nothing as to the issue. Then from this prophetic word let us learn, that God makes no account of all those things which men prepare when they wish to effect anything. For smoke is everything that dazzles our eyes; so forces and arms have no importance before God; for by a single blast he can dissipate all such clouds. And this truth is very useful; for we look on external things, and when anything specious presents itself to us, we are immediately taken up with it, and rob God of all power; for we transfer his glory to these masks which appear before us. We now then understand why the Prophet speaks here of bucklers, and shields, and lances, and chariots, and helmets, and coats of mail.

For it immediately follows, Why, or how, have I seen them broken? Here the Prophet, on the other hand, disregards all the things which he before enumerated in such high terms, for he spoke, as it were, according to the common judgment of men. And, as I have said, he undertook the person of a herald, as though Pharaoh himself had commanded the Egyptians immediately to take up arms. This then was apparently very formidable. But the Prophet now speaks as though standing on an eminence, and says, How or what is this? for {מדוע}, meduo, is a particle of wonder, How! He then passes over from the common opinion of the flesh to the prophetic Spirit, as though he had said, ``Were any one to judge of the Egyptians by their external splen-dour, he would say that they would be victorious over their enemies; but were any one to ascend higher and to form a judgment, not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit, he would see that all this is frail and evanescent.''

But the question, How? is to be taken as emphatical; for it could have been hardly believed that an army so well equipped could have become a prey to the Babylonians, and that it was hastening to its own ruin. As then this seemed incredible to any one attending to the subject, the Prophet asks, How have I seen them? He however says that he saw them, even because God had set him, as we have said, as it were on a watch-tower. This, however, may be applied to the body as well as to the mind. I saw them turned backward:, when yet they were rushing forward, as he says afterwards, like a flood. Their valiant men, he says, have been smitten, and by flight they have fled. He means, in short, that there would not be so much courage in the Egyptians as to withstand the onset of their enemies, because they would be broken down by the hidden power of God. He also adds, that their flight would be accompanied with so much dread, that they would not dare to look behind, so that their danger would increase their haste.

He at length adds in God's name, Terror on every side, says Jehovah Here he changes the person the third time, for he declares as from God's mouth that there would be terror on every side; and thus it is an answer to the question, How, or why? even because God, he says, executes his judgment on them. Whenever, therefore,

we see that nothing is wanting to our enemies for victory even over the Church of God, let what the Prophet says here be remembered by us, that there is no reason why we should despond, though we may be filled with wonder and amazement; for God will so work as to break down, without the hand of man, those who shake the whole world with terror. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 46:6

6. Let not the swift flee away, nor the mighty man escape; they shall stumble, and fall toward the north by the river Euphrates.

6. Ne effugiat volex, et ne servetur fortis; in Aquilone (in Septentrione) super ripam fluvii Euphratis impingent (vel, impegerunt, est proeteriti temporis,) et ceciderunt ({כשל} significat etiam corruere, ideo vertunt alii, corruerunt, sed videtur esse species gradationis.)

He then says first that they would gain power, but he speaks presently of their fall, unless it be thought that the same thing is repeated: and the beginning of the verse may be read affirmatively, ``The swift shall not flee,'' etc. But as the particle {אל}, al, is often used in a prohibitory sense, the verse may be evidently explained as spoken by God, and thus it may be read in connection with the previous verse, Let not the swift flee, nor the brave escape For God here declares authoritatively, that celerity and courage would be of no avail to the Egyptians, because the swiftest would be taken by their enemies, and the bravest would fall. [359]

He says, In the land of the north, on the bank of the river We know that Babylon and Assyria and Chaldea and those countries, were northward with respect to Judea. Whenever then the Prophets speak of the Babylonians, they call them Northlanders; but Egypt was to the south, as it is clear from many parts of Scripture. But as the Prophet here speaks of the Egyptians, he rightly makes Chaldea to be northward. Then he says, On the bank of the river Euphrates they shall stumble, or fall. The meaning is, that the event of war is in the power of God, so that he would tear in pieces and lay prostrate or scatter the Egyptians, however well equipped they might be, and trust in their own strength.

We must also observe, that whatever subsidies men pro-cum for themselves in order to protect their safety, they are nothing when God is opposed to them. The Prophet indeed mentions only two things; but he means that though men may excel in many things and possess many endowments, they must yet perish, when that is God's will: flight cannot save the swift, nor strength the valiant. It follows ---

Jeremiah 46:7-8

7. Who is this that cometh up as a flood, whose waters are moved as the rivers?

7. Quis iste tanquam lacus ascendet (vel, ascendit, ad verbum) tanquam fluvii sese agitant (aut, moventur) aquae ejus?

8. Egypt riseth up like a flood, and his waters are moved like the rivers; and he saith, I will go up, and will cover the earth; I will destroy the city and the inhabitants thereof.

8. Aegyptus tanquam lacus ascendit (ascendet, ad verbum, sed significat contin-

[359] It is more consistent with the passage to render the verbs in the future tense, — Not flee shall the swift, Nor escape shall the strong; In the north, by the side of the river Euphrates, Have they stumbled and fallen. — Ed.

uum actum,) et tanquam fluvii sese movent aquae: dixit enim, Ascendam et operiam terram; perdam urbem et qui habitant in ea.

The Prophet again meets those doubts which might have possessed the minds of the godly, so as to prevent them to receive this prophecy in faith and with due reverence: for we have said, that when our thoughts are occupied with external things, the power of God is disregarded. When, therefore, we speak of some impregnable kingdom, it does not come into our minds, that all strongholds are of no account with God. It was therefore necessary highly to extol the power of God, when the Prophets spoke of his judgments: otherwise the flesh, as we have stated, would have said, ``They who are well fortified must be free from evils, and as it were beyond the reach of weapons, and hence there is nothing for them to fear.'' And it is with this false imagination that the proud deceive themselves, for they set up their forces, their auxiliaries, and all the things which they deem, according to the judgment of the flesh, as sufficient to protect their safety. Titus it happens, that they heedlessly disregard all threatenings, even because they think that the subsidies which they have are so many fortresses against all attacks.

It is for this purpose that the Prophet now says, Who is this that as a lake rises, or swells, as rivers are moved, or, whose waters are agitated? But he speaks according to the common judgment of men, for the very sight could not but fill men with fear; and so the Jews could never have thought that possible which the Prophet here asserts. He then, as it were, introduces them all as anxiously inquiring according to their own judgment, Who is this? as though Pharaoh was not a mortal, but something above human. For the drift of the question is this, that Pharaoh was as it were exempted from the common condition of men, because his power increased like a river rising or swelling; and its waters, he says, make a noise

Then he adds, Egypt is like rivers and like a lake: it made a noise with its forces, as though a river were rolling along its waters. But all this would be nothing, as he afterwards tells us he adds, he hath said, I will ascend, I will cover the land, I will destroy the city, etc. He puts city in the singular instead of the plural number; [360] I will destroy cities, he says, and all who dwell in them. He in short sets forth Pharaoh here as one who triumphed before he fought, because he could cover the land with the multitude of his footmen and horsemen. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 46:9

9. Come up, ye horses; and rage, ye chariots; and let the mighty men come forth; the Ethiopians and the Libyans, that handle the shield; and the Lydians, that handle and bend the bow.

9. Ascendite equi (quidam vertunt, insanite, sed dura esset metaphora, ideo simpliciter accipio,) jactate vos currus (ponit in singulari numero, cum tamen verbum sit pluralis numeri,) egredientur fortes, nempe Aethiopes et Lybes, qui tenent clypeum, et Lydi, qui tenent et tendunt arcum.

He goes on with the same subject, and enumerates whatever might discredit his prophecy. For when the faithful saw that the Egyptians went on that expedition

[360] The city here is put in opposition to the land, — And it (Egypt) said, I will ascend, I will cover the land; I will destroy (every) city, and the dwellers in it.

not only with immense forces, but had also, as foreign aids, the Ethiopians and the Libyans, and even transmarine soldiers from Lydia, --- when they saw hired soldiers from all parts joined to the Egyptians, it was hardly credible that such an army could be put to flight. Then the Prophet says here, that though Pharaoh hired the Ethiopians, the Libyans, and the Lydians, yet with all these forces he would perish.

He again speaks in the name of Pharaoh, Ascend, ye horses; toss, ye chariots, and let the valiant come forth This coming forth may refer to the lands whence they came. He mentions first the Ethiopians, who were near the Egyptians, though separated from them. Then he adds the people of Libya, who were Africans, or who were in the middle between Egypt and Africa. Then he says, that they laid hold on the shield. He points out their principal armor, not that they were without a helmet and sword and other arms, but they mainly trusted in their shields. As we know that the Macedonians wore the pelta, and were remarkable for that piece of armor, so the Prophet says that the Ethiopians and Libyans were furnished with bucklers or shields. He mentions also the Lydians, who were from another part, even from the opposite shore of the sea; for we know that the Lydians were in Asia Minor, while the Egyptians were in the middle between Africa and Judea. The Mediterranean Sea was therefore between them. It hence appears, that auxiliaries from a distance, and with great expense, were procured by Pharaoh when he undertook this war. And it is also probable that other nations were hired; but the Prophet mentions only the Ethiopians, Libyans, and Lydians: and he says, that those named last laid hold on the bow, because they were the best archers. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 46:10

10. For this is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts, a day of vengeance, that he may avenge him of his adversaries: and the sword shall devour, and it shall be satiate and made drunk with their blood: for the Lord GOD of hosts hath a sacrifice in the north country by the river Euphrates.

10. Verum (copula enim hic adversative exponi debet, atqui) dies ille Domino Jehovae exercituum, dies ultionis ad ulciscendum de adversariis suis; et vorabit gladius et saturabitur et inebriabitur sanguine ipsorum; quia victima Domino Jehovae exercituum in terra aquilonis ad fluvium Euphratem.

The Prophet having described the terrible forces of Pharaoh, in which he so trusted, that he dared to boast of a certain victory, now says that the event would be very different: But this day, he says, will be the day of Jehovah's vengeance; as though he had said, that Pharaoh would look only on his chariots and horsemen, his hired soldiers, their arms and warlike preparations, and that he would not at the same time look to God, who is not without reason called the God of hosts. Though the Scripture in many places ascribes this title to God, yet here it has a special application. For the Prophet derides the folly of Pharaoh, because he thought the issue of the war was in his own hand, as though the over-ruling of all things was not in God's hand. He then says, that victory depended on God only; and farther, he announces what was to be: This day, he says, will be the day of God's vengeance.

By these words he intimates that God was incensed with the Egyptians, and the cause we referred to yesterday, even because Pharaoh-necho had in passing through

slain the pious King Josiah. He then deserved that God should lay prostrate his arrogance, and also chastise his cruelty and check his tyranny. But when he calls the Egyptians God's adversaries, this was said for the consolation of the chosen people, to shew that God would undertake their cause. For whence was it that he was an enemy to the Egyptians? even because he would not suffer the pious king to be killed with impunity. We now then understand what these words mean, that this day would be a day of vengeance to the God of hosts; as though he had said, that God would preside over and regulate that war, so that all the forces of Pharaoh would avail him nothing.

he afterwards expresses more clearly, for confirmation, what he had said: The sword, he says, shall devour, and shall be satiated and made drunk with their blood But at the end of the verse he says, that this would be the righteous judgment of God. For God so extols his own power, that he yet would have himself acknowledged to be just whenever he inflicts punishment on the ungodly; for as his severity often appears extreme, hence the Prophets, when they speak of acts of vengeance which God executes, at the same time adds some testimony as to his judgment being righteous, as in this place, when it is said, that the God of hosts had a sacrifice

By sacrifice the Prophet means, that the slaughter would be free from every stain; for it is the same thing as though he had said, ``God will be glorified in that slaughter, when all the Egyptians shall be destroyed.'' For why do we offer sacrifices to God except that his glory may be proclaimed, that he is just as well as merciful, and almighty, and the fountain of all wisdom and uprightness? We hence see the purpose for which the word sacrifice is used, even that none should dare to blame that slaughter, as though God were too rigid and exceeded the limits of justice in shedding that blood. He then says that all the slaughters would be as so many sacrifices, in which God's justice as well as his power would shine forth, he again points out the place, the land of the north, nigh Euphrates, in order that more credit and certainty might be given to the prophecy. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 46:11

11. Go up into Gilead, and take balm, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt: in vain shalt thou use many medicines; for thou shalt not be cured.

11. Ascende in Guilead, et sume resinam virgo filia Aegypti; frustra multiplicas medicamina; sanitas nulla tibi.

The Prophet adds here nothing new, but confirms by another metaphor what he had said before. He then says, that the slaughter would be like a fatal plague, as though God would take away from the Egyptians every hope. We indeed know that the kingdom of Egypt did not then perish; for the nation itself remained. But the kingdom was so depressed, that, as it was stated yesterday, they kept themselves as shut up within their own borders, and did not afterwards bring out their forces. And yet it is well known how great was the pride and audacity of that nation; but they saw that they were wholly broken down and weakened. Hence the Prophet says, not without reason, that that would be an incurable wound, by which God would so smite Egypt, that it would no more recover its ancient strength; for after that time the kingdom of Egypt never flourished; and after a few years, as we shall see in

another prophecy, it was brought under the power of Babylon.

he now turns his discourse to Egypt: he says, O virgin, the daughter of Egypt, a mode of speaking common in the Prophets. They call Babylon, The daughter of Babylon; they call Judea, The daughter of Judah. But this may be applied to the people or to the kingdom. And he calls Egypt virgin on account of its delicacies, as though he had said, that the Egyptians were tender and delicate, because they had during a long peace gathered strength and all kinds of wealth. As then they were so inebriated with their pleasures, Egypt by way of mockery is called a virgin.

Ascend, he says, into Gilead, and take rosin, or, as some render it, ``balm.'' Jerome, in another place, rendered it ``honey,'' but without reason; and it is probable that the word means rosin rather than balm. It may be also concluded from other places that the best rosin was found on Mount Gilead, as we have also stated in the eighth chapter of this book (Jeremiah 8). The rosin was a juice flowing from trees, especially from the terebinth; and hence the best rosin is the terebinthine, which we call terebenthine. There is at the same time a rosin from firs and other trees. But as I have already said, Mount Gilead was fruitful in rosin, and is celebrated not only for the abundance of its rosin but also for its excellency; and its medicinal qualities are found better and more efficacious in some places than in others.

According, then, to the common mode of speaking, he says, O daughter of Egypt, ascend into Gilead, and take to thee rosin; but it will be, he says, in vain; that is, *``Wert* thou earnestly to seek a remedy for thy evils, thou couldst never find it; for thy stroke is incurable.'' Not that the kingdom of Egypt perished or was wholly overthrown, but that its strength would be lost, so that the Chaldean king would take possession of all that part of Asia which the Egyptians had occupied, even as far as Pelusium, to the very borders of the Nile. He at length adds, ---

Jeremiah 46:12

12. The nations have heard of thy shame, and thy cry hath filled the land: for the mighty man hath stumbled against the mighty, and they are fallen both together.

12. Audierunt gentes opprobrium tuum, et clamore tuo repleta est terra; quia fortis contra fortem impegit, et simul ceciderunt ambo.

He concludes this prophecy by saying that the report of this slaughter would be everywhere known among all nations. Had the Egyptians sustained only a small loss, the thing might have been unknown, as when a small engagement takes place the report does not spread far and wide; but when by one battle a nation is so conquered that a remarkable change follows, the event then is proclaimed everywhere. The Prophet then intimates by these words, that the stroke of Egypt would not be common, as also he said before, because the report would fly through all nations.

Heard then have all nations of thy reproach, even that the Egyptians had, to their great disgrace, been conquered by the Chaldeans, and that they had not only been put to flight, but that the greatest part of them had been slain, so that the kingdom of Egypt had been nearly lost; that at least they had been reduced to such straits, that they lost their chief eries and a very wide country, even throughout Asia to the river Euphrates.

He says that the land was filled with their cry: by voice or cry he means lamen-

tations. Then he adds, Because the valiant hath stumbled against the valiant This may be thus explained, ``The valiant hath contended with the valiant;'' but. that the Chaldean proved stronger than the Egyptian: but I prefer to apply this to the Egyptians; and this may be inferred from the end of the verse, where he says, that both fell. So the Prophet means that the multitude, in which the Egyptians gloried, would be a hindrance to them, as usually is the case, when the army is too crowded, for the larger and the more numerous the army is, the greater is the disorder and confusion. When an army is small, they can by degrees recede, or stand still, until they take flight in safety: but in a great multitude there is also great trepidation, and hence a great disorder and confusion. This then is what the Prophet points out, when he says, The valiant stumbled against the valiant, and they both fell together; that is, that while they were fighting, they would clash with one another, and produce such disorder, as to occasion the fall of both.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since we see that the most opulent kingdoms have not escaped thy hand, we may learn to recumb only on thine aid, and to submit ourselves to thee, with due hu-milky, so that we may be protected by thy hand, and that this only true confidence may sustain us in all perils, that thou hast undertaken the care of our salvation; and that we may, in the meantime, fight under thy banner with sincerity and uprightness of life, until we shall at length enjoy the fruit of our victory, in the celestial kingdom, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Sixty-Sixth

Jeremiah 46:13

13 The word that the LORD spake to Jeremiah the prophet, how Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon should come and smite the land of Egypt.

13. Sermo quem locutus est Jehova ad Jeremiam Prophetam ad veniendum (vel, de veniendo,) de adventu Nabuchadnezer regis Babylonis ad percutiendam terram Aegypti.

The former prophecy was respecting the slaughter of the Egyptian army, when Pharaoh came to assist the Assyrians, with whom he was then confederate. But this prophecy extends farther; for Jeremiah declares that the Egyptians themselves would have their turn; for we know even from other Prophets, that punishment had been denounced on them, (and Ezekiel pursues this subject through many chapters,) because they had, by their allurements, deceived the people of God. And God punished them not only for the evils by which they had themselves provoked his wrath, but because they had corrupted the Jews and confirmed them more and more in their obstinacy.

We now then perceive the design of the Prophet: the meaning is, that God, after having executed his judgment on the Israelites and the Jews, would become also the judge of the Egyptians and of other nations. We must further observe, that this prophecy was announced before the city was taken. At the time, then, that the Egyptians were secure, and that the Jews, relying on their aid, thought themselves safe from the violence of Nebuchadnezzar, it was then that this prophecy was delivered. But we see again, that the order of time is not observed as to these prophecies; for

he had spoken of the slaughter of the army, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim. And it is probable, though the time is not pointed out here, that the destruction of Egypt had then been predicted; for before Jeremiah began to discharge his prophetic office, Isaiah had spoken against Egypt. Ezekiel, also, when an exile in Chaldea, at the same time confirmed the prophecies of Jeremiah, and said many more things against Egypt. We must however remark, that Jeremiah had not once only prophesied of the ruin of Egypt; for after he was forcibly led there, he confirmed, as we have before seen, what he had said previously.

Jeremiah then had predicted what we read here many years before the taking of the city. But as the Jews disregarded what he had said before, he again confirmed it, when he was in Egypt, though it was not without great danger to his life, for he spared neither the king nor the nation.

He then says, that the word came to him respecting the coming of Nebuchadnezzar to smite the land of Egypt Hitherto he has spoken of the punishment which God inflicted on the Egyptians, beyond their own kingdom, on the bank of the Euphrates; but, now he records the punishment of Egypt itself, when Nebuchadnezzar not only went to meet the Egyptians, to drive them from his own borders, but when he made an irruption into their kingdom, and plundered many cities, and so afflicted the whole kingdom, that the Egyptian king afterwards reigned only, as it were, by his permission. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 46:14

14. Declare ye in Egypt, and publish in Migdol, and publish in Noph and in Tahpanhes: say ye, Stand fast, and prepare thee; for the sword shall devour round about thee.

14. Annuntiate in Aegypto, et promulgate in Migdol, promulgate in Noph et in Taphnees, dicite, Sta, et para te; quia voravit (vel, consumpsit) gladius circuitus tuos.

He pursues the same mode of speaking as we observed yesterday; and the reason was explained, even because, as men are very inattentive to God's judgments, the message of Jeremiah would have been ineffectual, had he spoken plainly, and in an ordinary way. It was therefore necessary to adopt an elevated style, and to speak, as he does, in a manner striking and forcible. Public speakers affect fine speaking, but only to catch applause, or to fill men with empty fear or joy: but the Prophets had in view another thing, even to teach, to exhort, to reprove, to threaten, in a way calculated to be effectual.

He says, Declare ye in Egypt, as though he pronounced a sentence from a tribunal, being endowed with divine authority. He then bids this message to be brought to the Egyptians. He afterwards mentions some cities, Migdol, Noph, and Tahpanhes. Some think Noph to be Alexandria; but it was probably Memphis, and this appears evident from other parts of Scripture. But they are mistaken who think that the same was Migdol, for the Prophet here refers to them as different places. Of Tahpanhes we have spoken elsewhere. Now these were celebrated cities and known to the Jews, as they were not far from them.

We know that Memphis was a renowned city; but this was much more known to

the Israelites, for it was not far from their passage from Egypt, as we may learn from the second book of Moses and other parts of Scripture. Then we have seen that the Jews dwelt in Tahpanhes when they became fugitives from their own land, and were received there as guests.

It is then the same as though the Prophet had said, that God was now armed against the Egyptians; but as he was not a teacher set over them, he speaks of them as of foreign nations, Declare, he says, in Egypt, that is, let the Egyptians know this. Say, Stand, and prepare thyself, for the sword has devoured thy borders, and everything around thee. By these words the Prophet intimates, that though the Egyptians, being warned in due time, should exercise vigilance, yet their care would be useless, for they could not prevent God from executing what he had determined, he speaks, however, of what was incredible, for the Egyptians thought themselves far from every danger: hence the Prophet says, that how much so ever they might prepare themselves, yet it would all be in vain. He then derides their security, because they thought themselves beyond the reach of danger. It follows ---

Jeremiah 46:15

15. Why are thy valiant men swept away? they stood not, because the LORD did drive them.

15. Quomodo dispersus est fortis tuns (ad verbum, fortes tui, est mutatio numeri,) non stabit (vel, non stetit,) quia Jehova impulit eum (iterum mutatur munerus, designat enim fortes tuos.)

By these words the Prophet expresses more clearly what I have just referred to, that the Egyptians would not be able to resist, though they might have gathered auxiliaries on every side, because God would carry on war against them. In astonishment he asks, ``How has it happened, or, how is it, that thy valiant men have been thus scattered?'' The verb, indeed, means to sweep, but here it means to scatter. He immediately answers, Because God has driven them, they could not stand The reason for such a question we explained yesterday, even because the unbelieving regarded as a fable whatever they heard from the Prophets; and as long as things went on prosperously, they slept, in a manner, over their good fortune, and became inebriated with it, so that they feared nothing, and did not think themselves exposed to any adversities. As then ungodly men proudly disregarded God, the Prophets, appealing to common sense, asked them, How comes this? For Jeremiah spoke of things as yet hidden, and which had not fallen under the observation of men. We hence see why this wonder was expressed, How have thy valiant fallen? Then he says, Because Jehovah has driven them, they could not stand

Here, again, we must bear in mind, what we briefly referred to yesterday, that ungodly men deceive themselves by a false confidence, when they set up in opposition to God's power their earthly helps and subsidies, and think that they are well secured when they possess many forces and strongholds, and when they can procure auxiliaries for themselves from every quarter. Let us know that nothing is more fatal than to confide in earthly helps, when God declares that he is our adversary. Hence the Prophet says, that they did not stand, because Jehovah drove them; as though he had said, that Egyptians would have to do not only with the king of Babylon, but

with God himself, whom they had provoked. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 46:16

16. He made many to fall, yea, one fell upon another: and they said, Arise, and let us go again to our own people, and to the land of our nativity, from the oppressing sword.

16. Multiplicavit, impingent, etiam cecidit quisque in socium suum; et dixerunt, surge et revertamur ad populum nostrum, et ad terram nativitatis nostrae a facie gladii populantis.

Brevity of expression renders this sentence obscure or ambiguous. The verb {הרבה}, erebe, is put without a nominative case; but it is to be applied to God. God, then, has multiplied. And then there is a change of number, for the singular is to be taken as a plural when he says, he falls, {כושל}, cushil: the meaning is, that many would stumble, because God would drive them, as it was said in the last verse. Hence comes what immediately follows, Even fall shall every one on his friend, that is, before the enemy smote them; by crowding together they would of themselves dash one against another, so that each would fall by the pushing of his associate.

He afterwards adds, And they shall say, Rise Here he speaks not of natives. Some think that the reference is to foreigners, who had come into Egypt on account of the fruitfulness of the land; for a dwelling in Egypt, which we know was very fertile and full of all abundance, was especially advantageous to them. As, then, Egypt had in it many strangers and sojourners, some interpreters think that the Prophet here speaks of them, as though he had said, ``They who came into Egypt, to live well there through the affluence of all good things, shall find nothing better for them than to flee away:'' They shall then say, Rise; that is, every one will exhort one another, and say, Let us go into the land of our nativity, that is, ``Let us be satisfied with our own native soil; for the very richness of Egypt will prove fatal to us if we remain in it.'' But I rather think that the Prophet refers to the hired soldiers. We saw yesterday that when Pharaoh carried on war on the banks of Euphrates, he had with him Ethiopians, and Lydians, and many from Libya, and we shall see again presently that there were hired soldiers in Egypt when Nebuchadnezzar conquered it. It was then very suitable for the Prophet to mention these foreign soldiers whom Pharaoh had hired; for at the beginning of the verse he said, Every one shall stumble on his neighbor, and then it follows, And they shall say, Let us return to our own people and to the land of our nativity When he says, Every one shall stumble on his neighbor, he means, no doubt, those valiant men, called to defend Egypt; of the same also he speaks when he says, Rise, let us return to the land of our nativity.

He says, From the face of the devastating sword. The word {היונה}, eiune, is derived by some from {יין}, iin, wine; and they give this explanation, ``from the inebriated sword.'' Jerome renders the word ``Dove,'' but without reason. He then calls the sword wasting or destroying, which had already been inebriated with much blood, and which had done many slaughters. By the sword, he means that of the soldiers of Nebuchadnezzar. Some render the words, ``saddening sword,'' but this rendering appears to me unmeaning. They then say, ``As we have been already broken down, and see our enemies committing slaughters with impunity, and kill all

who meet them, nothing is better for us than to return to our own land.'' It follows, ---

Jeremiah 46:17

17. They did cry there, Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise; he hath passed the time appointed.

17. Clamarunt illic, Pharao rex Aegypti perturbationis, praeteriit tempus statutum (vel, condictum.)

This verse ought to be joined with the preceding, for he refers to the cries of the soldiers who had been deceived by their own hopes: they at length cried, Pharaoh is to us a king of confusion. The Prophet predicts what was to be; but he speaks, according to what was usually done, in the past time; for the Prophets announce unknown things as before their eyes, in order to gain credit to their prophecies. He then says, that there would be a cry among the soldiers, Pharaoh the king of Egypt is a king of confusion; for the word {שאון}, shaun, is to be read in the genitive case; as though the Prophet had said that the soldiers would really find that Pharaoh would not turn out according to his boasting. The name of Egypt first filled him and the whole nation with arrogance; and further, it was dreaded by the neighbouring nations. When, therefore, they came to Pharaoh, they thought that they were coming to some sort of a god. The Prophet derided that foolish confidence unreasonably entertained, and says, *``They* shall cry there, O Pharaoh, magnificent king, thou art now a king of tumult,'' or confusion.

What follows is not well explained, as I think, by interpreters; for they all, with one consent, think that Pharaoh is derided, because he delayed time, after having before said that he would go against Nebuchadnezzar; as earthly kings, when they think themselves sufficiently prepared, do not wait until the enemy is at hand, or finds them at home, but go to meet him at a distance. Others think that the time for war had been proclaimed, as it was usual formerly for both sides to proclaim a certain day on which they were to come to a conflict. But from the last verse we may gather that the Prophet meant another thing, he then derides, if I am not mistaken, the folly of Pharaoh for another reason, even because he thought that those threatenings were vain and empty, which had been dispersed by the Jews; for the Egyptians were not ignorant of what had been predicted by the Prophets. Isaiah had long before cried out against the Jews, because they made treaties with the Egyptians, and fled there for aid. There is no doubt but the courtiers, in order to gain favor, said to them, ``Behold, our Prophets hinder us as much as they can, and we must take care lest they turn aside the people: while then there is time, let us make the treaty, which will be useful to you as well as to us.'' As, then, the destruction of Egypt had been predicted many years before, and as the Egyptians remained in safety after Judea was overthrown and laid waste, it is probable that they became more hardened, thinking that the time had elapsed. And this view, as I have said, is confirmed by the context. For it follows, ---

Jeremiah 46:18

18. As I live, saith the King, whose name is The LORD of hosts, Surely as Tabor is among the mountains, and as Carmel by the sea, so shall he come.

18. Vivo ego, dicit rex (cui nomen est rex) Jehova exercituum, quoniam sicut Thabor in montibus, et sicut Carmelus in mari, veniet.

Why did the Prophet say this, except that the Egyptians thought they had escaped, because the time had been delayed? As, then, the length of time had deceived them, thinking, as they did, that God had told what was false, or that he had forgotten what he had predicted by his Prophets, he says, I live, saith Jehovah, that is, by my life; for God here swears by his life, that what he now declares would come. This seems to be the true meaning. Igor did the Prophet speak thus only for the sake of the Egyptians, but also for the sake of the Jews; for we know that it was usual and common with them proudly to assert that what the Prophets had spoken from God's mouth was all vain: hence that proverbial saying,

``To-morrow we shall die, let us eat and drink.''
(Isaiah 22:13)

They also called the prophecies burdens, by way of reproach and contempt. As the ungodly promised themselves impunity through God's forbearance, it was necessary to testify to them what we here read, even that whatever God had threatened would come to pass, though he delayed it for a time. For he suspends his punishment, but his vengeance at length breaks out, when the unbelieving think that all things will turn out prosperously; yea, when they say,

``Peace and security, then sudden destruction overtakes them.''
(1 Thessalonians 5:3)

By the word {מועד}, muod, then, the Prophets mean a fixed time, not that they had pointed out a certain day, but that they had spoken of the destruction of Egypt, as though God had already gone forth as the judge.

As, then, they said that the time had passed by, God here swears by his life; and hence he says, whose name is King, Jehovah of hosts God here sets forth his own greatness in opposition to the power of Pharaoh and of all other kings; for prosperity commonly brings pride with it, and those who excel in dignity and power become self-willed and insolent. Hence to repress this haughty insolence, he says, that the name of King, the God of hosts, belongs not properly to any but to himself alone.

It shall come, he says, as Tabor is in the mountains, and Carmel in the sea Their exposition is not suitable who say, ``As wild beasts fleeing from hunters, pass over from neighboring mountains to Mount Tabor, and as trees cut on Carmel are carried to the sea.'' This is an extremely forced explanation, and cannot be adapted to the present passage. For what is the design of the Prophet? even to shew that what he had just declared would be immutable, and so fixed that it could not be reversed, that though the whole world attempted to frustrate what God had decreed, yet nothing could be done. Then he says, As Tabor is in the mountains, that is, As Mount Tabor is surrounded by other mountains, and has there its deep roots, so that it cannot be torn up; and as Carmel is in the sea Now this Carmel was not understood by the Jews to have been that mount where Nabal dwelt, but a mountain not far from Ptolemais, and it was girded and washed by the sea: hence he says, As Carmel is a mountain in the sea. Tabor as well as Carmel remain fixed, and cannot be transferred to another place; so he says, shall this prophecy come to pass; it is valid and shall be

accomplished; as though he had said, ``This immutable decree cannot be refixed, as Carmel cannot be moved, nor Tabor, so as to be transplanted elsewhere.'' It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 46:19

19. O thou daughter dwelling in Egypt, furnish thyself to go into captivity: for Noph shall be waste and desolate without an inhabitant.

19. Vasa migrationis fac (vel, para) tibi habitatrix Aegypti; quia Noph (id est, Memphis,) in solitudinem erit, et vastabitur, ut non sit habitator.

The Prophet exults over the Egyptians, in order that he might more and more confirm his doctrine; for we have said, and experience teaches the same, that the unbelieving are but little moved when God summons them to his tribunal, and gives evidence of his vengeance; for they remain stupid, except their torpor is by force shaken from them. This is the reason why the Prophet sharply assails the wicked, even that they might awake from their drowsiness.

Hence he says, Take to thee the furniture of transmigration, that is, prepare for thyself garments and other things for the purpose of removing. The Egyptians, having a fruitful land, remained quietly in their own country, and led, as it were, a sedentary life. Now the Prophet intimates that they were to move elsewhere; and he bids them to prepare for a long journey, or a long peregrination: Make to thee, then, furniture for transmigration; for Memphis shall be reduced to solitude, and laid waste without an inhabitant

He mentions Memphis again, which, as we have said, was a very celebrated city and a royal residence. He says that it would be laid waste, and yet we know that the Pyramids there were reckoned among the wonders of the world. The city was populous, and had many advantages. The Prophet dooms it to desolation. If, then, such solitude awaited the most celebrated city, what was to become of the smaller towns? what was to become of the villages? We now, then, see what was the purpose of the Prophet, even to shew, that when Nebuchadnezzar made an irruption into Egypt, all things would be under his power, so that he would, at his pleasure, seize on, plunder, and lay waste the whole land. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 46:20

20. Egypt is like a very fair heifer, but destruction cometh; it cometh out of the north.

20. Vitula formosa Aegyptus, afflictio ab aquilone venit, venit.

Jeremiah intimates here, that though Egypt indulged in pleasures, it could not yet escape the vengeance of God. We reminded you yesterday why the Prophets mentioned the wealth, the riches, and the power of the ungodly, even because they are blinded by all the good things in which they abound; for they fear nothing, nor feel any anxiety, but through a false notion they exempt themselves from every evil. As, then, the unbelieving are thus presumptuous and proud, the Prophets, on the other hand, warn them and say, that however they may exult in their own strength and defenses, they would yet, when it pleased God to make them prey, become the most miserable of all.

The Prophet, then, in short, takes away the false conceit of the Jews, as well as of

the Egyptians; as though he had said, ``The Egyptians trust in their prosperity, even as though they were like a heifer frisking in the fields; but calamity,'' he says,.'' is coming, is coming from the north.'' He repeats the same word, in order to remove every doubt: coming, then, is distress, it is coming from the north, that is, from the Babylonians, who were situated northward to Judea, as we stated yesterday.

Jeremiah 46:21

21. Also her hired men are in the midst of her like fatted bullocks; for they also are turned back, and are fled away together: they did not stand, because the day of their calamity was come upon them, and the time of their visitation.

21. Etiam mercenarii ejus in medio ejus tanquam vituli saginati, quia etiam ipsi vertent terga, fugient simul, non steterunt, quia dies calamitatis (vel, miseriae) venit super eos, tempus visitationis ipsorum.

Here the Prophet represents the mercenaries of Egypt, as we have already said, as being foreign soldiers, who had been hired here and there, and from far countries, such as Lydia was. It may yet have been, that there were not many at that time who had come from beyond the sea to the Egyptians; but they had the Ethiopians, for Ezekiel says that many came from Cush, that is, Ethiopia; and then they had some from Libya and the neighboring countries. Then Jeremiah includes them under one name, and says that they were mercenaries. Now, they who hire themselves seem to be more warlike than others; for they who defend their own country do this from necessity; but those who of themselves seek war, and depart from their own borders for the purpose of engaging in war, seem to be men fit for any bold undertaking.

But the Prophet says, also, {גם}, gam, also mercenaries; that is, not only the Egyptians were accustomed to a delicate and indulgent life, but also the Ethiopians and others who had been hired, They are also in the midst of it as fatted bullocks, that is, they fill themselves with the abundance of Egypt; and hence it was that they became a prey to their enemies; for we know that nothing is more injurious to soldiers than to live delicately and luxuriously. Of all ancient generals, the most celebrated is Hannibal; but how did it happen, that having an invincible army, by which he had terrified all Italy, he afterwards fell? because Campania, with its luxuries, enervated him, for he lived there not like a soldier, but had tables richly furnished for himself and for his army. Hence it was, that they were no more what they had been. So also the Prophet says, ``Egypt will ruin its hired soldiers; for she will satiate them with luxuries.'' What did at length happen to them? he compares them to bullocks of the stall, {מרבק}, merebec; some read bullocks of the pasture, but not correctly; for {רבק}, rebec, is properly to fatten. He then calls them the bullocks of the stall, which are fed that they may become fat and be soon slaughtered. He therefore says, They also shall turn their backs; and then he says, They shall not stand, because the time of calamity is come I cannot finish this subject now.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that when thou indulgest us, we may not abuse thy patience, nor become wanton in prosperity, but learn so to subdue ourselves of our own accord, that we may obey thee through the whole course of our life, and mortify our flesh, lest we be elated by pride and false confidence, but so live in thy fear as to reverence

thee when we regard thee as the righteous Judge of the world, and recumb at the same time on thee, when we acknowledge thee as our Father, as thou hast been pleased to adopt us in thine only-begotten Son our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Sixty-Seventh

Jeremiah 46:22

22. The voice thereof shall go like a serpent; for they shall march with an army, and come against her with axes, as hewers of wood.

22. Vox ejus tanquam serpentis incedet, quia in potentia incedent; et cum securibus venient contra eam, sicuti caesores lignorum.

To study elegance was not so much the object of the Prophet, as to confirm what he had taught. The figures, then, which he now uses, were not intended as ornaments of speech, but rather for the purpose of giving force and power to what he had said; for, as it has been said, prophecies had no credit with stupid men, unless stimulants were added to them.

He says now, that the voice of Egypt would go forth like that of a serpent: some read, ``as* though it were a serpent;'' but I prefer to render it in the genitive case, and it is more suitable; for the Prophet means that the complaints of Egypt would not be obstreperous; as serpents, in creeping, send forth their hisses, so he intimates that the Egyptians, being overthrown, would be so broken down, as not to dare to utter open complaints, as those who freely cry out, but such as would remain alive would be so smitten with fear as only to mutter, as it has been said of serpents, who hiss as they creep. We now understand the real meaning of the Prophet: he says that the Egyptians would be so east down as not to dare openly to complain of their miseries, for they would only mutter, not otherwise than serpents who, on the ground, indistinctly hiss: its voice,* then, shall advance, or go forth, like that of a serpent; and thus he points out their uneasiness, for they would seek hiding-places, and flee here and there, and never dare to remain in the same place. It is, indeed, a proof of the most miserable trepidation, when he who succumbs under his evils finds no place to set his foot on, but is forced, like serpents, to wander here and there. Jerome's rendering is, ``as that of brass,'' as though it was written, {נחשת}, nuchashet; but I have already shewn what the Prophet meant.

He adds, For they shall come with an army, or with power. The word {חיל}, chil, means both. He now speaks of the Chaldeans. He said that the Egyptians would tremble, and be so broken down, as not to dare to utter their groans openly. Now follows the reason, because the Chaldeans would come with power, or with an army; they would come not only as soldiers to fight, but also as hewers of wood with their axes He intimates that the issue of the war would by no means be doubtful, but that the Chaldeans would come into Egypt as hired men come to cut down trees. Soldiers are, indeed, armed with swords and lances; for they have to do with enemies, nor can they overcome without danger, at least they cannot conquer without striving; but the Prophet says that the Chaldeans would be so filled with confidence, that they would not regard the Egyptians as enemies, for they would come, as it were, to cut down trees which offer no resistance: They shall come, then, as hewers of wood There is here an implied contrast between swords, lances, and axes, as there

is between soldiers and hewers of wood. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 46:23

23. They shall cut down her forest, saith the LORD, though it cannot be searched; because they are more than the grasshoppers, and are innumerable.

23. Exciderunt sylvam ejus, dicit Jehova, quia non investigabitur, quia multiplicati sunt prae locusta (phsquam locustrae) et non illis numerus.

He goes on here with the same subject. He indeed uses the past tense, but we know that this was commonly done by the Prophets. He compares the people of Egypt to a forest, as he had said that individual men would be like trees: They have then cut down, that is, they shall cut down its forest, saith Jehovah For the sake of confirmation he ascribes the words to God; as though he had said, that he predicted nothing but what God had determined to do. His object then was to remove every doubt; because the Jews might on the one hand have refused to believe this prophecy on considering the power of Egypt; and the Egyptians on the other might have disregarded these threatenings, confiding in their own strength. Hence the Prophet introduces God as the speaker, as though he had said, ``This decree cannot be revoked, because God hath spoken.''

And he says, that they had multiplied more than locusts, so there could be no number I have omitted one previous sentence, It shall not be searched. As the particle {כי}, ki, is read twice, some think that both clauses refer to the Chal-deans. Others read, ``It shall not be numbered;'' but the verb {חקר}, chekor, properly means to inquire, to investigate; and the sentence may be thus suitably rendered, ``That* the forest may not be investigated.'' Yet another meaning has been more approved, that the Chaldeans shall not be numbered. If this view be received, there is a Change of number, for it immediately follows, ``They shall multiply,'' {רבו}, rebu; and then, there shall not be a number to them, {להם}, laem.* But what I stated in the first place, as it appears to me, does not ill suit the passage, that is, that there would be no investigation of the forest of Egypt, that is, of the people; for when a forest is cut down, it appears a naked plain, nor can the place of any tree be pointed out. As to the general meaning, there is not much difference. The Prophet, in short, means, that the slaughter, of which he prophecies, would be so great, that Egypt would be reduced to a waste, because the Chaldeans would come with a numerous army: and he sets up this number in opposition to the Egyptian forces, that they might know that their enemies would be far superior to them. It follows ---

Jeremiah 46:24

24. The daughter of Egypt shall be confounded; she shall be delivered into the hand of the people of the north.

24. Pudefacta est filia Aegypti, tradita in manum populi Aquilonis.

He says that Egypt would be ashamed, because it would be brought into the greatest disgrace, for their enemies would treat them reproachfully. By the people of the north he means the Chaldeans, as in many other places; for Babylon was northward of Egypt. he intimates, in short, that the Chaldeans would be proud conquerors, so that they would in a reproachful manner oppress the Egyptians, after having conquered them. It is no wonder that the same thing is often repeated by the Prophet,

because the thing was incredible at that time, as we have before said. As then it was difficult to make the Jews believe, that the Chaldeans would become victorious over that nation and land, Jeremiah confirms at large the same thing, for he resolutely struggled with the obstinate unbelief of the people. Let us proceed, ---

Jeremiah 46:25

25. The LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, saith, Behold, I will punish the multitude of No, and Pharaoh, and Egypt, with their gods, and their kings; even Pharaoh, and all them that trust in him:

25. Dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Ecce ego visito super multitudinem quae ab Alexandria, et super Pharaonem, et super Aegyptum, et super deos ejus, et super reges ejus, et super Pharaonem, et super eos, qui confidunt in ipso.

The Prophet speaks again in God's name, and sets God's glory in opposition to the perverseness of his own nation; for, as it has been said, he effected but little when he threatened the Egyptians. For the Jews, believing that land to be impregnable, were secure; because they thought that the Egyptians would come to their aid, and so they believed that they were fortified against any hostile power. As then the Jews were inebriated with this false confidence, the Prophet was constrained, not only with many words to enlarge on this subject, but also to introduce God as the judge.

He then does not speak here in his own words, but says, Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, hath spoken, Behold I, etc. It was a form of speaking much more forcible than if the Prophet had repeated in his own name what God had committed to him; and yet the Jews were not moved: but still this mode of speaking was calculated to break down their obduracy. he then says, Behold, I will visit the multitude, etc. The word {אמון}, amun, is to be taken here for {המון}, emun; {א}, aleph, is put for {ה}, he; though some render it ``king,'' but improperly: I will visit the multitude which is from Alexandria We know that this was a celebrated city of Egypt, though it had not yet this name; for Alexander was not born, who called it by his own name; but it had its old name {נא}, na, and it was so called by the Hebrews. In after time it was called Alexandria, its name having been changed.

But there is here a statement of a part for the whole, for the Prophet included the whole of Egypt; what is general is comprehended under what is particular; for God spared not the other cities of Egypt; and it appears from the context that the prophecy extended to all parts of that land, not one angle, even the least, being excepted. But as Alexandria might have remained safe, while the other cities were destroyed, it is here especially mentioned, as though he had said, that nothing would be safe in Egypt. Behold, he says, I will visit the multitude, etc. It was a very populous city, as we gather from heathen writers; and hence it was that it was full of pride, for they thought it sufficiently safe when they had as it were a proportionate army. But the Prophet derides this vain glory, and says that the vast number of people in Alexandria would avail nothing to prevent the Chaldeans to take possession of it.

I will visit, he says, the whole people, and then Pharaoh and Egypt We now clearly see that the city named was the chief city, and that its multitude was expressly mentioned, that the Egyptians might know, that they could not escape destruction, because they had war with God, and not with men; for as long as they looked on the

Chaldeans alone, they remained secure. But the Prophet awakens them from their lethargy, and says, that they were not to look on what the Chaldeans of themselves could do, for they would carry on war under the banner of God, and under his guidance would, without any difficulty, penetrate through the whole of Egypt. Hence he says, I will visit Pharaoh and Egypt

He adds, and her gods. We know that that land was very much given to superstitions, that the Egyptians had imbibed gross and shameful errors, though otherwise remarkable for their wisdom and knowledge. But God had smitten them with madness, so that they were become almost like brute beasts. Besides, as they thought that they had perfect safety in their idols, the Prophet shakes off this confidence, and declares that God would not only be the judge of men but also of the idols. For we know that men strengthen themselves against God's threatenings either by superstition or by confidence in their own strength: as long as they depend on the world, they gather from all quarters some grounds of hope; and hence it is, that they think that they will be safe though in opposition to God's will. The Prophet beats down this folly when he says, Behold, I will visit the multitude of Alexandria, and adds, I will visit the gods of Egypt. As the unbelieving, when they find earthly aids not sufficient for them, flee to God, but not in the right way, for they become vain in their foolish thoughts; hence is the reason why the Prophet threatens the idols of Egypt.

He adds, her kings. There was indeed but one king in Egypt, why then does he mention kings? This may be explained of successors; but I prefer taking ``kings'' here as meaning the satraps and princes, for we know that the kingdom was very opulent, that it had many equal to kings. I therefore think that the Prophet adorned the princes and satraps of Egypt with this high title; and he confirms this opinion by what immediately follows, even --- Pharaoh and those who trust in him He repeats the name of Pharaoh, and when he says that he would visit those who trust in him, I doubt not but that the Prophet points out those whom he had before designated ``kings.'' We now then perceive the real meaning, that though Pharaoh had many defenses, being strengthened by a great multitude of men, and had also mighty satraps, yet all this would prove fading and evanescent, when he would have to carry on war with God: and God declares here that he would be the general of the whole war guiding and directing the Chaldeans. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 46:26

26. And I will deliver them into the hand of those that seek their lives, and into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants: and afterward it shall be inhabited, as in the days of old, saith the LORD.

26. Et dabo illos in manum quaerentium animam ipsorum, et in manum Nabuchadnezer regis Babylonis, et in manum servorum ejus, et postea habitabitur sicut diebus antiquis, dicit Jehova.

Jeremiah pursues the same subject, and continues to speak in God's name, that he might more powerfully impress minds otherwise tardy; I will give them, he says, into the hand of enemies, and those deadly enemies; for we have said elsewhere that to ``seek life'' is not to spare it. Expressed here then is the cruelty of the Chaldean army, as though he had said that they would be deadly enemies to the Egyptians.

And he explains himself more fully, and says, Into the hand of the king of Babylon, and into the hand of his servants, so that not only Nebuchadnezzar was to be victorious over Egypt, but also his servants, which was still more degrading.

A promise is at length added, not to shew favor to that heathen nation, but that God might shew that he would be so far merciful towards the Egyptians as not wholly to destroy them. It shall be inhabited, he says, as in ancient days. Ezekiel says that the kingdom would be small and humble or abject. (Ezekiel 29:14, 15.) But our Prophet seems to promise to Egypt the same prosperity as it had before its overthrow. We have already said that restoration was promised to the Egyptians, not because God was pacified towards them, but because his purpose was that his mercy should be made evident in the judgments he executed even on foreign nations; and further, it served to confirm prophecy, when to Egypt, after having been destroyed, was granted that restoration of which Jeremiah had prophesied. The truth, then, of what the Prophet had said became more evident through the two changes, than if he had only said, *``God* shall destroy Egypt.'' We now, then, perceive why the Prophet spoke of the future condition of Egypt. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 46:27

27. But fear not thou, O my servant Jacob, and be not dismayed, O Israel: for, behold, I will save thee from afar off, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and be in rest and at ease, and none shall make him afraid.

27. Et tu ne timeas, serve mi Jacob, et ne expavescas (vel, frangaris animo, {חתת} significat conteri et frangi, sed magis refertur ad animum metaphorice, ne ergo frangaris animo,) Israel; quia ecce ego servo te a longinquo, et semen tuum e terra captivitatis ipsorum; et revertetur Jacob et quiescet et securus erit, et nemo exterrebit (nemo qui exterreat, ad verbum.)

The Prophet now directs his discourse to the Israelites; for we have already said that he was not appointed a teacher to heathen nations. Whatever, then, he spoke of heathen nations had a reference to the benefit of his people; and for this purpose, as we have said, the Prophets extended their prophecies respecting God's judgments to all nations; for otherwise the Israelites would have been disheartened, as though their condition was worse than that of others: ``What can this mean? God has chosen us as his peculiar people; in the meantime we alone are miserable: God pours forth on us his whole rigor, and yet he spares the unbelieving. It would have been better for us to have been rejected wholly by him, for the covenant which he has made with us only renders us more miserable than others.'' Thus the miserable Israelites might have rushed headlong into despair, had nothing been done in time to relieve them. And then the Prophets, or rather the Spirit of God who spoke by them, regarded another thing; for if nothing had been predicted they would have passed by, with closed eyes, those judgments which God executed on all their neighbors, for all that Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel had predicted was fulfilled. Had they been silent respecting the ruin of Egypt, of the Philistines and the Moabites, the people, owing to their torpor, would not have considered God's judgments, but would have thought them to have all happened by chance. The Prophets then represented as in a mirror the power of God, that the Israelites might know that it extended to the

whole world and to every nation.

This is the reason why Jeremiah now turns his discourse to the chosen people, and says, Fear not, my servant Jacob He still speaks in God's name. Now God calls Jacob his servant, not on the ground of obedience, but because he had chosen him. Then by this word God sets forth the favor of adoption, and not the obedience of the people, for we know how refractory and disobedient they were; we know that they were continually shaking off the yoke, that they insulted as it were God himself; very far were they from quietly submitting to his authority as it became servants. Here, then, the obedience of the Israelites is not commended, but that election is set forth by which God had set them apart from other nations. How then was Jacob God's servant? not because he deserved that honor by his own merits, but because God had been pleased gratuitously to choose him for himself. So also David says,

``I am thy servant, the son of thy handmaid,''
(Psalm 116:16)

He means that he was as it were a hereditary servant, who had been already dedicated to God before he was conceived in his mother's womb. But as this mode of speaking often occurs, I pass it by with only a few words.

Fear not, O Jacob, he says, and be not broken in mind, O Israel There are indeed two names used, but God thus addresses his people often; and why? because I wall save thee We now then see why God called Jacob his servant, even because the salvation of the elect people depended on this peculiar privilege, that God had chosen them for himself; I will save thee, he says, from far The ten tribes, as it is well known, had already been driven far, and a part of Judah had been led into exile. Distance took away the hope of a return. Hence God here declares that a long distance would be no hindrance to him to restore his people when it seemed good to him; Behold, I will save thee He then obviates this objection; ``What! why then does God thus suffer us to be driven to foreign lands? why have we not staid in our own land?'' God, he says, will not be less able to save thee in the remotest places, than if thou hadst remained in thy native country, and in thine own habitation. And he adds, and thy seed, from the land of their captivity

We hence learn, that though the Prophet spoke of the temporal restoration of the people, he yet had a regard to higher and greater things, even that the captives should recumb on God's mercy, and believe that he would be propitious to them even when dead. This passage then shews that the hope of God's children is not confined to this life, but extends farther, in order that they may know that God will be propitious to them after death, and that they may sustain themselves with the assurance of his favor, for otherwise this promise that God would restore their children after their death would have been absurd. ``But why is he implacable to us? why does he not restore us sooner?'' The Jews might have raised this objection; but the Prophet reminds them, that though they were not to be restored immediately to their country, yet the covenant of God would remain valid, and its stability would appear after seventy years.

We now perceive why the Prophet said, Jacob shall return and rest, and shall be secure I wonder that some have rendered the last words, ``and shall be happy,''

for {שאנן}, shanun, means to be secure, or to rest; and then the Prophet explains himself, nor will there be any to terrify We indeed know that it is the main part of happiness when no fear disturbs us, when our minds are in a composed and quiet state. Further, by these words he intimates the continuance of God's favor, as though he had said that his favor would not only be evident in restoring the people from exile, but in restoring the miserable in such a way as to grant them full and continued happiness. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 46:28

28. Fear thou not, O Jacob my servant, saith the LORD: for I am with thee; for I will make a full end of all the nations whither I have driven thee: but I will not make a full end of thee, but correct thee in measure; yet will I not leave thee wholly unpunished.

28. Tu ne timeas, serve mi Jacob, dicit Jehova, quia ego tecum, quia faciam consumptionem in cunctis gentibus ad quas te expulero illuc (est supervacuum {שמה};) et tecum non faciam consumptionem; et castigabo te in judicio, et excidendo non excidam te (alii vertunt, non faciam te innocentem, sed male, ut postea dicemus.)

He repeats the same thing, and no wonder, for under circumstances so hopeless it was not easy to raise up and sustain the minds of the people, so that they might patiently wait for the time of their redemption. He had to raise them to light as it were from the lowest depths, for captivity was little short of death, according to what Ezekiel says, (Ezekiel 37) who shews that the common saying among them was,

``Can God raise the dead from their graves?''

Whenever the Prophets promised that God would become their Redeemer, they said, ``Oh, will God raise us up again? It is all a fable.'' For this reason God commanded dead and dry bones to rise and to assume their own skin and flesh, at least this was shewn to the Prophet in a vision.

We now then understand why the Prophet repeated twice what was in itself sufficiently clear, Fear not, my servant Jacob, even because they could not apprehend God's mercy, except they looked off from their great difficulties, and further, because it was not enough for them once to embrace this promise, without recumbing on it constantly. Hence the Prophet, in order to encourage them firmly to hope, and at the same time to render them persevering, and to confirm them, says twice, Fear not, my servant Jacob He then adds, I am with thee And this promise, as it has been said, depends on gratuitous adoption, because God had chosen that people for himself, that they might be a priestly kingdom.

He afterwards adds, For I will make a consummation among all the nations, etc. By this comparison he softens and alleviates all sorrow: for however bitter the condition of the people might be, yet when they considered that fled would deal milder with them than with other mortals, it was a cause of ample consolation. The Prophet, then, seeing that the Jews, while their minds were embittered, could not accept God's favor, shews here, that however severely God might chastise them, he yet would be more merciful to them than to other nations: how so? because, he says, I will make a consummation among other nations, that is, they shall be destroyed without any remedy; as though he had said, that the wound he would inflict on other nations would be deadly, but that he would not make a consummation as to his

chosen people.

This seems not to agree with what he had said before, that Egypt should be again inhabited as in days of old. How can the restoration of Egypt be consistent with the words of the Prophet here? To this I answer, that when God mitigates his rigor towards the unbelieving, he is not yet propitious to them, nor is the indulgence shewn to them a proof of his paternal favor, as I have before observed. Though then there were Egyptians who remained alive after the ruin of their kingdom, yet God made a consummation in Egypt, for there his vengeance continued after that, time. Now, when we come to the chosen people, God says in many places, I will not make a consummation There seems to be here again some contrariety, when any one attends only to the words; for God is said to have made a consummation as to his elect people: but this was the case, when he destroyed the whole body of the people; and that consummation was external; there ever remained at the same time some hidden root.

In short, when God says, that he makes a consummation as to heathen nations, it ought to be understood, that God curses them from the root. As when a tree stands, when its root is dead; so also heathen nations, as it were, stand, but in the meantime they are consumed, for God has doomed them to eternal ruin. But consummation is said to be as to God's children, when nothing appears on the surface, but perhaps a dry trunk; yet a living root remains, which will again grow up, and from it branches will arise. We hence see how God makes a consummation as to all the unbelieving, and yet does not make a consummation as to his chosen people.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast testified that thou wilt be a Father to us, and hast given us a pledge of thy adoption, thine only-begotten Son, --- O grant, that we, trusting in thy promise, may never doubt, even when thou severely chastisest us, but that thou wilt at length be merciful to us, and that we may thus never cease to flee to thy mercy, and thus submit to thee, and suffer ourselves to be corrected; and may, in the meantime, this hope sustain us, and alleviate all our sorrows, that in all our miseries we shall yet ever glorify thy name, through the same, thy Son our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Sixty-Eighth

WE explained yesterday what is meant by not making a consummation. The meaning is, that sometimes God's vengeance is such towards his Church, that it seems to be consumed, while yet some hidden hope remains, for God raises his own as it were from death. We said, that in this sense is to be understood what Jeremiah now promises to the chosen people: for God makes a distinction between the Israelites and strangers; for on account of the covenant he had made with them, he would spare them, so that some hope remained, though the Church itself seemed for a time to be lost.

And he explains himself in other words, I will chastise thee, he says, in judgment; for to chastise in judgment is to exercise moderation, so that rigor may not issue in destruction. In the tenth chapter, Jeremiah says the same, ``Chastise me, O Jehovah, but in judgment, and not in thine anger.'' The Prophet, then, in the person

of the faithful submitted himself to the scourges of God, because it was useful for them to be corrected, for had the Lord spared them, they would have abused his indulgence, and have become thus putrid in their vices. Hence the Prophet offered himself to be chastised by God, but deprecated his anger, which he set in opposition to judgment. The word judgment, in Hebrew, is taken in various senses; but in that passage, as I explained there, it means due measure, or moderation. When God punishes the unbelieving, he cannot be charged with extreme severity, for he is ever just and regards a due measure. But, as I have already said, judgment means not only rectitude, but also the paternal love of God, when he moderates punishment, so as to render it medicinal and salutary to his elect. Hence he promises to punish his Church moderately, not only because he is just, but also because he mercifully spares his own, and regards what they can bear, and what is useful for them.

Now this passage ought to be especially noticed, from which we may derive great consolation; for we are here taught that punishments inflicted on us are temporary, and that God prescribes limits to them, such as he knows to be best for us: for whence comes despair which overwhelms the unbelieving, except that being sunk in the deep, they know not that God will be merciful to them, but apprehend nothing but his wrath? Hence then it comes that they have no comfort in their evils and sorrows. Whenever, then, excessive anxiety lays hold on us, or our evils drive us into despair, let us learn to flee to this consolation, even that the punishments by which we are chastised are only for a time.

He afterwards adds, And cutting off I will not cut thee off There are some who give another rendering, ``I will not make thee innocent:`` and in this sense the verb {נקה}, nuke, is sometimes to be taken; but it is not suitable to the context here, unless the copulative be rendered as an adversative, ``Though I shall not make thee innocent, I shall yet chastise thee with paternal moderation.'' As this, however, seems forced, I doubt not but that the Prophet means, that chastisement would be moderated, because God would not wholly cut off his chosen people, according to the exposition I gave on the thirtieth chapter of this book; and thus the Prophet confirms what I have already said, that God spares his children, because he purifies them by afflictions, as gold is melted and purified by fire, so that punishment does not issue in their destruction. Now follows the forty-seventh chapter:

Jeremiah 47

CHAPTER 47

Jeremiah 47:1

1. The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against the Philistines, before that Pharaoh smote Gaza.

1. Qui fuit sermo Jehovae ad Jeremiam Prophetam contra Philistim antequam percuteret Pharao Azah.

Jeremiah prophesies here against the Philistines, who were enemies to the Israelites, and had contrived against them many cruel and unjust things. There is then no doubt, but that God intended to testify, by this prophecy, his love towards the Israelites, for he undertook their cause, and avenged the wrongs done to them. We hence perceive why God had predicted the ruin of the Philistines, even that the Israelites might know his paternal love towards them, as he set himself against their enemies; and thus he gave them a reason for patience, because it behooved them to wait until God fulfilled this prophecy.

And he points out the time, Before Pharaoh smote Aza, or Gaza. The ancient Gaza, as far as we can find out, was near the sea; but after it was destroyed, another was built, which is mentioned by Luke, (Acts 8:26;) it appears from heathen writers that it was a celebrated city and opulent. But they are mistaken who think that its name is derived from the Persic word ``Gaza,'' which means treasures; for they say, that when Cambyses led an army against Egypt, he left there his riches. But the word {עזה}, Oze, is a very ancient Hebrew word; and it is well known that the {ע}, oin, has been pronounced like our g; and this is the case as to other words, as for instance, Gomorrah, {עמרה}, the {ע}, oin, has the sound of {ג}, gimel; so also {צער}, Tsor, the Greek and Latin interpreters have rendered it, Segor. Then Gaza has not derived its name from treasures, but it is a Hebrew word, signifying fortitude or strength.

Now Jeremiah says, that he prophesied against the Philistines before Pharaoh smote that city, but he did not demolish it. But we see that the Prophet threatens

nothing to it from the Egyptians, but rather from the Chaldeans. Why then does he speak here of Pharaoh?

We must refer to history, and then we shall see what the design of the Holy Spirit was. When Pharaoh came to bring assistance to the Jews under Zedekiah, as we have already seen, he was soon compelled to return to Egypt, for the Chaldeans, having raised the siege, went against the Egyptians; for if they routed them, they knew that they could soon possess themselves of the whole of Judea. Haying then left the Jews for a time, they went against the Egyptians. Pharaoh, possessing no confidence in himself, as I have said, retreated; but he plundered Gaza in his way, because it was very hostile to the Jews; and he wished to shew that he did not come altogether in vain, though this afforded no relief to the Jews. But thus in things of nought earthly kings shew off themselves. Pharaoh then at that time plundered Gaza, but he did not retain it. At this time Jeremiah predicted greater calamities. And this ought to be carefully noticed, for there would be no reason why the Prophet spake of the Philistines, except, he had respect to something farther. Let us now then come to the second verse:

Jeremiah 47:2

2. Thus saith the LORD; Behold, waters rise up out of the north, and shall be an overflowing flood, and shall overflow the land, and all that is therein; the city, and them that dwell therein: then the men shall cry, and all the inhabitants of the land shall howl.

2. Sic dicit Jehova, ecce aquae ascendunt ab aquilone, et erunt in torrentem exundantem, et exundabunt terram et plenitudinem ejus, urbem et habitatores ejus, et clamabunt homo (hoc est, singuli homines clamabunt,) et ululabit omnis incola terrae.

The Prophet, no doubt, wished to remind the Jews that it would only be a prelude when Gaza was plundered, and that a far more grievous punishment was impending over that ungodly nation, which had done so many wrongs to God's people. For if Gaza had suffered only that loss, the Jews might have complained of their lot, as those ungodly men who had acted so wickedly and in so many ways provoked God's vengeance, had lightly suffered. They might then have objected and said, ``What can this mean? God has indeed lightly smitten Gaza; but we would thus willingly redeem our lives: as those who wish to avoid shipwreck cast forth their goods into the sea, and whatever precious thing they may have; so we, if life only be given us, are prepared to part with all our property.'' The Jews then might have thus deplored their lot. Hence the Prophet says, that something more grievous awaited that city.

``When ye see Gaza plundered,'' he says, *``think* not that this is the last judgment of God; for, behold, waters shall rise from the north, that is, the Chaldeans shall complete the work of executing God's vengeance; the Egyptians shall only plunder the wealth of the city, which will be endurable; but at length the Chaldeans will come to exercise boundless cruelty, and they shall be like a flood, and shall overwhelm Gaza, so as utterly to destroy it.'' We now, then, see what the Prophet meant: there is implied a comparison between the plunder effected by the Egyptians and the final ruin brought on it by the Chaldeans.

The rising or ascending of waters is evidently a metaphorical expression. He adds that they would be an overflowing torrent, that is, the waters would be like an inundating river; and they will inundate the land. He speaks of the land of the Philistines, where this city was. They will inundate, he says, the land and its fullness Fullness is taken in Hebrew for opulence or wealth; trees, corn, and animals are called the fullness of the land; for when the land brings forth no corn and no fruits, when it breeds no animals, it is deemed naked and empty. As then God clothes the land with such ornaments, the land is said to be full, when it abounds in those productions with which God enriches it. he afterwards speaks of men, the city, he says; he speaks not now of the city Gaza, but of the whole country; then the singular number is to be taken here for the plural. At length he says, Cry shall men, and howl shall all the inhabitants of the land The number as to the verbs is here changed, but there is no ambiguity in the meaning. And by these words the Prophet intimates, that a most grievous punishment would be inflicted on the Philistines, so that they would not only cry for sorrow, but even howl. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 47:3

3. At the noise of the stamping of the hoofs of his strong horses, at the rushing of his chariots, and at the rumbling of his wheels, the fathers shall not look back to their children for feebleness of hands.

3. A voce strepitus ungularum fortium ejus, a commotione currus ejus, a tumultu rotarum ejus, non respicient patres ad filios prae dissolutione manuum.

He continues the same subject; for he says, that so grievous would be the calamity, that fathers would not have a care for their children, which is a proof of extreme sorrow; for men even in adversity do not divest themselves of their natural feelings. When a father has children, he would willingly undergo ten deaths, if necessary, in order to save their life; but when men forget that they are parents, it is a proof, as I have said, of the greatest grief, as though men, having changed their nature, were become logs of wood. But the Prophet expresses the cause, not only of sorrow, but also of anxiety; From the voice, he says, of the noise of the hoofs of his valiant ones; he does not name the horses, but {פרסות}, peresut, refer to horses; hoofs, he says, shall make a great noise by stamping. And then such would be the commotion by the driving of chariots, and such a tumult would the revolving wheels create, that fathers, being astonished, would not. look on their children At length, he adds, through dissolution of hands By dissolution of hands he means loss of courage or fainting. For as vigor spreads from the heart through every part of the body, so also the bands are the chief instruments of all actions. When therefore the bands are relaxed and become feeble, it follows that men become as it were inanimate. The Prophet now means that the Philistines would become like the dead, so as not to move, no, not even their fingers; and why? because they would be so terrified by the stamping of horses, by the commotion of chariots, and by the rumbling of wheels, that they would lose their senses. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 47:4

4. Because of the day that cometh to spoil all the Philistines, and to cut off from Tyrus and Zidon every helper that remaineth: for the LORD will spoil the Philistines,

the remnant of the country of Caphtor.

4. Propter diem qui venit ad perdendum omnes Philistinos (vel, totam terram Philistinorum, loquitur de terra et populo,) ad excidendum Tyrum et Sidonem, totas reliquias fortitudinis; quia devastat Jehova Philistinos, reliquias insuliae Caphthor.

Jeremiah shews now more clearly, and without a figure, his meaning, even that destruction would come on the Philistines when their time was completed. And he mentions Tyre and Sidon, neighboring cities, and. formerly under their own jurisdiction. But Tyre in the time of Isaiah had its own king; yet afterwards in the time of Alexander the Great the city was free, as it is well known. These, however, were cities of Palestine, and the people called then Philistines were contiguous to these cities, so that the Prophet rightly includes them as it were in the same bundle. Coming, he says, is the day to destroy all the Philistines, and also to cut off the most opulent cities, even Tyre and Sidon

Sidon was more ancient than Tyre; but the daughter devoured the mother, according to the common proverb. For Tyre in time flourished, and Sidon became almost forsaken. It, however, always retained a name and also some wealth on account of its commodious harbor. But Tyre was an island in the time of Alexander the Great; and was therefore more commodious for ships, as it had many harbors. But the Prophet connects them both together, because they formed then a part of the land of the Philistines. There is no doubt but that the destruction was especially denounced on these cities, that the Jews might know that nothing would be safe throughout the whole land, inasmuch as these cities, the defenses, as it were, of the whole country, were destined to perish.

He farther adds, on account of the day which is coming against all the helping remnants, for Jehovah will destroy, that is, he will destroy the Philistines, who are the remnants (it is indeed another word, but means the same) of the island of Oaphtor He confirms here the same thing in other words, even that God's hand would be on these cities and the whole land, though external aids might come; and these he calls all the remnants of courage, or auxiliaries. Though they might have many friends alive, ready to bring them help, yet the Lord would demolish them all, as it follows, for Jehovah will destroy the Philistines, the remnants of the island of Caphtor

By the island of Caphtor he no doubt means Palestine; but it is doubtful for what reason the Hebrews called the Cappadocians Caphtorim. As it is hardly credible that they who inhabited this land had come from so far a country, interpreters have supposed that others, and not Cappadocians, are here called Caphtorim. Yet Moses intimates (Deuteronomy 2:23) that those who inhabited the land from Gaza to Jordan, were not natives, that is, were not born in those places, but that they were a wandering people; for he says, that

``The Caphtorim went forth and dwelt there
in the place of the natives.''

We may hence conclude that the Caphtorim were foreigners, who, wandering from their own country, sought an habitation elsewhere, and took possession of this land. Whether they were Cappadocians, I leave undecided; nor ought we to toil much on a subject of this kind. But as the Caphtorim had emigrated into Palestine, Jeremiah

calls that region the remnants of the island of Caphtor It follows, ---

Jeremiah 47:5

5. Baldness is come upon Gaza; Ashkelon is cut off with the remnant of their valley: how long wilt thou cut thyself?

5. Venit calvitium super Gazam, destructa est Asealon, reliquiae vailis ipsorum (vel, profunditatis, potius, ut mihi videtur,) quousque laniabis te?

The Prophet returns again to what is figurative, that he might more fully illustrate his prophecy, and more powerfully move the Jews. Now by baldness he points out a sign of mourning; for they were wont even to tear their faces with their nails, and to pluck off their hair. He then says that baldness, or the loss of hair, had come upon Gaza; because the inhabitants of the valley and of the whole land, according to what was usually done in despair, would pluck off their own hair. It is added, Destroyed is Ashkelon This city, we know, had a great name in the land of the Philistines, and was nigh Gaza, as it appears from many parts of Scripture. he mentions the remnants of their valley, or depth, for the word is {עמק}, omek: and though it means a valley, yet the Prophet, no doubt, alludes to the situation of that part, because they were hid, as it were, in a safe place, and they thought themselves secure as those who are hid in caverns, to which an access is not easy; and then Tyre and Sidon, as well as Gaza, were cities on the sea side. As then they dwelt in these deep and hidden places, they thought, themselves far away from every danger and trouble. The Prophet derides this confidence, and says that the remnants of their valley should perish; as though he had said, that there would be no place so deep and hidden where God's vengeance would not penetrate.

He at length addresses the whole country, How long wilt thou tear thyself? By tearing he means, no doubt, mourning or lamentation; for they would tear their faces, as it has been said, with their nails, as in the greatest grief. The meaning is, that there would be no end to their calamities, because the Palestines would mourn perpetually: for otherwise they who are even most grievously afflicted do not perpetually mourn, for time alleviates grief and sorrow. The Prophet then shews that so dreadful would be God's vengeance, that evils would be heaped on evils, and thus renewed daily to the Palestines would be the cause of mourning. He afterwards adds, ---

Jeremiah 47:6-7

6. O thou sword of the LORD, how long will it be ere thou be quiet? put up thyself into thy scabbard, rest, and be still.

6. Heus gladie Jehovae, quousque non quiesces? collige te (vel, reconde te) in vaginam tuam; quiesce et sile.

7. How can it be quiet, seeing the LORD hath given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea shore? there hath he appointed it.

7. Quomodo quiesces, cum Jehova praeceperit ei (vel, de ipsa, sed malo, praeceperit ei) super Ascalon, et super littus maris, illic contestatus sit ei?

Here Jeremiah turns to address the sword of God; and it is a happy apostrophe. It is very striking and forcible, when the Prophet at one time addresses the land of the Philistines, and at another, the sword of God; and he had no other object but to

confirm his prophecy, of which otherwise, the Jews might have doubted.

He then says, Ho! sword of Jehovah! Though he puts here the preposition {ל}, lamed, which designates the dative case; yet it is often redundant. There is, in the meantime, no doubt but that he intimates that the slaughter of which he speaks would be, as it were, by God's sword, or by a sword hired by him. Thus he shews that the Chaldeans would do the work of God in destroying the land of the Philistines.

How long, he says, ere thou restest! Hide thyself in thy sheath, rest and be still Here the Prophet assumes the character of another, as though he wished to soothe with blandishments the sword of God, and mitigate its fury. ``O sword,'' he says, ``spare them, leave off to rage against the Philistines.'' The Prophet, it is certain, had no such feeling; but, as we have said elsewhere, it was a common thing with the Prophets to assume different characters while endeavor-ing more fully to confirm their doctrine. It is the same, then, as though he represented here the Philistines; and the Prophets speak also often in the person of those on whom they denounce the vengeance of God. It is here as though he had said, ``The Philistines will humbly ask pardon of God's sword, but it will be without advantage or profit; for when they seek to mitigate the wrath of God, the answer will be, How can it rest?'' Here the Prophet, as it were, reproves himself, ``I act foolishly in wishing to repress the sword of God; for how canst thou rest?'' It could not be; and why? because God hath commanded it against Ashkelon He now changes the person, but without any injury to the sense. God, then, hath commanded it, therefore the whole world would intercede in vain; in vain also will the Philistines deprecate it; for it will not be in their power to mitigate God's wrath, when it shall burn against them and against Ashkelon.

Some take it, {ה}, he, as meaning the land itself; but as it immediately follows, against Ashkelon and against the seashore, it is better to explain it as above.

By the sea-shore some understand Joppa; but it is probable that the Prophet includes the whole coast, and that he thus still speaks of Tyre, and Sidon, and Gaza, though he names Ashkelon, which was a little distant from the sea. When, therefor, God commanded his sword against Ashkelon and all the cities which were by the sea-shore, the execution of his judgement could not be prevented in that region. He further adds, he hath commanded it; but it is in a solemn manner, and hence I have rendered the words, he hath called it to witness, or protested it. He then intimates that God had not simply given his sword a command to commit slaughters through the whole land, but bound his sword, as it were, by solemn protest; as though he had said, that this decree could not be revoked, because Godwill not only command his sword to execute his vengeance, but will also give it a solemn command, and bind it, as it were, by an oath, never to cease from its work until the whole people, and all the cities, and the whole land, should be destroyed together.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou wouldst have to exist a monument of thine invaluable mercy towards thy chosen people, when thou didst so grievously punish the unbelieving, --- O grant, that we may at this day resort to thee whenever our enemies distress us, and never doubt but that thou wilt take care of our safety, and so recumb on thy mercy, that we may patiently wait for the time of our deliverance;

and that, in the meantime, we may see from on high, as in mirror, the punishment prepared for the unbelieving, so that we may not follow their example nor implicate ourselves in their vices, but separate ourselves from them, that, being devoted to thee, we may fight under the banner of thine only-begotten Son, until he shall gather us into his celestial kingdom. --- Amen.

Jeremiah 48

CHAPTER 48

Jeremiah 48:1

1. Against Moab thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Woe unto Nebo! for it is spoiled; Kiriathaim is confounded and taken: Misgab is confounded and dismayed.

1. Contra Moab, sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, Vae super Nebo, quia in vastitatem redacta est (vastata est;) destructa est Kiriathaim; pudefacta est Misgab et expavit (vel, anima fracta est.)

This prophecy is against the Moabites, who, though they derived their origin from Lot, and were of the same blood with the Israelites, had yet been inimical to them. This prophecy would be uninteresting, were we not to remember the history on which the application and use of what is said depends. We have said that the Moabites, as the father of their nation was Lot, were connected by blood with the Israelites; they ought then to have retained the recollection of their brotherhood, and to have dealt kindly with them; for God had spared them when the people of Israel entered into the land of Canaan. The Israelites, we know, passed through the borders of Moab without doing any harm to them, because it was God's purpose, from a regard to Lot, to preserve them for a time. But this people never ceased to contrive all manner of plots against God's people; and, as we shall hereafter see, when the state of that people became embarrassed, they cruelly exulted over them, and became more insolent than avowed enemies. Hence God prophesied against them, that the Israelites might know, as we reminded you yesterday, that their miserable condition was not overlooked by God, and that though he chastised them, yet some hope of mercy remained, as he undertook their cause and would be their defender. It was then no small comfort which this prophecy brought to the faithful; for they thus knew that God was still their father, though apparently he seemed to be severe to them. We now perceive the design of what is here said.

The case of the Moabites was different from that of the Egyptians, for the Egyptians were wholly aliens to the chosen people; but the Moabites, as we have said, were related to them. They were therefore willful, and as it were intestine enemies; and nature itself ought to have taught them to acknowledge the Israelites as their brethren, and to cultivate mutual kindness. This cruelty and ingratitude were so hateful to God, that at length he punished them most severely. But as the Moabites remained in quietness when Judea was laid waste, and the city Jerusalem destroyed, after the overthrow of the kingdom of Israel, and the banishment of the ten tribes to distant countries, it behooved the faithful to exercise patience, which could not have been done without hope. It was this then that Jeremiah had in view, even to sustain the minds of the godly with the expectation of God's judgment, which he here denounces on the Moabites.

He says, Against Moab; [361] and then it follows, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel By the first term he designates the immense power of God, and reminds them that God is the judge of the whole world, and that his kingdom extends over all nations; but by the second expression he bears testimony to the love with which he had embraced the children of Abraham, because he had been pleased to choose them as his peculiar inheritance. Woe, he says, on Nebo; [362] which was a city in the land of Moab; because laid waste, ashamed, taken is Kiriathaim He names here, as we see, some cities, and he will name more as he proceeds. Ashamed then and taken is Kiriathaim; and Misgab [363] is ashamed and torn, or broken in mind. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 48:2

2 There shall be no more praise of Moab: in Heshbon they have devised evil against it; come, and let us cut it off from being a nation. Also thou shalt be cut down, O Madmen; the sword shall pursue thee.

2. Nulla amplius gloriatio Moab in Chesbon; cogitaverunt super eam malum, Venite et excidamus eam, ne sit gens; etiam Madmen, (alloquitur urbem ipsam,) excisa es (ad verbum, in solitudinem redacta, sed metaphorice accipitur pro interitu, interiit ergo Madmen;) post to proficiscetur gladius.

The Prophet, as before, does not speak in an ordinary way, but declares in lofty terms what God had committed to him, in order that he might terrify the Moabites; not indeed that they heard his threatenings, but it was necessary that he should denounce vengeance in this vehement manner, that the Jews might know that the cruelty and pride of the Moabites, hereafter mentioned, would not go unpunished.

Hence he says, No more shall be the praise or the boasting of Moab over Heshbon We may learn from this place and from others, that Heshbon had been taken from the Moabites; for it was occupied by God's people, because the Moabites had lost it, as Moses relates in Numbers 21:30, and in Deuteronomy 2:26, etc. But (as

[361] All the versions, except the Syriac, which Calvin has followed, have "to Moab," and connect the words with the following, that is, "Jehovah says thus to Moab." The best version is, as given by Blayney and Henderson, "concerning Moab, thus saith," etc. — Ed.

[362] Some give this rendering, "Alas! no Nebo;" it had ceased to exist, and the reason is given, "for it is laid waste. — Ed.

[363] Neither the Vulg. nor the Syr. gives this as a proper name, nor is there any such place found elsewhere. Blayney renders it "the high fortress," agreeably with the Vulg., Syr., and the Targ. — Ed.

things change) when the Moabites became strong, they took away this city from the Israelites. Hence the Prophet says, that there would be no more boasting that they possessed that city; for he adds, They have thought, or devised, etc. There is here a striking allusion, for {חשבון}, chesbon, is derived from {חשב}, chesheb, to devise or to consult, as though it were a place of consultation or devisings. The Prophet then says, that as to Heshbon they consulted against it, {עליה} {חשבו} cheshbu olie He uses the root from which the name of the city is derived. Heshbon, then, hitherto called the place of consultation, was to have and find other counselors, even those who would contrive ruin for it. Come ye; the Prophet refers here to the counsel taken by the Chaldeans, Come ye, and let us cut her off from being a nation He then joins another city, And thou, Madmen, [364] shalt be cut off, for a sword shall go after thee, or pursue thee, as though the city itself was fleeing from the sword; not that cities move from one place to another; but when the citizens deliberate how they may drive away their enemies and resist their attacks, --- when they seek aid here and there, --- when they set up their own remedies, they are said to flee. But the Prophet says, ``Thou shalt gain nothing by fleeing, for the sword shall pursue thee.'' It follows, ---

Jeremiah 48:3

3. A voice of crying shall be from Horonaim, spoiling and great destruction.

3. Vox clamoris (id est, sonora) e Choronaim, vastitas et contritio magna.

By naming many cities, he shews that the whole land was doomed to ruin, so that no corner of it would be exempt from destruction. For the Moabites might have suffered some loss without much injury had they been moderately chastised; but the Prophet shews that they would be so reduced by the power of Nebuchadnezzar, that ruin would extend to every part of the land. We now then see why this catalogue of the cities is given.

By the voice of crying he means howling, a loud lamentation, heard far and wide. He says that the voice of crying would go forth from Horonaim, which some think was so called, because the city consisted of two parts, a higher and a lower part. He then adds, desolation and great destruction He thus explains himself, for the citizens of Horonaim would in vain cry out, because desolation and breaking or destruction would constrain them, that is, make them cry out so as to howl for the bitterness of their grief. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 48:4

4. Moab is destroyed; her little ones have caused a cry to be heard.

4. Afflicta est Moab; audire fecerunt clamorem parvuli ejus.

The Prophet speaks again generally of the whole country. It is said that the land of Moab was afflicted; not that it was so then; but to make certain the prophecy, he speaks of the event as having already taken place; for the prophets, as it is well known, speaking in the person of God, relate things as yet hidden, as though they

[364] None of the versions renders this a proper name, but as a participle from the verb which follows, and no such place is mentioned elsewhere. They must have read {,{מרמה instead of .{מדמן} Then the version would be, Even silenced thou shalt be silenced, After thee shall go the sword. To be silenced, in the language of the prophets, is to be subdued. See Isaiah 15:1, when the same thing is said of Moab. The word silence forms a contrast with the boasting of Moab mentioned at the beginning of the verse. After being subdued and removed elsewhere, still the sword would follow Moab. --- Ed.

had been completed. He says that the little ones of Moab so cried as to be heard. [365] This is much more emphatic than if he had said that men and women cried out; for children do not soon perceive what is going on, for their understanding is not great. Men and women howl when threatenings only are announced; but little children are not moved but by present evils, and except they are actually beaten, they are not affected; and then they hardly distinguish between some slight evil and death. Hence, when the Prophet says that the little ones of Moab were heard in their crying, he means that the grievousness of its calamity would be extreme, as that little children, as though wise before their time, would perceive the atrocious cruelty of their enemies. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 48:5-6

5. For in the going up of Luhith continual weeping shall go up; for in the going down of Horonaim the enemies have heard a cry of destruction.

5. Quoniam in ascensu Luhith cum fletu ascendet fletus, quia in descensu Choronaim hostes clamorem contritionis audierunt (conjungi debet proximus versus,)

6. Flee, save your lives, and be like the heath in the wilderness.

6. Fugite, eripite animas vestras; et eritis quasi Aroer (vel, myrica) in deserto.

Here Jeremiah uses another figure, that the weeping would be everywhere heard in the ascent to Luhith. It is probable, and it appears from the Prophet's words, that this city was situated on a high place. He then says, that men would go up with weeping in the ascent to Luhith; literally, In (or with) weeping shall weeping ascend But some read as though it were written {בכה}, beke, weeping; nor is there a doubt but that the verb {יעלה}, iole, refers to a person. But Jeremiah seems to have mentioned weeping twice in order to show that men would not only weep in one place, but during the long course of their ascent, as though he had said, ``They who shall be near the city shall weep, and they in the middle of their course, and those at the foot of the mountain;'' that is, there shall be weeping in every place. We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet.

He afterwards says, In the descent to Horonaim It hence appears that this city was situated in a low place or on a plain; and therefore I know not why they say that one part of it was higher than the other. It might indeed be that it had a hill in it; but the place was in a level country, and had mountains around it, as we learn from the Prophet's words, In the descent to Horonaim the enemies shall hear a cry of distress By saying that enemies would hear a cry, [366] he means that the citizens of Horonaim and their neighbors would become frantic through grief. For fear restrains weeping, and when any one sees an enemy near, the very sight of him checks him, so that he dares not openly to show his grief; and then shame also restrains tears as well as sighings, for an enemy would deride our weepings in our misery. There is

[365] Here all the versions and the Targum differ. The Vulg. only has "little ones;" the Syr. has "her poor," the Sept. take "Zoar" to be intended, according to Isaiah 15:5, the word {צוערה}, instead of {צעוריה}. The passage in Isaiah confirms this reading, though not found in any copies. Then the verse would read thus, --- Broken is Moab, They made the cry heard at Zoar. This is substantially the version of Venema. --- Ed.

[366] The word enemies is given only by the Vulg.; the other versions render it "distress." The literal rendering of the verse is, — For in the ascent to Luhith, With weeping ascends weeping; For in the descent to Heronaim, The distress of the cry of ruin have they heard. This version materially corresponds with Isaiah 15:5. Weeping ascending with weeping, shews that all wept as they ascended. "The distress of the cry" is a Hebraism for distressing cry — Ed.

no doubt then, but that the Prophet here amplifies the grievousness of their sorrow, when he says, that though the citizens of Horonaim had enemies before their eyes, they would yet break forth with weeping and loud crying, and that the reproach and derision of enemies would not restrain them.

Then he adds, Flee, save: this is the crying of distress; for miserable men, as the case is in extreme evils, mutually exhort one another, Flee, save your lives He then compares them to a tamarisk. The word {ערוער}, oruor, designates a country, as it is probable, and there were also two cities of this name. However, {ערער}, oror, is a tamarisk, as we have already seen in Jeremiah 17:6. Some render it, ``a tower;'' and the words of Isaiah in Isaiah 17:2, are perverted by some to maintain another meaning; for they think that {ערוער}, oruor, means the cot of shepherds in the desert; but I prefer the opinion of those who render it ``tamarisk,'' or juniper, though the Prophet seems to me to allude to the city Aroer, or to a region of that name, but I rather think to the city. He then says, And ye shall be as a tamarisk in the desert: and it is known from other places that Aroer was in the land of Moab.

We now then perceive what the Prophet means: that Moab would be like a juniper in the desert, that is, a barren tree, which never grows to any size; and then it is dry, because it is not cherished by any rain, nor fed by any moisture from the ground. It is in this sense, as we have stated, that our Prophet took the similitude in Jeremiah 17:5-8:

``Blessed,'' he says, ``is the man who trusts in Jehovah, for he shall be like a tree planted near waters: cursed is the man who trusts in man, and who makes flesh his arm, and withdraws his heart from Jehovah; for he shall be as the tamarisk of the desert;''

that is, he shall be barren and dry, without any moisture or support. It now follows: ---

Jeremiah 48:7

7. For because thou hast trusted in thy works, and in thy treasures, thou shalt also be taken: and Chemosh shall go forth into captivity with his priests and his princes together.

7. Propterea quod fiducia tua fuit in operibus tuis (ad verbum) et in thesauris tuis, etiam tu capieris; et egredietur Chamos in captivitatem, sacerdotes ejus et principes ejus simul.

Jeremiah assigns here the reason why God would take vengeance on the Moabites; but we shall hereafter see other reasons why God had been so much displeased with them. Let us then know that we are not here taught avowedly why God determined to lay waste and destroy the land of Moab; for there is here but one reason given, while there were others and greater ones, even because they had wantonly exulted over the miseries of the Jews, because they had conspired against them, because they had betrayed them, and lastly, because they had as it were carried on war with their God. But here Jeremiah briefly shews, that were there no other reasons, the Moabites deserved that God should pour forth his wrath on them even for this, because they trusted in their own works and treasures. By works some understand herds and flocks; and in this sense they are sometimes taken, and it is an exposition that may

be admitted. We may however understand by ``works'' fortifications, especially as ``treasures'' are added. He then says, that the Moabites were such that it was just that God should be roused against them, because they were inebriated with false confidence in their own power, and because they had many treasures: they hence thought that they were impregnable.

The Prophet in the meantime intimates, that the Moabites greatly deceived themselves in thinking that they were safe against God's hand, because they were strongly fortified, and because they had immense treasures laid up. Hence he says that all these things would avail nothing, for God would destroy the whole land.

Even thou, he says, shalt be taken There is no small emphasis in the particle {גם}, gam, even or also; for the Prophet expresses what would now take place; for the Moabites in vain trusted in their treasures and power, because God would notwithstanding destroy them, and his hand would penetrate into their fortresses. ``God then shall find thee out equally the same, as though thou wert exposed to all dangers.'' They who abound in warlike preparations, furnished with all kinds of defences, think themselves exempted from the common lot of men: hence he says, Even thou, equally the same with any village exposed to the will of enemies, even thou shalt be taken; and go forth shall Chemosh This was the tutelar God of the land, as it appears from the book of Judges and other places, and even from what Moses says, (Judges 11:25; 1 Kings 11:7, 33; Numbers 21:29.) As, then, the Moabites worshipped this idol, they thought themselves safe whatever evil might be at hand. The Prophet then derides this confidence. We have said before, that the ungodly in part set up their own earthly power in opposition to God, and in part imagined that they were aided by their idols. Hence the prophets exposed these two evils, as it appears also from the present passage: the Prophet had said, ``Because thou trustest in thy fortresses and treasures, even thou shalt be taken;'' and now he says, ``Because thou thinkest Chemosh to be a sure and invincible defense, it shall be driven into exile and be kept captive.'' This he said in reproach to the idol. He adds, its priests and its princes, even those princes, who seem to lie down safely under its shadow, they also shall be driven into exile.

Jeremiah 48:8

8. And the spoiler shall come upon every city, and no city shall escape: the valley also shall perish, and the plain shall be destroyed, as the LORD hath spoken.

8. Et veniet vastator ad omnem urbem, neque urbs eripietur; et peribit vallis, et perdetur planities, quod (id est, quemadmodum) locutus est Jehova.

He confirms the previous verse; nor ought he to be deemed too wordy, for this prophecy was not announced, that it might cherish the hope and patience of the faithful only for a few days; but it was necessary for them to rest dependent for a long time on this promise, which God had given them many years before. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet confirms at large a truth in itself sufficiently clear. Come, he says, shall a waster to all the cities It now appears more clearly why he mentioned some of the cities, though, as we shall see, they were many, even that the Israelites might know that all the land of Moab was to be given up to desolation: Nor shall a city escape, for destroyed shall be the valley and the plain, as Jehovah

has spoken It follows, ---

Jeremiah 48:9

9. Give wings unto Moab, that it may flee and get away: for the cities thereof shall be desolate, without any to dwell therein.

9. Date alam ipsi Moab, quia volando volabit; et urbes ejus in vastationem erunt, ut non sit qui habitet in illis.

Here is a bitter derision; for it was necessary not only to goad the Moabites, but also to pierce them through, because they were inflated with so much pride, and also because they cruelly raged against God's people, as we shall more fully see hereafter. When the Israelites were conquered, these ungodly men cast forth their taunts, and also betrayed them to their enemies. Hence the Prophet now says, Give wings to Moab Though the word {ציף}, tsits, properly means a flower, yet it means here a wing, put for wings; as though he had said, that the Moabites could not escape destruction except by flying. In short, as they had not only so proudly despised, but had also persecuted their miserable brethren, the Prophet says, ``Come shall the time when feet for running or for flight shall not be sufficient for you, your enemies being so eager in pursuit; but you will desire to have wings.'' But, as we shall see, he will presently tell us, that Moab had been quiet and settling on its dregs.

He then adds, that its cities would be a waste, so as to have no inhabitant He mentions the reason why Moab would need wings, even because there would be no refuge for them, for wherever it would betake itself, it would be thence driven away; for the enemy would take all the cities, so that the whole people would be under the necessity of removing elsewhere; he intimates, in short, that there would be no hope for life to the Moabites, except by flight, and that the swiftest. At length he adds, ---

Jeremiah 48:10

10. Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood.

10. Maledictus qui tacit opus Jehovae fraudulenter (hoc est, non bona fide,) et maledictus qui prohibet gladium suum a sanguine.

The Prophet here encourages the Chaldeans to severity, so as to make no end until they destroyed that nation. We have said that the prophets assumed different characters, so that what they said might be more impressive. The Chaldeans were not indeed the disciples of Jeremiah; nor was this exhortation intended for them, but that the Israelites might know that what they heard from the mouth of Jeremiah was certain. He then turns to address the Chaldeans; as he before spoke to any who might be present, ``Give wings to Moab;'' so now another apostrophe follows, Cursed, etc., --- to whom does he speak? to the Chaldeans; and yet the Prophet did not address them as though he could effect anything; but, as I have said, he had a regard to the Jews.

This passage has been very absurdly explained, and it is commonly quoted as though the Prophet had said, that special care ought to be taken by us, not to omit anything of what God commands. But they thus misrepresent the meaning. We ought therefore to bear in mind what I have already said, that these words are addressed to the Chaldeans, as though he had said, ``Spare not, but shed blood, and

let no humanity move you, for it is the work of God; God has armed you, that ye might fully execute his judgment and spare no blood: ye shall then be accursed, except ye execute his vengeance.'' It is not indeed a common mode of speaking; but as to the subject and the meaning there is no ambiguity. It is the same thing as though he had said, ``Go on courageously, and boldly execute God's vengeance, inasmuch as punishment has been denounced on them.'' As when soldiers idly delay, the leader when present not only exhorts them but also urges them on with reproofs and threatenings, in order to rouse their alacrity; so the Prophet here shews that God, as though present with the Chaldeans, would chide their sloth, ``Why do ye give over? cursed is every one who will not shed blood, and who will not destroy them from the least to the greatest.''

But the whole import of the passage is found in the expression, that the destruction of that ungodly nation was the work of Jehovah; as if he had said, ``Though the Chaldeans shall lay waste the land of Moab, and shall do this, not in order to obey God, but from avarice and ambition, yet it will be the work of God; for God has hired the Chaldeans for this end, that they might destroy the Moabites, though they may think of no such thing.'' It follows, ---

Jeremiah 48:11

11. Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from vessel to vessel, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed.

11. Tranquillus fuit Moab a pueritia sua (vel, quietus fuit Moab,) et resedit ipse super faeces suas, et non mutatus fuit a vase in vas, et in captivitatem non profectus (aut, non migravit;) propterea stetit sapor ejus in eo, et odor ejus non mutatus est.

Here he expresses more clearly what we have before seen, that Moab in vain promised to himself perpetual impunity, because he had for a long time been prosperous. Then the Prophet says that he would be suddenly destroyed, when God ascended his tribunal to execute his judgment.

He first says, that he had been quiet from his childhood, because when the Israelites had been often harassed, that nation remained untouched, and never felt any disadvantage, as though fortified on all sides by their own defences; for they dwelt in part amidst mountains, but had a level country, as it is well known, beyond Jordan. It was a land in a moderate degree fertile, so that as they enjoyed continual peace, they collected great wealth. But it was very hard for the Israelites, when God afflicted them with various calamities, to see the Moabites secure and safe from all trouble and all losses. As, then, this thought might have grievously wounded the minds of the faithful, the Prophet here exhorts them not to envy the happiness of the Moabites, because God would at length stretch forth his hand against them, according to what was done by David, who also exhorted the faithful patiently to wait for the day of the Lord, when they saw the ungodly enjoying all kinds of pleasure, and meeting with success according to their wishes. (Psalm 37:1, 7, 8.) We now then understand the object of the Prophet.

He compares Moab to an old man, who had passed his whole life in security, without any losses, without any grief or sorrow. Quiet, then, has Moab been, or quiet from

his childhood, even from the time he became a nation. For what was the childhood of Moab? even from the time they expelled the giants and other inhabitants and dwelt in their land. Then success ever attended them; and hence he says, that they settled on their dregs, so that they underwent no change. Here is another metaphor: as wine which remains in its own vessel, and is never changed into another, retains its taste, its strength, and its savor; so also the Prophet says that Moab had always been in the enjoyment of perpetual felicity, like wine which remains on its own dregs. For the dregs preserve the wine, as it is well known; for the wine, being taken off from its dregs, loses in part its own strength, and at length becomes vapid; but wine, being not changed, continues in its own strength.

We hence see how apt is the comparison, when the Prophet says, that Moab had not been changed from vessel to vessel, but had settled on his dregs And he explains himself without a figure when he adds, that he had not gone, or removed, into captivity He yet intimates that this perpetual peace would avail the Moabites nothing, because as the Lord had resolved to destroy them, he would cause the strength of Moab to fail and all his wealth to be reduced to nothing.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since we are so disposed to indulge sloth, and so devoted to earthly things, that we easily forget our holy calling except thou dost continually stimulate us, --- O grant that the afflictions by which thou triest us, may effectually rouse us, so that leaving the world we may strive to come to thee, and devote ourselves wholly to thy service; and that we may so carry on the warfare under the various afflictions of the present life, that our minds and all our thoughts may always be fixed on the hope of that eternal and blessed rest which thine only-begotten Son our Lord has promised as having been prepared for us in heaven. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventieth

Jeremiah 48:12

12. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his vessels, and break their bottles.

12. Propterea ecce dies veniunt, dicit Jehova, et mittam ei abactores qui abigant eum, et vasa ejus evacuent, et lagenas eorum dispergant.

The Prophet said in the last lecture that the Moabites, as long as they lived prosperously, were very hardened, as impunity becomes an incentive to sin; for the ungodly, while God spares them, think that they shall never be called to an account. He now adds, that the days would come, in which God would suddenly execute vengeance on them. But he pursues the comparison which he had used; for he had said, that the Moabites were like wine which had not been poured from one vessel into another; and hence they retained their own odor, that is, they were inebriated with their own pleasures, because God had granted them peace and quietness for a long time.

Now, the Prophet, on the other hand, says that God would send to them drivers,

[367] to drive them away, and who would empty their vessels and scatter their bottles, --- the containing for the contained; though I do not disapprove of another rendering, ``and destroy their bottles;'' for the verb is sometimes taken in this sense. Properly it means to scatter, to dissipate; but the verb {נפץ}, nuphets, sometimes expresses a stronger idea, even to scatter or to cast forth with violence, so as to break what is thus cast forth. As to the real meaning there is not much difference: for we perceive what was God's purpose, that he would send to the Moabites enemies to drive them into exile, and thus to deprive them of those pleasures in which they had so long indulged. But this was not said for the sake of the Moabites, but that the Jews might know, that though that land had been in a quiet state, yet it would not escape the hand of God; for its long continued felicity could not render void that decree of God of which the Prophet had spoken. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 48:13

13. And Moab shall be ashamed of Chemosh, as the house of Israel was ashamed of Bethel their confidence.

13. Et pudefiet Moab a Chamos, sicuti pudefacti sunt domus Israel a Bethel, sua fiducia.

We may see more clearly from this verse, that the Prophet does not so much address the Moabites as his own people; for he was not a teacher to the Moabites to promote their safety; on the contrary, he intended his doctrine for the benefit of the Jews, as in the present instance.

Ashamed, he says, shall Moab be of his idol: for we have said that Chemosh was the god of the Moabites, as every nation had its own peculiar god, even its own invention. Now, the comparison made here shews that the Prophet wished to exhort the people, to whom he was appointed a teacher, to repentance; for he set before them the example of the ten tribes. And we know that at the time Jeremiah announced this prophecy, the kingdom of Israel was destroyed. All the Israelites, then, had been driven into exile except the tribe of Judah and the half tribe of Benjamin. Now, the ten tribes, as it is well known, had, under Jeroboam, departed from the pure worship of God, and had built for themselves an altar in Bethel. Hence, then, the Prophet now says, As ashamed were the Israelites of their superstitions, which they had devised for themselves, so a similar vengeance of God awaited the people of Moab; and thus he shews to the Jews what it is to trust in the only true God. The Jews were not, indeed, involved in so gross a superstition as to worship idols, at least publicly; but Ezekiel shews that they also were contaminated with this kind of pollution, and that the very sanctuary was defiled with idols; and at the same time the worship of God, according to the Law, continued to be celebrated. But the Jews had nothing but the external form: they had, indeed, the temple and the altar, they professed to worship the true God, but in the meantime impiety and contempt of true religion prevailed among them, and they had begun to involve themselves in many ungodly superstitions, as we have before seen.

[367] "Incliners" is the Sept.; "strewers," the Vulg.; "plunderers," the Syr. and Targ. The verb means to spread, to strew. They were those who turned the wine vessels in order to empty them. Henderson has "overturners;" but Blayney has the best word, "tilters," who should tilt him. — Ed.

What, then, does Jeremiah now do? He sets before their eyes the ten tribes whom God had destroyed, though the Israelites, as well as the Jews, had descended from the same father, even Abraham. As, then, God had inflicted so heavy a punishment on the kingdom of Israel, he now shews to the Jews, that the punishment of the Moabites was not less probable; and why? because they have, he says, their idol. God shews that this was a most atrocious wickedness, by which the Moabites had provoked his anger; for there is nothing less intolerable than for men to transfer the glory of God to their own inventions, to statues, to logs of wood, to stones, or to idols of gold and silver. We now, then, understand the object of the Prophet. It follows ---

Jeremiah 48:14-15

14. How say ye, We are mighty and strong men for the war?

14. Quomodo dicitis, Viri (fortes) nos, et viri robusti ad praelium?

15. Moab is spoiled, and gone up out of her cities, and his chosen young men are gone down to the slaughter, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts.

15. Vastatus est Moab, civitates ejus excidit (alii vertunt, civitates ejus evanuerunt, ut sit mutatio numeri; alii, incola ascendit, vel, discessit ab urbibus ejus,) et electio juvenum descendit (hoc est, electi juvenes; et est allusio ad nomen {בחריו}, nam {בחורים}, dicuntur apud Hebroeos adolescentes, qui sunt in flore oetatis, sed nomen hoc deducitur a {בחר}, quod est eligere, unde est etiam nomen hoc quo utitur Propheta; electio igitur juvenum, vel, electi juvenes, descenderunt) ad mactationem, dicit Rex, nomen ejus Jehova exercituum (id est, cujus nomen est Jehova exercituum.)

The Prophet here reproves the pride of the Moabites, because they trusted in their own strength, and derided God and what the Prophets announced. We indeed know that ungodly men, when all things prosper with them, are moved by no fear, divest themselves of every feeling, and become so sunk in indifference, that they not only disdainfully disregard the true God, but also what is connected with moral obligation. Such, then, was the confidence which prevailed among the Moabites. Hence the Prophet here checks this foolish boasting.

How say ye, We are strong, we are warlike men? as though he had said, ``These boastings, while God is seriously contending with you, are all empty, and will avail you nothing: ye think yourselves beyond the reach of danger, because ye possess great power, and are surrounded with strong defences; but God will reduce to nothing whatever you regard as your protection.'' Wasted, then, is Moab He sets up this threatening in opposition to their arrogance. He indeed foretells what was to come, but speaks of it as a thing already fulfilled. Wasted, he says, is Moab, and the enemy has cut off his cities The verb {עלה}, ole, is to be taken in a transitive sense; it is indeed a neuter verb, but the other meaning is more suitable to this place, that the enemy would cut off the cities of the Moabites. I yet allow that it may be explained otherwise, that the inhabitants would ascend or depart from his cities; for, {עלה}, ole, metaphorically, indeed, signifies to ascend, and to flow off, or to go away, as they say, in smoke; and if an anomaly as to number, common in Hebrew, be approved, the sense will be, ``and from his cities they have vanished.'' [368] And this explanation

[368] There is no agreement in the Versions and Targ., as to these words, nor among critics. The

agrees well with what follows, and his young men have descended to the slaughter; that is, they who seem the strongest among them shall be drawn to destruction, or shall descend to the slaughter. But as the event seemed difficult to be believed, God is again introduced. Then the Prophet says, that he did not speak from his own mind, but announced what God had committed to him. And he adds his title, that the Jews might be more attentive to the consideration of God's power. God, he says, is he who speaks, the King, whose name is Jehovah of hosts He sets up God's name in opposition to the warlike preparations, of which the Moabites, as we have seen, boasted; as though he had said, that if the Moabites had to do with mortals, they might indeed have justly gloried; but as they had a contest with the living God, all their power would vanish away, since God was prepared to execute vengeance. It follows ---

Jeremiah 48:16

16. The calamity of Moab is near to come, and his affliction hasteth fast.

16. Propinqua est calamitas Moab ,{דיא} sigificat infortunium et calamitatem, significat etiam interitum, ideo vertunt quidam propinquus est interitus) ad veniendum (ut veniat,) et malum ejus (id est, calamitas) festinat valde.

Here the Prophet expresses something more, that the vengeance of which he spoke was near and hastening. It served to alleviate the sorrow of the faithful, when they understood that the Moabites would shortly be punished; for it was a grievous and bitter trial, when God severely chastened his own children, to see that the wicked were in the meantime spared. As, then, he deferred his judgments as to the wicked, that delay tended to drive the faithful to despair, at least they could not bear with sufficient patience the scourges of God.

This is the reason why the Prophet now says, Near is the destruction of the Moabites, and their calamity hastens And though God did for some time yet bear with the Moabites, so that they remained in a quiet state, and reveled in their pleasures, yet this prophecy was true; for we are to bear in mind that truth, which ought ever to be remembered as to promises and threatenings, that a thousand years are as one day with the Lord: and hence is that exhortation given by the Prophet Habakkuk,

``If the prophecy delays, wait for it; for coming it will come, and will not delay.'' (Habakkuk 2:3)

And this mode of speaking occurs often in the prophets. When, therefore, God denounces punishment on the wicked and the despisers of his Law, he says, ``Behold, your day hastens,'' and he says this, that they might be awakened and begin to fear in due time.

But here, as I have reminded you, Jeremiah had a regard to his own people. For the faithful might have objected, and said, ``What can this be? how long will God defer

easiest construction is presented by Blayney, — A spoiler of Moab and of her cities is gone up. The next clause is not so well rendered by Blayney. He applies it to the Chaldeans. “Moab” is spoken of in this chapter, both in the feminine and in the masculine gender. In our language the neuter would be the most suitable, it and its. I render the verse thus, — 15. The waster of Moab and of its cities is going up, And the choice of its youth shall descend to the slaughter, Saith the King, Jehovah of hosts is his name. “Going up” as ascribed to the conqueror, and “descending” to the conquered. — Ed.

the punishment which he threatens to our enemies?'' Hence he says, ``Strengthen your minds for a little while, for God will presently stretch forth his hand and show that he is a defender who cares for you and your safety; for he will set himself against the Moabites, because they have been unfaithful and vexatious to you.'' It is, then, for this reason that he says, Near is their destruction, and their vengeance hastens

We may hence learn this useful doctrine, that whenever God promises anything, we ought to receive it as a present thing, though yet hidden and even remote. There is no distance which ought to impede our faith; but we ought to regard as certain whatever God promises, and as though it were before our eyes and in our hand. And the same ought to be the case as to threatenings; whenever God denounces anything hard and grievous, it ought to touch and move us the same as though we saw his hand armed with a sword, and as though the very execution of his vengeance was exhibited before our eyes. For we know what the Scripture teaches us elsewhere,

``When the wicked shall say, Peace and security, destruction comes suddenly on them, as the pain of childbearing, which seizes a woman when she thinks nothing of it.'' (1 Thessalonians 5:3)

Let us then learn to set God's favor ever as present, and also all punishments, so that we may really fear them. It follows ---

Jeremiah 48:17

17. All ye that are about him, bemoan him; and all ye that know his name, say, How is the strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod!

17. Commovemini illi (id est, super Moab) quicunque estis in circuitu ejus, et quicunque cognoscitis nomen ejus, dicite, Quomodo fractus est baculus fortis? virga pulchritudinis (vel, excellentiae, nam {תראפת} significat decorum pulchritudine.)

The Prophet seems indeed to exhort all neighbors to sympathy; but we have stated for what purpose he did this; for it was not his object to show that the Moabites deserved pity, so that their neighbors ought to have condoled with them in their calamities: but by this figurative mode of speaking he exaggerated the grievousness of the evils which were soon to happen to the Moabites; as though he had said, ``This judgment of God will be so dreadful as to make all their neighbors to tremble; all who had previously known the state of the people of Moab, will be smitten with such terror as will make them to groan and mourn with them.'' In short, the Prophet had nothing else in view than to show that God's vengeance on the Moabites would not be less severe and dreadful than it had been on the ten tribes, and what it would be on the tribe of Judah.

Say ye, he says, how is the staff broken? He introduces here all their neighbors as astonished with wonder; for the same purpose are other things mentioned, even to show that the calamity of Moab would be deemed a prodigy, for the people thought them unassailable, and no one had ever dared to attempt anything against their land. This, then, was the reason why the Prophet here asks as one astonished, even in the person of all nations, How has it happened that the staff is broken? and the beautiful rod? [369] These are metaphorical words, which refer to the royal dignity

[369] The literal rendering is, — How has the rod of strength been broken, The staff of honor? "How" is by what means, or how much: the first seems to be the meaning here. The rod and the staff are the same — the sceptre an ensign of power and of honor or glory. — Ed.

and the condition of the whole people. It follows ---

Jeremiah 48:18

18. Thou daughter that dost inhabit Dibon, come down from thy glory, and sit in thirst; for the spoiler of Moab shall come upon thee, and he shall destroy thy strong holds.

18. Descende e gloria, sede in sit habitatrix filia Dibon; quia vastator Moab ascendit contra to, destructor munitionum tuarum (vel, quia vastatus est Moab, et supra to ascendet, etc.)

Here the Prophet turns to address the city Dibon, which was renowned among that people. The mode of speaking is well known; he calls the people of the city the daughter of Dibon; and he calls the daughter an inhabitant, because the Moabites, as it has been said, ever rested in safety and quietness in their own habitations, for no one disturbed them. It is, then, the same as though he had said, ``Ye who have hitherto been in a quiet state, descend now from your glory, and dwell in thirst.'' [370] By thirst he means the want of all things. Thirst is set in opposition to glory; but it is more than if the Prophet had mentioned disgrace or poverty; for there are many who are otherwise oppressed by want, and yet find fountains or streams; but when there is no drop of water to quench thirst, it is an extreme misery.

We hence see that the Prophet exaggerates the punishment of the Moabites, when he says that the citizens of Dibon would sit in thirst, because, he says, ascended against thee has the waster, [371] and the destroyer of thy fortresses. We may hence conclude that the city was on all sides fortified, so that it thought its defences sufficient to keep off enemies. But the Prophet derides this presumption, because the Chaldeans would come to pull down and destroy all these strongholds. It follows ---

Jeremiah 48:19

19. O inhabitant of Aroer, stand by the way, and espy; ask him that fleeth, and her that escapeth, and say, What is done?

19. Super viam consiste et speculare habitatrix Aroer; interroga fugientem et eam quae elapsa fuerit, dic, Quid factum est (quid accidit?)

We have stated elsewhere why the prophets in describing calamities spoke in so elevated a style; for their object was not to seek fame or the praise of eloquence. They are not these rhetorical ornaments which the prophets used; but they necessarily spoke in a lofty style of the punishments which awaited the ungodly, because such was the hardness of their hearts that they hesitated not to despise God's threatenings, or to regard them as fables. That God's threatenings then might penetrate into the hearts of men, it was necessary to exaggerate them by means of various comparisons, as it is done here and in many places. We ought at the same time to bear in mind what I have said, that the Prophet had a regard to his own people. As the Moabites were like a hid treasure, the Jews could never have thought it possible, that the Chaldeans would at length make an inroad there; but the Prophet declares that the thing was so certain, as though it was seen by their own eyes. In order then to lead the Jews to the very scene itself, the judgments of God are here not only

[370] The verb "dwell" favors the idea adopted by some, that {{צמא means here a dry or thirsty land. - Ed

[371] {{עלה here, as in Jeremiah 48:15, is a participle, and so the verb which follows. The ``waster'' is represented as then on his way, --- For the waster of Moab is ascending against thee, The destroyer of thy fortresses. --- Ed

described, but as it were painted.

Stand, he says, on the way, and look, thou inhabitant of Aroer This was another city of the Moabites, of which mention is made in many places; and then he mentions others, as we shall see. Ask him, he says, who fleeth and her who escapes He, indeed, changes the gender of the nouns; but when he mentions many, and then one person, he did this for the sake of amplifying; because, on the one hand, he wished to show that so great would be the number of exiles, that the whole land would become empty; and then, on the other hand, when he says that this and that person would flee, he means that they would be so scattered that they would not go in troops; but as it is usual in a disordered state of things, one would flee on this side, and another on the other side. Ask him who fleeth, or as we may render the words, Ask all who flee; and then, ask her who escapes; because not only men, but also women would flee, so that no sex would be spared. In short, he intimates, that those who dwelt in cities well fortified, would be all anxiety on seeing enemies irresistibly advancing through every part of the country.

Jeremiah 48:20-24

20. Moab is confounded; for it is broken down: howl and cry; tell ye it in Arnon, that Moab is spoiled,

20. Pudefactus est Moab, quia contritus est; ululate et clamate, et annuntiate in Arnon, quoniam vastatus est Moab (vel, quod vastatus est Moab; {כי} enim hic explicative accipitur, non causaliter;)

21. And judgment is come upon the plain country; upon Holon, and upon Jahazah, and upon Mephaath,

21. Et judicium perveniet ad terram planam (vel, rectam, hoc est, ad ipsam planiciem,) ad Holon et ad Jazar et ad Mephaath;

22. And upon Dibon, and upon Nebo, and upon Bethdiblathaim,

22. Et super Dibon, et super Nebo, et super Beth-diblathaim (domum Diblathaim, sed est nomen proprium urbis;)

23. And upon Kiriathaim, and upon Bethgamul, and upon Bethmeon,

23. Et ad Cariathain, et ad Beth-gamoul, et ad Beth-meon;

24. And upon Kerioth, and upon Bozrah, and upon all the cities of the land of Moab, far or near.

24. Et super Chirioth, et super Bozrah, et super omnes urbes terrae Moab remotas et propinquas.

We have stated why the Prophet describes so fully the ruin of the Moabites, and dwells so long on a subject in no way obscure; it was not indeed enough merely to teach and to show what was useful to be known, but it was also necessary to add goads, that the Jews might attend to these prophecies; nay, it was necessary to drive as it were with a hammer into their minds what would have been otherwise incredible; for they deemed it a fable that the Moabites could thus be broken, laid waste, and reduced to nothing. The Prophet then would have labored in vain, or spoken ineffectually, had he described in simple and plain words what we here read. But he added vehemence to his words, as though he would drive in his words with a hammer and fasten them in the minds of the people.

He then says, that Moab was ashamed, because he was smitten And then he turns again to address their neighbors, Howl, cry, and declare in Aroer: but the Prophet ironically exhorted others to howl and cry; for, as we have said, it was not his purpose to show that they deserved pity who had been the most cruel enemies to God's Church, but to show that God's vengeance would be so dreadful as to call forth cryings and howlings through the whole neighborhood. And then he adds, Declare it in Aroer; and afterwards he names many cities; as though he had said, that no corner of the land would be free from fear and anxiety, because the enemies, after having made an inroad into one part, would turn to another, so as to make no end of ravaging, until they had destroyed the whole country and all the people. Of these cities and of their situation there is no need of saying much, for it would be a useless labor. For in the last place, the Prophet sufficiently shews that what he had in view was what I have stated; for he says, on all the cities of Moab, remote as well as near: he intimates that no part of the land would be exempted from destruction; for the enemies having begun to attack it, would not cease until they had gone through every part, and desolation had spread everywhere, as though the whole country had been burnt with fire. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 48:25

25. The horn of Moab is cut off, and his arm is broken, saith the LORD.

25. Succisum est cornu Moab, et robor ejus confractum, dicit Jehova.

By another metaphor he expresses the same thing. By horn he means power, as all who are in any measure acquainted with Scripture well know that by this word is set forth power, strength, or any defense for the protection of a nation. He then says that the horn of Moab was cut off; and he adds afterwards as all explanation, that his strength was broken Hence by this second clause we understand what the Prophet meant when he said, that the horn of Moab was cut off. But he again introduces God as the speaker, because the Moabites thought that their horn could not be broken. As then Jeremiah would not have obtained credit, had he spoken in his own name, he again brought forward God as declaring his own words. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 48:26-27

26. Make ye him drunken; for he magnified himself against the LORD: Moab also shall wallow in his vomit, and he also shall be in derision.

26. Inebriate ipsum, quia adversus Jehovam magnificatus est, et complosit Moab in vomitu suo (vel, involvit se,) et ipse quoque in derisum (vel, in ludibrium: adjungamus etiam alterum versum.)

27. For was not Israel a derision unto thee? was he found among thieves? for since thou spakest of him, thou skippedst for joy.

27. Annon in risum fuit tibi Israel? an inter fures deprehensus fuit? quia ex quo sermo tuus de eo fuit, commovisti to.

The Prophet now addresses the Chaldeans, who were to be the executioners of God's vengeance: hence he says, Make him drunk, because he has magnified himself against Jehovah, that is, raised himself in his pride against God. Then the Prophet, as God's herald, encouraged the Chaldeans, fully to execute God's judgment, who had been chosen to be his servants. And the address had more force in it when the

Prophet showed that such a command was committed to him, as we have seen elsewhere; for the Prophets showed how efficacious was their doctrine, when they besieged and stormed cities, when they gave orders to armies. This then is the course which Jeremiah now follows, when as God's herald he summons the Chaldeans, and commands them vigorously to perform what God approved and what he had decreed, even to inebriate the Moabites with evils. The rest to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant Almighty God, that we may learn, not only to consider thy judgments when they appear before our eyes, but also to fear them whenever they are announced, so that we may implore thy mercy, and also repent of our sins and patiently bear thy paternal chastisements, and never murmur when thou sparest for a time the ungodly, but wait with calm and resigned minds until the time comes when thou wilt execute vengeance on them, and when in the meantime thou wilt gather us at the end of our warfare into the blessed rest above, and give us to enjoy that inheritance which thou hast prepared for us in Heaven, and which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventy-first

We began yesterday to explain why the Prophet, denouncing on the Moabites the punishment they had deserved, directed his speech to the Chaldeans, even that his prophecy might have greater force and produce greater effect. The metaphor of drunkenness which he uses, is common; for when Scripture intimates that any are made miserable, as they say, to satiety, or more than what can be well borne, it compares them to those who are made drunk. For as a drunken man loses his senses, so they who are overwhelmed with miseries, are almost stunned with evils, so that they become deprived of reason and judgment. This then is the drunkenness which the Prophet now mentions. And following up the same idea, he adds, And Moab is rolled in his own vomit Some by vomit understand intemperate joy, and render the words in the past tense, ``And Moab shouted in his own vomit,'' that is, he luxuriated in his own abundance, and when he gorged himself with wine and with all kinds of luxuries, he loudly exulted; and therefore he shall be also a reproach This contrast is not unsuitable, that Moab immediately exulted when in prosperity, and that therefore God would shortly punish him, so as to make him a reproach or a derision.

But I follow what has been generally approved, that Moab shall be rolled, or shall clap hands even in his own vomit: so that by vomit the Prophet means excessive grief. For the drunkard delights in drinking, but afterwards by vomiting he suffers the punishment of his intemperance, when his head, his stomach, his legs and other members shake and tremble. So also, it is no unsuitable comparison, when the Prophet calls sorrow, arising from calamity, vomiting. He then says, that when Moab shall clap his hands, or roll himself [372] (for the word is variously rendered) in his own

[372] The word has no other meaning than that of smiting, striking, or clapping the hand. A drunkard rejoices by clapping his hands, even in his filth, and thus makes himself an object of ridicule and derision; or he may strike his hands in agony: but it is by the first he renders himself ridiculous, the thing evidently intended here. It is observed justly by Blayney, that the first verb in the verse is in the singular number, used for the plural; and he regarded this verb to be the same; and his version is, — And clap at Moab in his vomiting. The objection to

miseries, he shall be even a derision Why he says, that he would be a derision, we may learn from the next verse, for he says, Has not Israel been a derision to thee?

But the higher cause for the drunkenness mentioned here ought to be observed, even because Moab exalted himself against God. For after having spoken of the pride through which he exulted over God, he adds an explanation, Has not Israel been a derision to thee? See then how the Moabites acted proudly towards God, even because they treated his Church reproachfully. And this ought especially to be noticed; for God intimates by these words, that he is so connected with the faithful as to regard their cause as his own, as it is said elsewhere,

``He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of my eye.'' (Zechariah 2:8)

God then so takes the faithful under his own protection, that whatever injury is done to them, he counts it as done to him. This connection is well expressed by the Prophet, when he says, ``The Moabites have raised themselves against God;'' and at the same time he shews the way and manner, even because they exulted over the Israelites. Were any one to object and say, that the Moabites injured mortal men only and not God; the answer has already been given, even that God has so adopted his Church as to identify himself with it. Let us then know, that God, when he sees us suffering anything unjustly, regards the wrong as done to himself. As then the people of Israel had been a derision to the Moabites, the Prophet threatens them with a similar punishment for their pride.

And then he adds, Has he been found among thieves? It is, indeed, certain, that the people of Israel deserved very severe scourges, and that when they were subjected to so many adversities, a just reward was rendered to them for their iniquities. With regard to God this is certain; but with regard to the Moabites, the people of Israel were innocent; for these ungodly men could not object anything to the Israelites, for they were altogether like them, or even worse. God then compares here his chosen people with aliens, and says that the Israelites were not thieves. Under one thing he comprehends everything, as though he had said, ``Of what wickedness have the Israelites been guilty, that you have thus become so enraged against them?'' We hence see what the words of the Prophet mean, even that the Moabites were impelled by nothing but cruelty and pride, when they so basely raged against the Israelites, and so disdainfully oppressed them; for as I have already said, there was no cause why the Moabites should have been so hostile to the miserable people. Thus their crime was doubled, for they acted proudly towards God's people, and they acted thus without a cause; for with regard to them, God's people were innocent.

By saying that they were moved, or excited whenever they spoke of the Israelites, he intimates that they were carried away by malevolence, so as to wish all kinds of evil to the miserable, and then, as far as they could, to lay snares for them. As then they thus raged furiously against the Israelites, the Prophet includes everything of

this is, the verb in this sense is not used without a preposition after it; see Lamentations 2:15: otherwise this would suit the passage: it was suggested by Gataker. — Ed.

this kind in the word ``moved,'' or raised an uproar. [373] It follows ---

Jeremiah 48:28

28. O ye that dwell in Moab, leave the cities, and dwell in the rock, and be like the dove that maketh her nest in the sides of the hole's mouth.

28. Deserite urbes, et habitate in petra (hoc est, in rupibus) habitatores Moab, et erunt quasi columba, quae nidulatur in transgressionibus (hoc est,) trans os fissurae.

Here Jeremiah denounces exile on the Moabites; as though he had said, that such would be the desolation of their land, that they would be forced as wanderers to flee here and there. That he bids them to leave their cities, this is not done in the same way as when God commands his people what is right; but he only shews that he was armed with the sword of God, not only to speak with the mouth, but also to perform what he foretells; for the execution ought not to be separated from the prophecies, for the hand of God is joined with his mouth. When, therefore, he announces anything by his servants, the fulfillment also, as it has been stated, is included.

This is the import of the words, Leave the cities, and dwell among the rocks; that is, Hide yourselves in lurking-places, for no habitable land will afford you rest, or be a convenient place to flee to. And they shall be, he says, like a dove which makes a nest in remote places beyond the clefts of the rocks, or stones. He means the most deserted places. It is the same as though he had said, that it would not be simply an exile that God would allot to the Moabites, but that they would be taken away to regions unknown, and deserted by men. It follows ---

Jeremiah 48:29

29. We have heard the pride of Moab, (he is exceeding proud) his loftiness, and his arrogancy, and his pride, and the haughtiness of his heart.

29. Audivimus superbiam Moab; superbit valde fastum ejus (vel, arrogantiam ejus) et superbiam ejus (nomen est etiam ejusdem significationis, et ab eadem radice, quemadmodum si quis diceret ferocitatem et ferociam, tantum pronuntiatione differunt istoe voces) et altitudinem cordis.

Here the Prophet intimates by anticipation, that how much soever the Moabites might boast, they could not, by their boastings and their pride, so succeed that God should not appear against them as a Judge. We have said already, that as the Moabites had been long in a quiet state, what the Prophet denounced on them, appeared at the first hearing as incredible. It is then by way of anticipation that he says, that the Moabites were proud, did swell with haughtiness, and breathed much arrogance, that, in short, they manifested high and lofty spirits. When the Prophet says all this, and adds, that nothing would avail them, we see that he meets those doubts which might have possessed weak minds, so as to prevent them to believe his prophecy.

And when he uses the words, We have heard, he not only means by report, but that the Moabites loudly boasted, as it is usual with proud men; for they made, so to speak, a bellowing, and sought, even by their tongues alone, to strike others with terror. As then they proclaimed their wealth and their power, they sought in

[373] The Vulg. and the Targ. give the best version of these words, — Surely for the abundance of thy words against him, thou shalt be quickly removed, or, led captive. Then, in the following verse, Moab is bidden to quit his cities — Ed.

a manner to shake the very air, so that all might tremble at their voice alone. This seems to have been expressed by the Prophet, when he said, We have heard In short, Jeremiah does not mean that the report of the pride of Moab had spread abroad, as rumors often fly respecting the haughtiness and boastings of men; but he intimates that the Moabites were heralds of their own power, so that they spoke in lofty terms of their own greatness, and thus their own tongues testified of their haughtiness and arrogance. [374] And hence it was that the Prophet enlarged on their pride; Moab is very proud, he says; we have heard his haughtiness, his pride and his arrogance, (though it be the same word,) and the loftiness of his heart, or, as we may say in Latin, et altos spiritus, and his high sprits. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 48:30

30. I know his wrath, saith the LORD; but it shall not be so; his lies shall not so effect it

30. Ego cognovi, dicit Jehova, insolentiam ejus; et mendacia ejus non rectitudo; non sic facient.

This verse is variously explained, at least the second clause. Some render it, ``His indignation, and not what is right;'' then they add by itself, ``his lies;'' and lastly, ``they have not done rightly,'' or as others, ``they will not do anything fixed,'' which is more suitable, and comes near to the rendering which I have given. But I will not here discuss other interpretations, or try at large to disprove-them, but it is sufficient for us to understand the real meaning of the Prophet.

In the first place, God is here introduced as saying, I know his insolence The pronoun {אני}, ani, is emphatical, for in the last verse the Prophet had said, that the boastings of Moab were a terror, as they spoke loudly of their own strength and defences. As then they thus with open mouths sounded forth their own praises, they filled all their neighbors with terror; hence the Prophet said, We have heard the pride of Moab Now God also on his part gives this answer, I know, he says, his insolence; as though he had said, ``The Moabites do not thus boast, but that I am a witness; all these things ascend to my tribunal.''

He afterwards adds, still in the person of God, Not rectitude are his lies By the word {עברתו}, obertu, which some render, ``his indignation,'' the Prophet means, I think, insolence. It signifies properly excess, as it comes from {עבר}, ober, to pass over. The noun is indeed often taken to express indignation, because anger keeps within no limits, but is, as Horace says, a momentary madness. [375] But on account of what the passage seems to require, I render it insolence, and it is the most suitable word. And God having declared that the insolence of Moab was seen by him, mentions also his lies The word {בדים}, means branches of trees, and sometimes sons or children,

[374] Our version in Isaiah 16:6, where the same form of words occurs, is, "We have heard of," though here the "of" is dropped, and thus the meaning of Calvin is conveyed, which is favored by the early versions. The verse may be thus literally rendered, — We have heard the arrogance of Moab; Very arrogant has been his insolence and arrogance; Yea, his arrogantness and the loftiness of his heart. The word for "arrogance" means swelling; it is to grow big, and to claim more than what belongs to us. Then "insolence" signifies to rise high, so as to look down on others with contempt. Arrogance is first, then insolence: and in the last line the two are inverted, and with this difference, the disposition is denoted in the last line, and the acting in the former. — Ed.

[375] Ira furor brevis est — Epist. 2 ad Loll.

they being members of the community; and hence some render it ``sons'' here, as though the Prophet had said, that after the Moabites had been cut off, there would be none remaining to continue their name in the world. As then there was to be no posterity to the Moabites, they think that {בדים}, badim here means sons or children. But this view cannot be admitted, because we shall hereafter see that there was to be some residue to the Moabites. We cannot then take {בדים}, badim, but as referring to their vain boastings, for they were nothing but lies.

But we must consider what Jeremiah says; the word {כן}, ken, means right; and I take the two words as being in apposition, ``His lies are not right;'' that is, there is no stability in his lies. For when an apposition is explained, one of the words is turned to an adjective, or a preposition is inserted: Not right then are his lies; that is, in his lies there is no rectitude, or in his lies there is no stability. But the rectitude of which the Prophet now speaks, refers not to justice or equity, but to stability; and that it has this meaning may be gathered from other places. Then he says, that the boastings which the Moabites indulged in were vain, because God would not establish what they thought, or as they commonly say, what they presumed.

And then he adds the reason; the particle {כן}, ken, is to be taken here adverbially; it is an adverb of likeness, ``so,'' or thus, they shall not so do; that is, as they had conceived in their minds. It is a confirmation of the last clause; for why was there to be no stability in their lies? because God would break down the Moabites, so that their counsels would be vain, without any effect. We now then perceive the meaning of the words. Isaiah 16:6 uses nearly the same expressions, but he does not add this confirmation, that they would not be able to do what they intended. He only says, ``there shall no rectitude be in their boastings,'' {בדיו} {כן} {לא}, la ken bediu, having previously spoken of the loftiness of their heart and of their ferocity and insolence; for he mentions the third word with the other two. [376]

Now this verse may be accommodated to our use; whenever the ungodly indulge in boasting, and insolently arrogate all things to themselves, let us not fear and tremble, but bear in mind what the Prophet teaches us here, whose admonition is very necessary; for he shews that this pride is in derision with God, and that when the ungodly fulminate in a terrible manner, there will be no effect to their lies. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 48:31

31. Therefore will I howl for Moab, and I will cry out for all Moab; mine heart shall mourn for the men of Kirheres.

31. Propterea super Moab ululabo, et ad Moab totum (hoc est, penitus ad totam gentem) clamabo, meditabor ad viros urbis testae.

Some think the last word to be a proper name, though, according to etymology, it is ``the city of potsherd.'' They therefore give this rendering, ``the strong city.'' But Isaiah calls it ``Kir-hareseth,'' {הרשת}-{קיר}; he extends the word by adding a

[376] The versions and the Targ. all differ as to this verse. The Vulg. is the best; it takes {בדים}, branches, and also limbs, in a metaphorical sense, signifying strength. I give the following rendering, --- 30. I know, saith Jehovah, his excess, (i.e. of pride;) But not so his strength, not so have they done. The mixture of numbers, singular and plural, is common in the prophets --- ``his'' and ``they.'' The meaning seems to be, that however excessive was the pride and insolence of Moab, they had no power fully to effect their purposes. - Ed.

syllable to it; but the word, however, is the same. Then he says, I will think of the men of Kir-cheres The word {הגה}, ege, is properly to complain, to whisper, to murmur; and hence some render the words not improperly, ``I will mutter to the men of the city of potsherd.'' [377]

The Prophet does not relate here what he would do, as I have before reminded you; but that he might represent to the life the ruin of Moab, he mentions their howling, crying, and complaints. He then says, I will howl, cry aloud, and with a trembling voice complain, as those who are grievously oppressed with evils; at one time they complain, cry aloud, and howl, and at another they mutter inwardly, grumble and murmur. Thus the Prophet assumes the character of such persons, in order that he might more fully set forth the extreme calamity of that nation. He afterwards comes to particulars: ---

Jeremiah 48:32

32. O vine of Sibmah, I will weep for thee with the weeping of Jazer: thy plants are gone over the sea, they reach even to the sea of Jazer: the spoiler is fallen upon thy summer-fruits and upon thy vintage.

32. A fletu Jaezer flebo (vel, a planctu plangam) tibi (id est, super to) vitis Sibmah; propagines tuae penetrarunt ultra mare (trajecerunt mare,) usque ad mare Jaezer (hoc est, cives Jaezer, vel propagines) attigerunt; super aestivales (vel, aestivos) fructus tuos (vel, messes proprie,) et super vindemias tuas irruit vastator.

Here the Prophet shews more clearly what he had said generally before, that Sibmah would weep for her vines, after having wept for Jazer. These were cities in the land of Moab, as it appears from other places. Some give this rendering, ``In comparison with the weeping'' or mourning, etc.; and {מן}, men, as it is well known, has this meaning; but as {ב}, beth, ``in weeping,'' is adopted by Isaiah, instead of {מן}, men, there is no doubt but that the Prophet means a continued mourning, when he says, From (or with) the weeping of Jazer I will weep for thee, vine of Sibmah; that is, there will be no end to weeping; for after the Moabites had mourned for the destruction of the city Jazer, a new cause of weeping would arise, for other cities would be destroyed, and especially Sibmah.

Now the region of Sibmah was very fertile, especially on account of the abundance of vines. Then the Prophet includes the whole wealth of that city under the word vine; nay, he designates the citizens as its shoots or young branches. I will weep, he says, ``over thee, the vine of the vine-bearing region of Sibmah; for thy shoots, that is, thy wealth, have passed over the sea, and the citizens of Jazer, who were thy neighbors.'' He afterwards repeats respecting the city of Jazer what he had said, because its calamity was connected with the other, and was the same. For God had involved these two cities in the same destruction. Jazer then came even to the sea. Now a waster rushed in: Isaiah has shouting, {הידד}, eidad, which is added presently here; but the word there has quite a different meaning, that all rejoicing would cease.

[377] This paragraph has been transplanted from the text. The verbs here are imperatives in the Sept and Syr., "Howl ye," etc.; and in the future tense in the Targ., "they shall howl, etc. The Vulg., is according to the Hebrew. The last verb is in the third person, "He (Moab) will mourn for the men of Kir-heres." This city was on the extremity of Moab northward, as Jazer was on its extremity southward. — Ed.

The word here is {שדד}, shidad, and means a waster or spoiler. A waster then has fallen, that is, has come with great irresistible force, on thy vintages and harvests; that is, that he may scatter and consume all things. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 48:33

33 And joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab; and I have caused wine to fail from the winepresses: none shall tread with shouting; their shouting shall be no shouting.

33. Et tolletur laetitia et exultatio ab agro fertili (neque enim est hic proprium loci nomen; scio quidem montem Carmelum esse celebrem, sed hic accipitur appellative, quia agitur de regione Moab; sicut explicative continuo post additur proprium nomen regionis,) a terra Moab (inquit Propheta,) et vinum e torcularibus cessare faciam (loquitur adhuc in persona Dei,) non calcabit cum cantico, cantico, non erit canticum.

He pursues the same metaphor or comparison; for he says that all places would be laid waste and desolate, which before had been valuable and highly regarded on account of their fruitfulness. Cease then shall all rejoicing from the land of Moab, however fruitful it might have been. And then he adds, I will make the wine to cease from the presses; that is, no one shall press the grapes, that from them the wine may flow. And he adds, {הידד} {הידד}, eidad, eidad, shouting, shouting, for there will be no shouting Some render {הידד}, eidad, ``signal,'' celeuma, (vel celeusma,) a Greek word, but used also in Latin: {κέλευμα} is said by the Greeks to be the shouting of sailors, especially when they drive to the shore; they then rouse one another in rowing, and also congratulate one another, because they are nigh to land; for to see the harbor is a cause of special joy to sailors, as though it were a restoration to life and safety. But this word {κέλευμα} is applied to other things, as it may be said that reapers sing a celeusma when they finish their work. The vine-dressers had also their songs; and they were sung by heathen nations, as Virgil says. ``Now the worn-out vine-dresser sings at the extreme rows of vines.'' [378] By extreme rows or ranks he seems to mean the extreme parts of the vines; for extreme rows (antes) are properly prominences or overhanging stones. Now when they had come to the end, they sang and congratulated themselves as to the vintage. It was then a common custom among all nations.

The Prophet, now alluding to this, says, ``They who shall tread in the winepress shall not be as usual joyful, so as to have their shouting, shouting, {הידד} {הידד}, eidad, eidad.'' He repeats the word, because men greatly exult at the vintage, and are excessive in their rejoicings. This is the reason why the Prophet mentions the word twice. He then adds, there shall be no shouting, {הידד} {לא}, la eidad, because there would be no vineyards. Isaiah uses other expressions, but the meaning is the same. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 48:34

34. From the cry of Heshbon even unto Elealeh, and even unto Jahaz, have they uttered their voice, from Zoar even unto Horonaim, as an heifer of three years old: for the waters also of Nimrim shall be desolate.

34. A clamore Hesebon usque ad Elealeh, ad Jahaes edent (ediderunt, ad verbum)

[378] Jam canit extremos effœtus vinitor antes. — Geor. 2:417.

vocem suam; a Zoar ad Choronaim vitula triennis (aut, vitulam triennem;) quia etiam aquae Nimrim in vastationem erunt (in ariditatem scilicet.)

He continues the same subject; and by many and various expressions confirms the same thing, in order that the faithful might know that the destruction of the Moabites was really foretold, and that they might feel more assured that God announced nothing but what he would presently execute.

At the cry of Heshbon even to Elealeh they shall send forth their voice. He means, as before, that there would be continued cryings and howlings sounding forth from every part, and spreading through every region. He then adds, From Zoar to Horonaim We must bear in mind the situations of these cities; but we may suppose that the Prophet chose those cities which were opposite to each other. Then from one corner to the other continual crying would be heard, because there would be everywhere desolation and ruin. And then he comes to another part, from one city even to another there would be a similar cry. In short, he shews that no part in the whole land of Moab would be in a quiet state and free from miseries. This is the meaning.

But he compares the whole land of Moab, or the city Horonaim, to an heifer three years old, on account of its lasciviousness. Some restrict the comparison to the city Horonaim, for they read the words in apposition, ``to Heronaim, an heifer three years old,'' putting the last words in the accusative case: but others read them apart, ``an heifer three years old'' is Moab. And I prefer this construction, because he afterwards adds another city, even Nimrim. As, however, it is a matter of no great moment, I will not contend with any one who may take the other view. Whether then it be one city or the whole country, it is compared to an heifer three years old, because that nation had long luxuriated in its own pleasures. Now, an heifer three years old, as it is well known, frisks and leaps, because it knows not what it is to fear the yoke; and then it is not worn out, as the case is with cows, who are weakened by having often brought forth young; and further, the milk that is taken from them exhausts their strength. But all heifer three years old is in her rigor and prime. In short, the Prophet intimates that the Moabites lived well, and as it were unrestrained, for they had long exulted in their abundance; and as they had plenty of wine and bread, they gave themselves up to luxury. [379]

He then adds, Surely even the waters of Nimrim shall be a desolation Some think Nimrim to have been a city, and it is elsewhere called Nimra. Its waters are also mentioned by Isaiah, as the brooks of the willows. We may hence conclude that these waters were perpetual and flowed continually. But the Prophet speaks metaphorically as before, for the meaning is, that nothing would be so safe in the land of Moab as not to be destroyed, that nothing would be so fruitful as not to be dried up. Then by the waters of Nimrim he means the abundance which was in the whole country. For the Chaldeans did not dry up that river or those lakes, for it is certainly unknown whether there was a river there or a lake. But it is probable that there was there abundance of waters, which were not dried up by the coming of an hostile army; but, as I have said, he shews by these figurative expressions that the whole land of

[379] A reason more suitable to the passage has been given for this comparison, — that Moab in its distress is compared to an heifer lowing for want of pasture and especially of water, for it follows that the waters of Nimrim would be dried up. See Isaiah 15:5, 6 — Ed.

Moab would be laid waste. It follows ---

Jeremiah 48:35

35. Moreover I will cause to cease in Moab, saith the LORD, him that offereth in the high places, and him that burneth incense to his gods.

35. Et cessare faciam (id est profligabo) ex Moab, inquit Jehova, eum qui offert in excelso, et qui adolet (aut, suffitum facit) diis suis.

In this verse the Prophet expresses what he had before referred to, that God would become in such a way the avenger of the pride and cruelty of the Moabites as to punish them for their superstitions. They had descended from a pious father, for they were the posterity of Lot; but they had renounced the worship of the only true God, and had defiled themselves with the pollutions of heathens. Justly then does God declare that he would be the avenger of idolatry, while executing punishment on the pride and cruelty of the Moabites.

Now this passage, as innumerable others, clearly shews that idolatry and all profanation of divine worship, cannot finally escape punishment. God may indeed for a time connive at it, but he must necessarily at last appear as the vindicator of his own glory in punishing superstitions. But, if he spared not the Moabites, to whom the law had not, been given, and who had been corrupted through many long years, how shall they now escape unpunished, to whom God's Word is daily propounded, and in whose ears it sounds? Let, us then remember that superstitions cannot be endured, for God will at length vindicate his own glory with regard to these abominations; for every superstition is nothing less than a profanation of God's glory, which is thus transferred to idols and vain inventions.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast once deigned to receive us under thy protection, we may have thee as our defense against our enemies, and that the more cruel and ferocious they become, and that the more heavily thou chastisest them, we may thus find that thou carest for our salvation, and flee also to thee with greater confidence, and that when we have experienced thy mercy, we may more readily give thee continual thanks, through Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventy-second

Jeremiah 48:36

36. Therefore mine heart shall sound for Moab like pipes, and mine heart shall sound like pipes for the men of Kirheres: because the riches that he hath gotten are perished.

36. Propterea cor meum propter Moab tanquam tibiae resonabit, et cor meum ad viros Kir-cheres (vel, urbis testaceae, ut dictum fuit) sicuti tibiae resonabit, quoniam thesaurus quem fecerunt, perierunt (ad verbum est, residuum fecit, perierunt; sed loquitur de thesauris reconditis, quemadmodum patet ex simili loco Isaiae, capite 15.)

Here the Prophet, as it has been before stated, does not mourn the calamity of the people of Moab, but assumes the character of others, so that the event might appear more evident, it being set as it were before our eyes; for as we have said, the wealth of the Moabites was so great at that time, that it dazzled the eyes of all. It

was then difficult for the faithful to form an idea of this vengeance of God, therefore the Prophet transfers to himself the feelings of others, and relates what the Moabites would do, when God had so grievously afflicted them.

My heart, he says, shall sound like pipes Some think that mournful pipes are meant, but I know not whether or not they were instruments of this kind; and there are those who think that {חלים}, chellim, were bag-pipes, but what is too refined I leave. The Prophet simply means that such would be the trepidation, that the hearts of the Moabites would make a noise like pipes. He repeats the same thing in different words, that his heart would make a noise, or sound, for the men of Kir-heres, of which city we spoke yesterday.

He now adds, for the residue which they have made, or which Moab has made, for the verb is in the singular number; and then, they have perished, where also there is a change of number; but the reference is to the word ``residue,'' {יתרת}, iteret, which included hidden treasures, as we have stated. [380] Whatever then the Moabites had gained for themselves, and whatever they thought would be always safe, the Prophet declares that it would perish. Isaiah adds, ``their substance,'' {פקותם}, pekotem, and says, that they would carry it to the willows, that is, to deserted places; as though he had said, that all the wealth of the Moabites would be scattered, as though it were, as they say, a thing forsaken. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 48:37

37. For every head shall be bald, and every beard clipped: upon all the hands shall be cuttings, and upon the loins sackcloth.

37. Quia omni capiti calvitium, et omni barbae rasura (ad verbum diminutio; {ערג} significat diminuere, sed hic accipitur, pro rasura,) et super omnes manus incisiones, et super lumbos saccus.

The Prophet describes at large a very great mourning. They were wont in great sorrow to pull off their hair, to shave their beard, and to put on sackcloth, or to gird it round their loins, and also to cut their hands with a knife or with their nails. As these things were signs of grief; Jeremiah puts them all together, in order to show that the calamity of Moab would not be common, but what would cause to the whole people extreme lamentation. They shall make bald, he says, their heads, their beard they shall pull off, or shave; for the word, to diminish, may signify either. Then he adds, the incisions in the hands; they shall tear their faces and their hands with their nails, or as some say, with a knife or a razor. As to sackcloth, it was also a sign of mourning. It is indeed certain that it was formerly the practice for men, as though it was innate in human nature, in great calamities to spread ashes on the head and to put on sackcloth. But he has added other excesses which are not very congenial to nature, for it is not agreeable to humanity to pull off the beard, to make bald the head, or to tear the hands and the face with the nails. These things show excesses, suitable neither to men nor to women, --- not to women on the ground of modesty, nor to men on the ground of manliness and strength of mind.

[380] As to this clause, widely different are all the versions; the Targ. gives the general sense. The word {{יתרת is evidently plural, the {ו} being wanting. ``Reserves,'' as given by Blayney, is an exact rendering, --- Because the reserves he had made have perished. Connected with this word is another in Isaiah 15:7, which means ``deposits;'' both signify the wealth or treasures they had laid up. --- Ed.

But mankind never control themselves, and whether they mourn or rejoice, they are ever led away to excesses, observing no moderation. There was also another evil connected with sackcloth and ashes; for when it was God's design to lead men by these symbols to humble themselves, to consider their sins and to flee to his mercy, they were diverted to another end, even that he who mourned might appear miserable to others, and make a display of his weeping and tears. In short, besides excess, there was also this common evil, even hypocrisy. For men ever turn aside to what is vain, and dissemble in all things. But in this place there is no reason to dispute about mourning, for the Prophet means only that the Moabites would become most miserable, exhibiting all the symptoms of sorrow. It follows ---

Jeremiah 48:38

38 There shall be lamentation generally upon all the housetops of Moab, and in the streets thereof: for I have broken Moab like a vessel wherein is no pleasure, saith the LORD.

38. Super omnia tecta Moab, et in compitis ejus omnino planctus (hoc est, ubique; {כלה} sumitur adverbialiter,) quoniam confregi Moab tanquam vas quod non est in pretio (ad verbum, non desiderium in ipso, tanquam vas quod contemnitur, quod non appetitur,) dicit Jehova.

The Prophet at the beginning of the verse continues the same subject, that the Moabites would weep and lament throughout all their houses and in all their streets The reason is added in the second clause, because God would bring a severe judgment on that nation.

By saying that there would be lamentation on all the roofs, he refers to what was customary at that time, for they had their walks on the roofs or tops of their houses. Then he says, that the Moabites, in order to be more seen and to excite pity, would ascend on the roofs, and cry, howl, and lament there. But we must observe what is added, that the calamity would come from God; for it would not have been sufficient to foretell adversity, except this was added, that God ascended his tribunal to execute his judgments when he thus chastised the people. He also compares the people of Moab to a despised vessel, in order to make a distinction between God's children and aliens; for God does also chastise his own people when they sin, but he ceases not to love them and to regard them as precious. Now he says that Moab would be a vessel despised and rejected. [381] It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 48:39

39. They shall howl, saying, How is it broken down! how hath Moab turned the back with shame! so shall Moab be a derision and a dismaying to all them about him.

39. Quomodo contritus est? ululabunt (alii vertunt, ululârunt:) quomodo vertit cervicem Moab; pudefactus est; et fuit Moab in derisum, et in terrorem omnibus qui sunt in circuitu.

The Prophet still speaks in the person of others, and according to their feelings and not his own. He then says, that howling, they would say, through wonder, How

[381] All the versions and Targ. read, "as a useless vessel;" but the Hebrew is, "as a vessel without delight in it," i.e., as a vessel which has nothing pleasing or agreeable in it. — Ed.

is it that Moab has been so broken, that all had turned their backs, that Moab had become ashamed? He indirectly intimates, that though no one could then know God's judgment, which he now foretells, yet God would by the event prove that he had said nothing but in earnest. This wonder then was expressed for this purpose, that the Jews might know, that though the calamity of Moab would fill all with astonishment, and make them cry out as respecting an extraordinary thing, ``What can this mean?'' yet the fulfillment of his prophecy would be certain.

This is the meaning of the words when he says, Howling, they will cry out, How has Moab been broken? and how has he turned his neck, or as they say, his back? Moab is ashamed; and then, he is made a derision, which we have observed before. He adds, a terror, though some read, ``a bruising;'' but more suitable is fear or terror. For the Prophet means, that Moab would be to others a derision, and that he would be to others a dread, being an example of God's awful judgment. [382] And he says that he would be a terror to all around, that is, to the whole surrounding country, as well as a laughter and a derision. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 48:40

40. For thus saith the LORD, Behold, he shall fly as an eagle, and shall spread his wings over Moab.

40. Quia sic dicit Jehova, Ecce tanquam aquila volabit, et expandet alas suas super Moab.

Here again he introduces God's name, for it was necessary to confirm an incredible prophecy by his authority. ``God is he,'' he says, ``who declares that enemies will come, who will fly through all the land of Moab.'' He now compares the Chaldeans to eagles; and there is here a name understood which is not expressed. Fly will he like an eagle, that is, the king of Babylon with his army.

The sum of what is said then is, that however widely extended might be the country of Moab, yet there would be no corner into which the Chaldeans would not penetrate, because they would nearly equal the eagles in swiftness. Hence he adds, They will extend their wings, not to cherish, as eagles spread their wings over their young ones; but by extension he means, that they would seize on all the land of Moab; so that hiding places would be sought in vain, because the Chaldeans would from one part to another take possession of every place, however remote the Moabites might think it to be, and however they might hope its distance would render it safe. He afterwards adds, ---

Jeremiah 48:41

41. Kerioth is taken, and the strong holds are surprised, and the mighty men's hearts in Moab at that day shall be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

41. Captae sunt urbes (est hic etiam mutatio numeri, sed dura esset translatio ad verbum, ideo satis est sensum tenere; captae ergo sunt urbes, hoc est, unaquaeque urbs capta est, deinde,) arces (vel, propugnacula) comprehensa sunt (est iterum mutatio numeri,) et fuit cor virorum Moab in die illa tanquam cor mulieris quae angitur (vel, premitur anxietate.)

[382] The literal rendering is as follows, — How broken! they howled; How has Moab turned the back ashamed! Thus Moab has become a derision And a terror to all around him. The past tense is used for the future. — Ed.

I have already reminded you, that the Prophet is not using too many words in this extended discourse, for it was necessary to confirm at large what all would have otherwise rejected. He then says, that the cities of Moab were taken, that strongholds were seized He mentions these things expressly, because the country of Moab thought that it was defended by cities and strongholds; and they thus thought, ``Should the Chaldeans come and make an irruption, there are many cities who will oppose them; they will then have to spend much time in overcoming these obstacles. It may then so happen, that being broken down with fatigue they will return to their own country, and we shall recover what we may have lost.'' With this confidence then the Moabites deceived themselves, when they looked on their well fortified cities and strongholds. For this reason the Prophet now says, Taken are the cities, and seized on are the strongholds [383]

There was another thing of which the Moabites boasted, that they possessed military valor; and yet they had not of late made a trial of their strength, as they had been indulging themselves in sloth and pleasures. But as they had formerly performed deeds worthy of being remembered, they despised, as I have said, their enemies, arrogating to themselves the credit of great valor. The Prophet, on the other hand, declares that their courage would vanish away: The heart, he says, of the men of Moab shall become effeminate in that day, softer than the heart of a woman, when oppressed with evils. It might have appeared a complete comparison, when he said that the men of Moab would be soft and effeminate; but he wished to express something more, and hence he added, that they would become softer than women when in great trouble. And by these words he intimates, that it is in God's power to melt the hearts of men, and to break down their fierceness, so that they who were like lions are made like does. And this ought to be carefully noticed; because courage is not only a special gift, but it is also necessary that God should daily and constantly strengthen those whom he has once made brave; otherwise they who are courageous above others will soon lose their valor. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 48:42

42. And Moab shall be destroyed from being a people, because he hath magnified himself against the LORD.

42. Et contritus est (perditus, excisus) Moab, ut non sit populus; quia adversus Jehovam sese extulit (magnificatus est., ad verbum.)

He repeats what we have before observed, that the calamity of Moab would be a just reward for his pride and indeed his sacrilege. The Prophet then says that though God's vengeance might seem extremely grievous, yet it was most just, because the Moabites had not only been cruel against their neighbors, but also reproachful against God. Here, then, he condemns them first for cruelty, and then for their impious pride, because they exalted themselves against God

But we must bear in mind the reason noticed before; for the Moabites did not

[383] The literal rendering of the verse is as follows, the nominative case to the two verbs being Moab, taken here as the country, — 41. Taken it is, — the cities; And the strongholds, — it is seized: And become shall the heart of the valiants of Moab, In that day, like the heart of a woman in distress. In our language it would be, “as to its cities,” and, “as to its strongholds.” — Ed.

openly boast that they were equal or superior to God, but when they raised their crests against God's people, they became contumelious against God himself, who had promised to be the protector and the Father of his people. As then the Moabites thus despised the protection and promise of God, they are here justly condemned by the Prophet, that they exalted themselves against God And this ought to be carefully noticed, so that we may not do any wrong to the godly, for God will at length show that he is injured in their persons. And then also no common consolation may be hence derived, that all who molest us are carrying on war against God, and that all who injure us act sacrilegiously towards him. For the Prophet has before explained how the Moabites gloried against God, even because they regarded the children of Israel with derision. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 48:43-44

43. Fear, and the pit, and the snare, shall be upon thee, O inhabitant of Moab, saith the LORD.

43. Terror et fovea et laqueus super to, habitator Moab, dicit Jehova.

44. He that fleeth from the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that getteth up out of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for I will bring upon it, even upon Moab, the year of their visitation, saith the LORD.

44. Qui fugerit a facie terroris incidet in foveam; et qui ascenderit e fovea laqueo capietur; quoniam adducam super eam, super Moab, annum visitationis ipsorum, dicit Jehova.

By these words the Prophet skews, that though the Moabites should adopt many means of escape, yet they should be taken, for God's hand would everywhere entrap them. He mentions terror first, then the pit, and thirdly, the snare, [384] that is, ``Thou wilt be so frightened that terror will compel thee to flee; but when thou fleest, pits will be in the way into which thou wilt fall: but if thou wilt rise from the pit, snares will surround thee, and thou wilt be taken.'' We then see that by these similitudes nothing else is meant but God's judgment, which impended over the Moabites, so that it could by no means be averted by them; for no ways could be found out by which they could escape, because fear would force them to flee, and would, as it is usually the case, deprive them of mind and thought, and thus they would be driven here and there, and could not move from any place without meeting with a pit, and, as it has been said, after the pit there would be the snare.

Now all this has not been expressed without reason, because we know with how many flatteries men are wont to delude themselves when God summons them to judgment; for they immediately look around here and there, and promise themselves impunity, and then they hope for light punishment, as though they were at peace with God. But the unbelieving harden themselves, as Isaiah says, as though they had made a covenant with death and a compact with hell. (Isaiah 28:15.) As, then, the wicked set up security in opposition to God, the Prophet here shews that there are many ways in his hand, by which he can take the fugitives, and those who seem to think that they can escape through their own astuteness; and hence he said, He

[384] There is a striking alliteration in these words, fear, pit, snare — peched, pechet, pech. — Ed.

who flees from terror, that is, from present danger, shall fall into the pit, that is, when the Moabites shall now think themselves secure, they shall meet with new dangers, and new deaths will surround them.

But we must notice what is added at the end of the verse, Because I will bring on Moab the year of their visitation Here God sustains the minds of the godly, that they might not faint on account of long delay. As, then, the faithful might have been worn out with weariness while God prolonged the time as to the Moabites, the Prophet says, ``Come at length shall the year of their visitation.'' For as it has been stated elsewhere, by this mode of speaking God intimates that though he for a time passes by things and connives at them, he will at length show himself to be the judge of the world. We would have God ever to act in haste; and hence, when he exhorts us to patience, all our feelings rebel. This happens, because we do not consider that the fitness of times is determined by his will. Hence he speaks now of the year of visitation, as though he had said, ``I may for a time appear to disregard human affairs and to neglect my own, while my people are cruelly oppressed by the wicked; but the time of visitation will come.'' For by this word ``visitation,'' God means that there are changes, or, as they commonly say, revolutions, which are fixed and certain. We now then understand the design of God, when he says, that he would bring a visitation on the Moabites. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 48:45

45. They that fled stood under the shadow of Heshbon because of the force: but a fire shall come forth out of Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon, and shall devour the corner of Moab, and the crown of the head of the tumultuous ones.

45. In umbra Hesbon steterunt a fortitudine (aut, violentia) fugientes; quia ignis egressus est ex Hesbon, et flamma e medio Sion, et vorabit angulum Moab, et extremitatem et verticem filiorum tumultus.

He confirms what is said in the last verse, that the Moabites would in vain resort to their strongest cities, even Heshbon and Sihon; because a flame would thence break forth, which would consume the whole land. We hence see that God took away from the Moabites all their vain confidences, and showed that no defences could stand against his power, when once he rose up for judgment.

The fleers, he says, shall stand under the shadow of Heshbon, thinking that there would be a safe refuge in that city, and in others. [385] But the particle {כי}, ki, seems not to me to be here causal, but rather an affirmative, or even an adversative; but, or surely a fire has gone forth from Heshbon, and a flame from Sihon The Prophet, I doubt not, borrowed these words from Moses, for he says in Numbers 21:28, that a fire had gone forth from Heshbon; and there the expression is given as an old proverb. There is no doubt but that enemies had triumphed over that city when it was taken; for that whole song spoken by Moses is ironical, and in saying that fire

[385] The word "strength" is here omitted. Calvin's version is, "Under the shadow of Heshbon stood they who had fled from strength," or violence, i.e., of their enemies. Some connect it with "stood," the fugitives "stood for strength," or, "without strength," which, perhaps, is preferable: they stood under the shadow or protection of Heshbon, and obtained no help; so far was this from being the case, that from Heshbon would go forth fire, that is, "the spoiler," or, destroyer, before often mentioned. Then {כי would have its usual meaning, for, as giving a reason why the fugitives remained without strength or help, under the protection of Heshbon. --- Ed

had gone forth, he referred to their counsels, for they thought that city sufficiently strong against enemies. Now the Prophet says, that what had been formerly said of Heshbon would be again fulfilled, that it would be, as it were, the beginning of the fire. The meaning then, as I think, is, that the Moabites indeed thought, that they would have a quiet and agreeable shadow under the protection of the city Heshbon, and of the city Sihon; but what was to be? even that these two cities would become, as it were, the beginnings of the fire. How, or in what way? even because the probability is, that there those counsels were taken which provoked the Chaldeans. We indeed know that riches and power always produce haughtiness and false confidence in men; for in villages and small towns wars are not contrived; but the great cities gather the wood and kindle the fire; and the fire afterwards spreads and pervades the whole land. [386]

This, then, is what our Prophet means, when he says, that fire went forth from Heshbon, even contrary to the expectation of the people, for they thought that were all things to go to ruin, there yet would be safety for them in that city: go forth, he says, shall fire from the city Heshbon, and a flame from the midst of Sihon, and it shall consume the corner of Moab, and all his extremities; for by {קרקר}, kadkad, he means all parts. Extremity is elsewhere taken for a part; but he does not mean that fire would come to all parts or extreme corners, only as it were to touch them slightly: but he intimates that the whole land would be consumed by this fire; it would thus spread itself to its very extremities. [387]

But as I have already said, the Prophet alludes to that old saying mentioned by Moses, (Numbers 21:27, 28.) Further, there is no doubt but that Heshbon and Sihon were then in the possession of that nation; for they had taken away many cities from the Israelites, and thus the children of Israel had been reduced to narrower limits. At length the tribe of Judah alone remained after the overthrow of the kingdom of Israel. When they were driven into Chaldea, it was an easy thing for the Moabites to make that their own which belonged to no one. Besides, as they had helped the Chaldeans and betrayed that miserable people, and had thus acted perfidiously towards their brethren, a reward was given to them. But when at length they themselves dreaded the power of the Babylonian monarchy, they began to change their minds, and endeavored to obstruct the farther progress of the Chaldeans. Hence then a war was contemplated, and the occasion was given. He then speaks of Heshbon and Sihon as chief cities; and there is no doubt but that Sihon derived its name from a king who ruled there. For we know that there was a king bearing this name; but as he speaks here of a place, it is probable, that the king's name was given to the city in order to commemorate it.

He at length adds, that this fire and flame would devour the top of the head of

[386] Most give a different explanation of this fire, that it designated "the spoiler" that was to come on Moab. That fire has often this meaning is evident. See Judges 9:20. — Ed.

[387] The last clause is evidently a quotation from Numbers 24:17: it is not literally the same, but the meaning is so. It is "corner"' here and not "corners," as in Numbers; and the word there is {,קרקר and not {קדקד as here, only there are some copies which have the former word here. In that case, the passage would read thus, --- And it shall devour the corner of Moab, And destroy the sons (or children) of tumult. {שת in Numbers is probably for ,{שאת which means the same as the word here used, coming from the same root, and properly rendered ``tumult.'' This passage is omitted in the Sept.; the Vulg. renders ,{קדקד } ``verticem,'' the crown or top of the head; but the Syr. and Targ. drop the metaphor, and render it ``chiefs'' or nobles. --- Ed

the sons of Saon, or tumult. But he calls the Moabites tumultuous, because they before made a great noise, and were dreaded by their neighbors. As then all their neighbors had been frightened, in a manner, by their voice alone, he calls them sons of tumult, or tumultuous men, from the effect produced. It follows ---

Jeremiah 48:46

46. Woe be unto thee, O Moab! the people of Chemosh perisheth: for thy sons are taken captives, and thy daughters captives.

46. Vae tibi Moab! periit populus Chamos, quia tracti sunt (vel, rapti) filii tui in captivitatem, et filiae tuae in exilium.

Here the Prophet, as he comes to the end of his prophecy, suddenly exclaims, Woe to thee! as though he had said, that words failed him to express the grievousness of God's vengeance. There is then more force in this single expression, than if he had at large described the miseries of that nation. He then adds, The people of Chemosh have perished The Prophet again intimates, that the Moabites vainly confided in their idol, Chemosh; they thought that there would be a sure safety to them from their god, who was, as they commonly say, a tutelar god. But the Prophet says, that their superstition would avail them nothing, for they and their idol would perish together. He exults over this fictitious god, that on the other hand he might extol the power of the only true God. For there is here an implied contrast between the God of Israel and Chemosh whom the Moabites worshipped.

He then adds, Thy sons and thy daughters shall be carried away into captivity The Prophet does not seem here to continue the same subject; for he had said before that ruin or destruction was coming on the Moabites, but he now mitigates that punishment, and speaks only of exile. But as captivity is like death, as it abolishes the name of a nation, he speaks correctly and suitably. And then we must observe, that God, for a time, so executed his vengeance on the Moabites, that he left them some hope as to the future, according to what follows in the last verse ---

Jeremiah 48:47

47. Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the LORD. Thus far is the judgment of Moab.

47. Et reducam captivitatem Moab in fine dierum (hoc est, post longum tempus,) dicit Jehova. Hactenus judicium Moab.

Here, as we see, God gives place to his mercy, so that the Moabites should not wholly perish. At the same time, things which seem to be contrary agree together, even that destruction was nigh the people of Moab, and yet that some would remain alive, who would afterwards renew the name of the nation, as it was God's purpose to restore the Moabites to their former state. These things, as I have said, seem inconsistent, and yet they may be easily reconciled; for it was God's will so to destroy the Moabites, that those who died might not be without hope; and then, those who remained alive were not deemed to be among the living, but in exile they were like the dead. God, indeed, ever supported the godly with hope, even when they were driven into Babylon: but as to the Moabites, the living as well as the dead, had no hope. Why, then, was this promise given? not for the sake of the Moabites; but that the Jews might feel assured that God would at length be propitious to them;

he promises pardon to the Moabites as it were accidentally, so to speak, and thus unavowedly stretches forth his hand to them, but with a design through this mercy to give to the Israelites a taste of his paternal favor. What remains we must reserve for the lecture tomorrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou wert formerly pleased to extend thy mercy to aliens, who were wholly estranged from thee, that the children of Abraham, whom thou didst adopt, might hence have a hope of deliverance, --- O grant, that we may also, at this day, cast our eyes on the many proofs of thy goodness, manifested towards the ungodly and the unworthy, so as to make an application for our own benefit, and never to doubt but that however miserable we may be, thou wilt yet be ever propitious to us, since thou hast deigned to choose us for thy peculiar people, and hast promised to be ever our God and Father in Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventy-Third

We began in our last lecture to explain what the Prophet has said of the restoration of Moab; and we said that some hope of mercy to the unworthy is left here. For though they had in various ways provoked the wrath of God, yet he was unwilling wholly to destroy them; and from that nation also Christ, the Redeemer of the world, derived his origin. Here, then, we have a memorable instance of God's favor, that he did not wholly obliterate that nation, which yet had deserved extreme punishment. We said further, that it was, as it were, accidental that the Prophet promised favor to the Moabites; for we know that the people of Israel were then a people distinct from other nations. God then so disposed of his favor, that when a few drops came to heathens, it was, as it were, adventitious. For it was not his will to cast indiscriminately to all the bread which he had designed for his own children, as Christ also says, that it is not right that the children's bread should be given to dogs. (Matthew 15:26.) God, however, designed to show some preludes of his mercy towards alien nations, when he so directed the promises of salvation to his chosen people as not wholly to exclude the heathens, as we have an example here in the Moabites. We shall hereafter see the same as to the Ammonites. Now follows ---

Jeremiah 49

CHAPTER 49

Jeremiah 49:1

1. Concerning the Ammonites, thus saith the LORD, Hath Israel no sons? hath he no heir? why then doth their king inherit Gad, and his people dwell in his cities?

1. Ad filios Ammon: Sic dicit Jehova, An filii non sunt Israeli? An haeres non est ei? quare haereditate possidet rex eorum Gad et populus ejus in urbibus ejus habitat?

We have said that the Ammonites were not only contiguous to the Moabites, but had also derived their origin from Lot, and were thus connected with them by blood. Their origin was indeed base and shameful, for they were, as it is well known, the offspring of incest. There was, however, the bond of fraternity between them, because both nations had the same father. God had spared them when he brought up his people from Egypt; for in remembrance of the holy man Lot, he would have both peoples to remain uninjured. But ingratitude doubled their crime, for these impious men ceased not in various ways to harass the children of Abraham.: For this reason, therefore, does Jeremiah now prophesy against them.

And we see here, again, the object of this prophecy and the design of the Holy Spirit in announcing it, even that the Israelites might know that they were not so completely cast away by God, but that there remained some remnants of his paternal favor; for if the Moabites and the Ammonites had been free from all evils, it would have been a most grievous trial; it would have been enough to overwhelm weak minds to see a people whom God had adopted, miserably oppressed and severely chastised, while heathen nations were remaining quiet in the enjoyment of their pleasures, and exulting also over the calamities of others. God, then, in order to mitigate the grief and sorrow which the children of Israel derived from their troubles and calamities, shews that he would yet show them favor, because he would carry on war against their enemies, and become the avenger of all the wrongs which they had suffered. It was no common consolation for the Israelites to hear that they were

still the objects of God's care, who, nevertheless, seemed in various ways to have poured forth his wrath upon them in a full stream. We now, then, see the reason why Jeremiah denounced destruction on the Ammonites, as he did before on the Moabites.

Then he says, To the children of Ammon: [388] Are there no children to Israel? Hath he no heir? It was a trial very grievous to the miserable Israelites to see a part of the inheritance promised them by God forcibly taken from them by the Ammonites; for what must have come to their minds but that they had been deceived by vain promises? But it had happened, that the Ammonites had deprived the children of Israel of a part of their inheritance. Hence the Prophet teaches us here, that though God connived for a time, and passed by this robbery, he yet would not suffer the Ammonites to go unpunished for having taken to themselves what justly belonged to others. Hence it is added, Why doth their king inherit Gad?

I know not why Jerome rendered {מלכם}, melkam, as though it were the name of an idol, as the word is found in the Prophet Amos. [389] But it is evident that Jeremiah speaks here of the king, for immediately after he adds, his people Their king, then, he says, inherits Gad Gad is not the name of a place, as some think, but Mount Gilead, which had been given to that tribe. The Prophet says that they possessed the country of the Gadites; for they had been ejected from their portion, and the children of Ammon had occupied what had been given by God to them. And this is confirmed by the Prophet Amos, when he says,

``For three of the transgressions of the children of Ammon, and for four, I will not be propitious to them, because they have cut off the mountain of Gilead.'' [390] (Amos 1:13)

He speaks there metaphorically, because God had fixed the limits between the tribe of Gad and the children of Ammon, so that both might be satisfied with their own inheritance. But the children of Ammon had broken through and expelled the tribe of Gad from the cities of Mount Gilead. This, then, is what now our Prophet means, even that they had taken to themselves that part of the land which had been allotted to the children of Gad; for it immediately follows, and his people dwell in his cities, even in the cities which had been given by lot to that tribe; for we know that a possession beyond Jordan had been given to the children of Gad. We now, then, perceive the meaning of the words.

God, then, shews that he had not forgotten his covenant, though he had for a time suffered the Ammonites to invade the inheritance which he had conferred on the children of Israel; yet the Gaddites would at length recover what had been unjustly

[388] Literally it is, "To the children of Ammon thus saith Jehovah:" so the Sept., the Vulg., and the Targ. There are prophecies concerning Ammon in Ezekiel 21:28-32; 25:2-7; Amos 1:13-15; and in Zephaniah 2:8-11. — Ed.

[389] "Milcom" is given by the Sept., the Vulg., and the Syr.; but "their king" by the Targ. In Amos 1:15, the Vulg. and Syr. are the same; but the Sept. have "kings," and the Targ. is the same as here. There was a king of Ammon, Jeremiah 27:3; and there is one passage in which the possession of a country is ascribed to a heathen god, to Chemosh, see Judges 11:24. But "inheriting" is more suitably applied to a king than to an idol; and the contrast in the next verse is with Israel and not with God, "Israel shall be heir," etc. Most probably, then, the king is meant, and not the idol. — Ed.

[390] The quotation is not literally given, but the meaning of the passage. — Ed.

taken from them. For it was a robbery not to be endured, that the Ammonites should have dared to take to themselves that land, which was not the property of men, but rather of God himself, for he had called it his rest, because he would have his people to dwell there. And though God inflicted a just punishment on the Gaddites when he expelled them from their inheritance, yet he afterwards punished the children of Ammon, as he is wont to chastise his own children by the hand of the wicked, and at length to render them also their just reward. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 49:2

2. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will cause an alarm of war to be heard in Rabbah of the Ammonites; and it shall be a desolate heap, and her daughters shall be burned with fire: then shall Israel be heir unto them that were his heirs, saith the LORD.

2. Propterea ecce dies veniunt, dicit Jehova, et audire faciam (vel, faciam resonare) super Rabbath filiorum (vel, super filios) Ammon clangorem praelii, et erit in acervum vastitatis, et filiae ejus igne comburentur, et possidebit Israel possessores suos, dicit Jehova.

God testifies here plainly that he would not suffer the Ammonites for ever to enjoy their unjust plunder. He says that the days would come, in order to sustain with hope the minds of his children: for the Prophet announced his prediction at a time when the Ammonites were in a state of security; and then, some years elapsed while that people enjoyed their spoils. He therefore holds here the minds of the faithful in suspense, that they might learn patiently to wait until the fixed time of God's vengeance came. For this reason, then, he says, that the days would come when God would cause the trumpet of war to resound in Rabbah He speaks as of a thing extraordinary, for the Ammonites thought, as we shall see, that they should never be in any danger. As, then, they proudly trusted in their own strength, the Prophet speaks here of the trumpet of war in Rabbah, which was the metropolis of the whole land. Some think that it was Philadelphia, a name given to it by Ptolemy. Interpreters, however, do not agree; but the opinion mostly received is, that it was Philadelphia. Now, as to the main thing, there is no doubt but that it was then the chief seat of government, and the capital of the kingdom, because the Prophet, stating a part for the whole, includes the whole land when he speaks of this city.

He says that she would become a heap of desolation But this was then wholly incredible, because Rabbah was so fortified that no one thought that it could be destroyed. But the Prophet now declares that the whole city would be demolished, so that neither walls nor private houses would remain, but that it would be a deformed mass of ruins. He adds, her daughters shall be burned with fire By daughters he no doubt understands towns and villages; and hence is confirmed what I have said, that Rabbah was then the chief city of the whole land of Ammon. At the end of the verse he says, Israel shall possess all who possess them [391] By these words Jeremiah again confirms what I have slightly referred to, that the calamity of the Ammonites would be a testimony as to God's paternal kindness towards his chosen people, because

[391] Literally it is, "And Israel shall inherit his inheritors." The Ammonites claimed to be the heirs, and Israel succeeded them as the right heir. This prophecy was fulfilled as recorded in 1 Macc. 5:6, 7, 28-36. — Ed.

he resolved to avenge the wrongs done to them. As, then, God undertook the cause of the Israelites as his own, he sufficiently manifested the favor he had intended for his people, and for no other reason, but because he had gratuitously chosen them.

It may be asked, when was this prophecy fulfilled? God, indeed, under David, gave some indication of their future subjection, but Israel never possessed that land. Indeed, from that time Ammon had not been brought low until after the overthrow of Israel. It then follows that what Jeremiah predicted here, was not fully accomplished except under the kingdom of Christ. David humbled that nation, because he had received a great indignity from the king of Ammon; and he took also Rabbah, as it is evident front sacred history. (2 Samuel 12:29, etc.; 1 Chronicles 20:1, 2.) He was yet satisfied with making the people tributary. From that time they not only shook off the yoke, but exercised authority within the borders of Israel; and that the Israelites had recovered what they had lost, we nowhere read. [392] Then Israel began to possess power over the Ammonites when the kingdom of Christ was established; by which all heathen nations were not only brought into subjection and under the yoke, but all unworthy of mercy were also reduced to nothing. What is added at the end of the verse is not superfluous; for the Prophet introduces God as the speaker, because he speaks of great things, and of which it was difficult to be fully convinced. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 49:3

3. Howl, O Heshbon, for Ai is spoiled: cry, ye daughters of Rabbah, gird you with sackcloth; lament, and run to and fro by the hedges; for their king shall go into captivity, and his priests and his princes together.

3. Ulula Chesbon, quoniam vastata est Hai; vociferamini filiae Rabbath, accingite vos saccis, plangite, discurrite per sepes, quoniam rex eorum in captivitatem profectus est, et sacerdotes ejus et principes cum ipso.

The Prophet now triumphs, as it were, over the land of Ammon, and, according to his accustomed manner, as we have before seen; for had the prophets spoken without metaphors, and simply narrated the things treated of by them, their words would have been frigid and inefficient, and would not have penetrated into the hearts of men. This, then, is the reason why the prophets adopted an elevated style, and adorned with grandeur their prophecies; for they never, like rhetoricians, affected eloquence, but necessity so urged them, that they represented to the eyes those things which they could not otherwise form a conception of in their minds. On this subject we have spoken often already; but I am again constrained briefly to touch on it, because those who are not well acquainted with Scripture, and do not understand the design of the Holy Spirit, may think that words only are here poured forth. But when we duly weigh what I have said, then we shall readily acknowledge that the Prophet did not, without reason, enlarge on what he had previously said.

Howl, thou Heshbon, he says, for Ai is laid waste These were two neighboring cities: hence he exhorts Heshbon to howl on seeing the overthrow of another city. He then adds, Cry, or cry aloud, ye daughters of Rabbah He again repeats what

[392] Except in 1 Macc. 5:6-8. The victories of the Maccabees were, no doubt, a literal accomplishment of this prophecy. See verses 33, 34; where the sound of the "trumpets" is expressly mentioned. — Ed.

he had before touched upon as to the city Rabbah. Gird yourselves, he says, with sackcloth, or put on sackcloth. He does not here exhort the citizens of Rabbah to repentance, but he speaks according to the customs of the people, as it has been stated elsewhere. Sackcloth was, indeed, a symbol of penitence; when the miserable wished humbly to flee to God's mercy, and to confess their sins, they put on sackcloth. But the unbelieving imitated the faithful without discretion or judgment. Hence it was, that they scattered ashes on their heads, that without any reason they put on sackcloth. What was then commonly done is now mentioned by Jeremiah; Put on sackcloth, he says, lament and run here and there by the fences

He afterwards adds in the third person, for gone is their king into captivity. He expressed this, that the Israelites might know, that though that kingdom flourished for a time, yet the day of which the Prophet had spoken would come, when the condition of the Ammonites would be nothing better than that of the Israelites; whose king, as it was known, had been driven into exile, together with the priests and princes. The Prophet now denounces the same punishment on the Ammonites, that not only their king would be driven into another land, as a captive, but also their princes and their priests. It follows ---

Jeremiah 49:4

4. Wherefore gloriest thou in the valleys, thy flowing valley, O backsliding daughter? that trusted in her treasures, saying, Who shall come unto me?

4. Quid gloriaris reconditis tuis? defluxit profunditas tua (ad verbum, vallis tua; sed quoniam {קמע} significat prfundum esse ideo {מיקמע} sunt profunditates; cur ergo gloriaris in tuis profunditatibus? sed non repugno quin transferamus, quid gloriaris in vallibus tuis? defluvit vallis tua, est idem nomen,) filia aversatrix, quae confidit in reconditis suis (in thesauris suis,) Quis veniet ad me?

As the minds of men continually vacillate, because they do not sufficiently consider the infinite power of God, the Prophet, that he might remove all obstacles which might have rendered his prophecy doubtful, now declares that the Ammonites gloried in vain in their valleys. Some understand by valleys a fertile land, well watered. But the Prophet, as I think, refers rather to fortified places. He then says, that they in vain gloried in their deep valleys; as they were surrounded with mountains, so they thought that they could not be approached. He derides this vain confidence, Why, he says, dost thou glory in thy valleys, or, profundities? Flown down has thy valley. By saying, that the valley, or depth, had flown down, he alludes to its situation: for when any one considers a region situated among mountains, the land appears as flowing, like a river gliding between its banks. It is then a striking allusion to a deep place, when he says that the valley flowed down [393] It was the same as though he

[393] The verb means to flow out, and to flow away, to waste. The latter seems to be the meaning here, "wasted has thy valley." (See Lamentations 4:9.) It has a noun after it, when it means to flow out in the sense of abounding; but when used intransitively, it means to flow away in the sense of wasting, — Why gloriest thou in deep valleys! Flown away has thy deep valley, O daughter, who hast turned aside, Who hast trusted in thy treasures, Who hast said in thine heart, "Who can come to me?" The participle {,{השובבה ``who hast turned aside,'' or away, is rendered ``delicate,'' by the Vulg., and ``beloved,'' by the Syr., and the idea of impudence or folly, is conveyed by the Sept. and Targ. How the word could be so rendered, it is difficult to say. The verb means to turn to or from. Being a reduplicate here, it means to turn away resolutely; hence ``rebellious'' would be no improper rendering. ``Her'' before ``treasures,'' refers to ``daughter,'' but in our language ``thy'' reads better, as adopted by the Vulg. and the Syr. There is an addition in several copies of the words, ``Who hast said in thine heart,'' and all the versions have what corresponds with them. --- Ed

had said, ``Thy depth has vanished,'' or, ``It shall not be to thee such a protection as thou thinkest.'' But the meaning is, that though the Ammonites, confiding in their defences, disregarded all attacks of enemies, they would yet be exposed to plunder; for their mountains and valleys would avail them nothing, notwithstanding the opinion they entertained, that they were so fortified, that they could not be assailed.

He calls Ammon a rebellious, or a backsliding daughter, though he mentions no particulars. But Ezekiel and also Amos and Zephaniah, these three, clearly show why God was so severe towards the Ammonites, (Ezekiel 25; Amos 1:13; Zephaniah 2:9;) it was because they had uttered blasphemies against him and his people, exulted over the miseries and calamities of the chosen people, and plundered them when they saw them overcome by their enemies. For these reasons, then, our Prophet now calls them a rebellious people: they had proudly exalted themselves against God, and exercised cruel tyranny as to the miserable Israelites, who were yet, as it has been stated, connected with them by blood.

Who trusts in her secrecies, or hidden places: rendered by some, ``in her treasures.'' But as {אצר}, atser, means to hide, the reference is, as I think, to strongholds; for the Prophet in the next words explains himself, Who can come to me? It appears, then, that the Ammonites thought themselves thus secure, because they were not exposed to their enemies, but protected by their mountains, as though they were in hiding places. This boasting sufficiently shews that they did not so much trust in their treasures as in their hidden places, because they dwelt in recesses. The meaning is, that though the Ammonites gloried that they were beyond the reach of danger, yet God would become the avenger of the cruelty which they had exercised towards their relations, the Israelites. It follows ---

Jeremiah 49:5

5. Behold, I will bring a fear upon thee, saith the Lord GOD of hosts, from all those that be about thee; and ye shall be driven out every man right forth; and none shall gather up him that wandereth.

5. Ecce ego adduco super to terrorem, dicit Dominator, Jehova exercituum, ab omnibus circuitibus tuis, et expellemini, quisque coram facie sua, et nullus erit qui colligat dispersos.

Jeremiah at length concludes his prophecy, by saying, that God would dissipate that foolish confidence through which the Ammonites were filled with pride, because he would bring a terror on them. He sets up terror in opposition to that security in which the Ammonites lay torpid; for they were inebriated, as it were, with their pleasures. And then the strongholds by which they thought themselves protected, so hardened their hearts, that they feared no danger. God then sets up this terror in opposition to the false arrogance by which they were inflated: I bring, then, a terror from all around thee. And this was not without reason added, for the Ammonites thought that they could, on some side, escape, if enemies pressed hard on them; and as there were many outlets, they thought it impossible that they should fall into the hands of enemies. But God declares that they would be in every way full of fear, for terror would surround and besiege them, so that they could not escape.

He then adds, Ye shall be driven out, every one to his face, or, before his face.

This would be the effect of terror, because God would deprive them of all thought; for when we flee in haste, and only regard any opening that may present itself, it is evident that we are driven by terror. As we say in French, Il court devant soi; so the Prophet says here, Ye shall be driven out, every one before his face, that is, ``ye shall flee wherever a place may be open to you.'' He shews that they would be so full of fear, that they would not consider which would be the best way, nor think of a safe retreat; they would, in short, think of nothing but of flight. And to the same purpose is what follows: There will be none to gather the dispersed: for when trembling seizes the hearts of the multitude, they can yet be recalled, when one who has more courage than the rest encourages them to stop, as we know that many armies have been in this way saved; for as to soldiers, when suddenly seized with fear, a leader has often been able to gather them again. But the Prophet, when he says, that there would be none to call them back from flight, intimates their destruction. He at length subjoins ---

Jeremiah 49:6

6. And afterward I will bring again the captivity of the children of Ammon, saith the LORD.

6. Et postea reducam captivitatem filiorum Ammon, dicit Jehova.

He now says the same thing of the children of Ammon, as he said before of the Moabites, that some hope yet remained for them, for God would at length show mercy to that nation. But, as we have said, these promises were but adventitious, because God had chosen but one people to be a Father to them; and the children of Abraham must be viewed as distinct from all other nations. But though God built, as it were, a wall to separate his people from aliens, it was yet his will to give some preludes of his favor, and of the calling of the Gentiles. The Prophet, then, had here a regard to the kingdom of Christ. The promise, no doubt, extended itself to his coming; for he speaks of the calling of the Gentiles, which God deferred until he manifested his own Son to the world. It is the same then, as though the Prophet had said, that God's mercy would at length be showed to the Ammonites in common with others; that is, when God would gather his Church from the whole world, and unite, in one body, those who were before scattered. Nor is there a doubt but that the Prophet, speaking of the children of Ammon, intended to show what was to be manifested through all parts of the world. And so it is, that on our calling is our salvation founded, for we see that the gospel has not been, without a design, proclaimed to the world; but as God had determined and settled this from the beginning, so we see that Jeremiah was a herald of our adoption. This, then, is the import of what is said. He afterwards passes over to the children of Edom. But I cannot now proceed farther.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou didst formerly give so many proofs how great and singular was thy love towards the children of Abraham, whom it had pleased thee to choose as thy people, --- O grant that we at this day may also enjoy the same favor, since we have been admitted into a participation of the same union, and that we may be so chastised as never to lose the hope of thy mercy, but that we may so taste it as to meditate on that celestial kingdom, which has been obtained

for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventy-Fourth

Jeremiah 49:7

7. Concerning Edom, thus saith the LORD of hosts; Is wisdom no more in Teman? is counsel perished from the prudent? is their wisdom vanished?

7. Ad Edom (contra Edom) sic dicit Jehova exercituum, An non amplius sapientia in Theman? periitne consilium ab intelligentibus? computruit (vel, supervacua facta est) sapientia ipsorum?

Here Jeremiah turns to Idumeans, who were most inveterate enemies to the chosen people, though their origin ought to have disposed them to show kindness to them, for they had descended from the same father, even Abraham. The Idumeans also gloried in their holy descent, and had circumcision in common with the Jews. It was then a most impious cruelty that the Idumeans entertained such bitter hatred towards their own blood. Hence our Prophet most severely reproved them, as also did Ezekiel and Obadiah. (Ezekiel 25:12-14; Obadiah 1:1, 8.)

He says first, Is there not wisdom any more in Teman? By these words he intimates, that though the Idumeans thought themselves safe through their own counsels, because they excelled in acuteness, it yet would avail them nothing, for the Lord would blind them and deprive them of a sane mind; for what is put here interrogatively is declared plainly by Obadiah, (Obadiah 1:8.) even in God's name,

``I will take away wisdom from Teman, and there shall be no understanding in Mount Esau.''

But as Obadiah had preceded Jeremiah, it was necessary that he should speak of this as of a future thing. But our Prophet, as the judgment of which Obadiah was a witness and a herald, was near at hand, boldly exults over the Idumeans, and laughs at their reproach, inasmuch as they were deprived of counsel and understanding when they had most need of them. Teman, no doubt, was the name of a mountain or of a region; and this we learn from the Prophet Habakkuk,

``God shall come from Teman, and the holy one from Mount Paran.'' (Habakkuk 3:3)

It was also a chief city, as we learn form other places; and our Prophet sets it forth as the seat of the kingdom, when he says, Is there not wisdom in Teman? and then, Has counsel perished from the intelligent?

I wonder that interpreters, skillful in the language and conversant in it, should render the last word ``sons,'' for it is unsuitable to the place. [394] The word, no doubt, is derived from {בום}, bun, to understand, and not from {בנה}, bene, to build, whence the word, {בנים}, benim, sons, comes. For how can it suit this passage to say, Is there no more wisdom in Teman? Has counsel perished from the children? that is, as they understand it, ``from the children of Esau.'' But this is frigid and forced; and the two clauses correspond much better when read thus, ``Is there no more wisdom in Teman? has counsel perished from the intelligent?'' that is, from those who have hitherto boasted of their intelligence and acuteness.

[394] So the Vulg. and the Targ., while the Sept. and the Syr., have "prudent," or intelligent. The word is not in its regular form, the {י} iod being wanted, and the {נ} mem before it being omitted, which is not uncommon. Discerning rather than ``prudent,'' or ``intelligent,'' is its meaning. --- Ed

He then adds, Rotten has become their wisdom. The verb {סרח}, sarech, means to be superfluous, but some render it here to be putrid, as it is in Niphal I know not whether they have done this, because they did not know another meaning suitable to the context; but we may fitly render it thus, that their wisdom had become superfluous, that is, useless. We may also adopt another meaning, that their wisdom had been hitherto overflowing, that is, superabounded; for they had such wisdom, so as not only to act wisely for themselves, but also to show to others what was right and useful. As then the Idumeans possessed so much wisdom as to direct others, and not to be wise only for themselves, the words would read well were they rendered, that their wisdom had abounded. But in that case the words would be ironical; for the Prophet seems to assign a reason for his astonishment.

I give then this explanation: he first says, Is there wisdom no more in Teman? He exclaims, as though the thing was very strange, ``How can this be! is the very fountain of wisdom exhausted? Who could have thought that a city so renowned for wisdom would become so fatuitous as not to know her approaching calamity, so as to meet it, and apply in time the remedy?'' And to the same effect he adds, Has counsel perished from the intelligent? At length he subjoins, Abounded has their wisdom; and this he says, in order to show a reason for his astonishment. [395]

But we must notice the sameness and the difference between our Prophet and Obadiah. The latter foretold the blindness of that nation; but our Prophet, as though he wished to rouse from their torpor those who had been inattentive to the prophecy of Obadiah, exclaims, ``How has wisdom perished from Teman, and counsel from the intelligent?'' We must further observe, that this punishment was by God inflicted on the Idumeans, because they had applied all their thoughts to frauds and intrigues; and it seldom happens, but that they who excel in acuteness become very sharp and fraudulent. As then men are thus wont to abuse for the most part their knowledge, God blinds them, and shews that men cannot of themselves be wise, but as far as it is given them from above. As I have already said, the Prophet enlarges on this judgment, that he might the more effectually rouse the minds of men. For had the Idumeans been rustics, such as dwell among mountains, and had no report prevailed as to their wisdom, no one would have wondered that they were taken and subdued; for simple and unwary men are exposed to the intrigues of their enemies, and cannot escape them. But the Prophet, in order to set forth this judgment of God as wonderful, says that their wisdom had been as it were overflowing, that is, like an abundant treasure, for they administered counsel to others. As, then, the Idumeans so much excelled in intelligence, especially those who dwelt in the city Teman, the Prophet shews by this very circumstance that their blindness proceeded from the manifest vengeance of God, and that such a change did not happen by chance. It follows, ---

[395] Some maintain that the first clause only is a question, for there is no interrogatory particle prefixed to the other clauses, — Is wisdom no longer in Teman? Perished has counsel from the discerning, Vanished has their wisdom. Neither the versions nor the Targum put the two last lines as questions; nor the Sept. and the Syr. the first. The verb {{סרח is differently rendered, --- by the Sept., ``departed;'' by the Vulg., ``become useless;'' by the Syr., ``taken away;'' by the Targ., ``marred,'' or corrupted. The verb means to spread, to stretch out; and spreading here is in the sense of dissipating or scattering, and the verb here is passive. So ``vanished'' would convey the meaning. The first line is a question, and the two following contain the answer. A tautology cannot be otherwise avoided. --- Ed.

Jeremiah 49:8

8. Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep, O inhabitants of Dedan; for I will bring the calamity of Esau upon him, the time that I will visit him.

8. Fugite, conversi sunt, profundaverunt habitationem incolae Dedan, quia interitum Esau adduxi super ipsum tempore visitationis ejus.

The Prophet shews here how great was the pride of that nation, and sets it as it were before their eyes. Flee, he says; the language is abrupt, yet the meaning is not ambiguous. The meaning is, that when any one warned the Idumeans to flee, none of them would move; nay, they would remain fixed in their own country, for they thought that they would have there a perpetual quietness. The citizens of Dedan have made deep their habitation He names another city not far from Teman. He then adds, in God's name, But I will bring destruction on Esau in the time of his visitation [396]

We now understand the design of the Prophet, --- that he wished to set before our eyes how proudly the Idumeans trusted in their defences, as they never could be persuaded to flee. The Prophet then, as God's herald, declares that they would have to flee. But what did they do? They made deep their habitation, that is, they would remain quiet in their own country, as though they were fixed in the center of the earth, and therefore unassailable. By saying then that they made deep, he sets forth their obstinacy, so that no one could terrify them, though he announced extreme dangers. But it was his purpose thus to strengthen confidence in his prophecy, because the greatest part of the faithful could form no judgment but according to the present aspect of things; and the Idumeans proudly laughed at all threatenings. That the faithful then might not think that the Idumeans would be safe, he afterwards adds, in God's name, ``Behold, I will bring ruin on Esau.'' He mentions their father, and the Idumeans, we know, descended from Esau the first-born of Isaac; and hence they were of the same blood with the Israelites. But the Prophet, by bringing forward the name of a reprobate man, intended, no doubt, to renew the memory of a curse, for Esau had been rejected, and his younger brother Jacob succeeded in his place. Hence the Prophet, that he might gain more credit to his words, brought before the people what was well known to them, that Esau had been rejected by God; for on the rejection of Esau depended their gratuitous election and adoption.

And he says that God would be the avenger of that nation at the time of visitation; for as I have before reminded you, what we have read was not immediately fulfilled. When, therefore, the Israelites suffered extreme calamities, their hope might a hundred times have failed them, on seeing the Idumeans remaining still as it were asleep in their pleasures, and these judgments of God as it were buried; for it might have come to their minds that all which Jeremiah had declared had passed away like smoke. Hence, to sustain their hope and patience, he sets before them here the time of visitation; as though he had said, that the Idumeans also would have their turn, after God had patiently borne with their impiety and spared them for a long time. But of this we shall hereafter see. Now, as I have shown elsewhere, the words which

[396] The versions, (except the Syr. and the Targ.) have the verbs here in the imperative mood; and they are so regarded by most critics, “Flee ye, turn back, dwell deep,” etc.. This is necessary on account of {,{כ for, which follows. --- Ed

remind us of the time of God's visitations, ought to be noticed, that we may not by hastening fall headlong, as it is usually the case; for they who are in a hurry, fall at the first step. That we may then learn to wait for the ripened time, let this remain fixed in our minds, that God has his settled seasons of visitations. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 49:9

9. If grapegatherers come to thee, would they not leave some gleaning-grapes? if thieves by night, they will destroy till they have enough.

9. Si vindemiatores venissent contra to, non reliquissent uvas? si fures in nocte, nonne perdidissent quod sufficeret ipsis?

Interpreters have not only obscured, but also perverted this verse, and only said what is to no purpose, and have gone far from the meaning of the Prophet. [397] How so? because it did not occur to them to compare this with a passage in Obadiah. Obadiah is the true interpreter; nay, our Prophet has borrowed what we read here from him. For there a question is asked, ``If thieves were to come to thee, if robbers ({שדדי}, shaddi, is added there, but is omitted by Jeremiah) --- if robbers by night, how wouldest thou have been reduced to nothing?'' But in the first place the rendering ought to be, ``Had thieves come to thee, how wouldest thou have been reduced to nothing?'' then he adds, ``Would they not have stolen what would suffice them?'' He afterwards adds the second clause, ``If the grape-gatherers had come to thee, would they not have left grapes.'' There is now then no ambiguity in the Prophet's words, if we read them interrogatively. But there is an implied contrast between the calamity threatened to the people and the other devastations. Were a thief of the night to plunder another's house, he would depart, loaded with his prey, and leave something behind; for in all plunder some things remain: so also as to grape-gatherers, some grapes remain, which escape the gatherers.

Then the Prophet here shews, that so great would be the destruction of that nation, that it would exceed all kinds of plundering; for when one strips his vines, he leaves some grapes; and when a thief enters a house, he does not carry all things away with him, being satisfied with his booty. But nothing, he says, shall be left remaining with the Idumeans. We hence see why the Prophet brings forward the two comparisons, that of the grape-gatherers and of the thieves.

We must at the same time observe, that when God denounces his vengeance on the Israelites, he often adduces these comparisons, in order to show that nothing would be left them, ``When the olives are shaken, yet some fruit remains on the top of the trees; but thou shalt be wholly emptied.'' As God had said these things, the Israelites might have raised an objection and said, ``What is our condition, and how miserable! for we are extremely afflicted; though God afflicts the Idumeans, yet he deals mildly with them, for God's wrath is less inflamed against them than against us.'' Lest then the faithful should be thus thrown into despair, our Prophet declares that the Idumeans would be wholly destroyed, so that not a grape would be left them, nor any of their furniture, for their enemies would lay desolate the whole land. Now follows a confirmation of this verse ---

[397] The interpreters probably referred to are the Sept. and the Vulg., where the interrogative form is not used; not so the Syr. and the Targ. — Ed.

Jeremiah 49:10-11

10. But I have made Esau bare, I have uncovered his secret places, and he shall not be able to hide himself: his seed is spoiled, and his brethren, and his neighbour's, and he is not.

10. Quia ego discooperio Esau, retego abscondita ejus, et occultari non poterit; vastatum est semen ejus (aut, vastabitur) et fratres ejus, et vicini, et non ipse (quanquam alii vertunt, et nemo erit, et contexunt proximum versum,)

11. Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me.

11. Relinque pupillos tuos; ego vivificabo (hoc est, alam ipsos;) et viduae tuae in me sperent.

As to the beginning of the verse, the meaning of the Prophet is not obscure; for he means that such would be the destruction of the people of Edom, that they would be spoiled by enemies, that they would become wholly naked. But he speaks in the name of God: Behold, I uncover Esau, and make open his hidden things By hidden things he means treasures, as it is evident from Obadiah. He then says that he would so expose the Idumeans to plunder, that there would be no hidden thing but that their enemies would seize and plunder it. This is the meaning.

He then confirms what I have said, that this plundering would not be like grape-gathering, or theft, or common robbery, because God would altogether empty the Idumeans of all that they had, even of all that they hid in the ground.

With regard to the end of the verse, some give this explanation, ``There will be none to say:'' there is then a word to be understood, --- ``there will be none to say, Leave thy orphans to me, I will nourish or sustain them, or I will he a father to them; and thy widows, let them hope or trust in me, or rest on me.'' For it is no small comfort to parents, when they know that their widows would have one to flee to, and also their orphans. When one dies and sees that his widow is destitute of every help, and sees that his orphans are miserable and needy, his paternal and conjugal love is grievously wounded. For is it more bitter than death itself, when the husband cannot provide any help for his widow, when he cannot provide any relief for his orphans. Hence some interpreters think that the ruin of this people is in this way exaggerated; that is, because no one would be found to bring comfort to parents, and to take as it were the place of the dead.

But the meaning would not be unsuitable, were the words deemed ironical, that the Prophet spoke in the person of God, Leave to me thy orphans, I will nourish them, and let thy widows rest on me, or trust in me: for it follows afterwards, Behold, they to whom there was no judgment, have drunk of the cup, etc. The passage then would not read amiss, if we consider that God taunts the Idumeans, and ironically declares that he would be a judge against them even after they were dead; for God's vengeance, we know, reaches to the third and the fourth generation. As then he had before declared, that the Idumeans would be destroyed, their seed, their brethren, and their neighbors, so he now confirms the same thing, --- ``What! dost thou expect that I should be a father or a protector to thy orphans? that I should bring aid to thy widow? This thou expectest in vain from me.''

The Prophet, in a few words, very sharply goads the minds of the Idumeans, when God thus presents himself, and says by way of mockery, that he would be a protector to their orphans and widows; for they had indiscriminately vented their rage on orphans and women, and spared neither sex nor age. Then God shews here that there was no reason why they should expect any comfort as to their children, for he would be their avenger to the third and the fourth generation. And forced, no doubt, is what some say; at least I do not see how the words, I will nourish them, can comport with the rest of the context. This clause, then, I apply to God himself, because his vengeance would consume them with their brethren, their neighbors and their seed. And the irony is the most suitable to the whole passage; that is, that God meant to show, that he could bring no help to orphans or aid to widows, since they had been so cruel both to orphans and widows. [398] Then follows a confirmation ---

Jeremiah 49:12

12. For thus saith the LORD; Behold, they whose judgment was not to drink of the cup have assuredly drunken; and art thou he that shall altogether go unpunished? thou shalt not go unpunished, but thou shalt surely drink of it

12. Quia sic dicit Jehova, Ecce, quibus non erat judicium (ad verbum, quibus non judicium ipsorum,) ad bibendum calicem bibendo bibent; --- tu vero ipse immunis eris? vel, immunis immunitatem adipisceris? vel tu, vero immunis evades?) non evades immunis, quia bibendo bibes.

He confirms the last verse, as I think, --- that God's vengeance awaited the whole seed of Esau, because it would be unreasonable to deal more severely with God's people than with aliens, who had wholly shaken off the yoke. For I explain what is said here of the Church, Those to whom it was not their judgment to drink the cup shall surely drink Some apply this to neighboring nations who had not become so wicked as the Idumeans. But this exposition is frigid, and we ought always, as we have said elsewhere, to have regard to the design of the Prophet. What then was his object but to show to the faithful, that there was no reason for them to despond, however grievously God might afflict them, because the punishment which he would inflict on the Idumeans would in no way be milder; for we know that we are greatly tempted by envy when we see that the state of the impious and the reprobate is better than that of God's children. And it was for this purpose that Psalm 37 was composed,

``Envy not the wicked, nor let their prosperity vex thee, because they shall soon perish.''

[398] Neither of the two explanations here given are satisfactory, though the first especially has been adopted by many, such as Henry and Scott. It is difficult to know the meaning of the Sept.; the Vulg. and the Syr. are literally our version. The Targ. goes wide astray, representing this verse as addressed to the people of Israel, of whom there is no mention here. Blayney supposes a typographical mistake, joins {{ועז to the preceding verse, and puts ,{נ} to the next word, and gives this version, --- And there is nothing of him left. 11. Shall I preserve the life of thy fatherless children? Or shall thy widows trust in me? The questions he considers as strong negatives. The simpler view seems to be this: in the preceding verse the destruction not only of Esau, but also of his brethren and neighbours, is announced. His ``seed'' means his posterity, the nation, and he was was not to be, that is, as a kingdom. There would be still some ``orphans'' and ``widows,'' and as ``brethren'' and ``neighbors'' would be destroyed as well as Esau himself, as to all grown up people, forming the nation, and thus orphans and widows would be left helpless, God was pleased to give the promise here stated: Leave thy orphans, I will preserve them, Thy widows also, in me let them trust. The last verb is both masculine and feminine, and refers both to the orphans and widows. This is substantially the explanation given by Venema, and is the most satisfactory. --- Ed.

And David also, in Psalm 73:2, 3, confesses, that he in a manner staggered when he saw the wicked luxuriating in their pleasures, while the children of God were miserably treated. Then our Prophet in this place, as often elsewhere, had regard to the faithful, and wished to sustain them, lest they should succumb under their burden, when God afflicted them as well as the Idumeans. Hence he says, when speaking of the Idumeans, Drinking they shall drink the cup whose judgment was not to drink, and shalt thou be exempted? that is, ``I will not spare my people, and should I spare aliens? this cannot be.''

We then see that it was a fruitful source of consolation to the faithful, when they heard that the wicked, who openly and avowedly disregarded God, could not escape his judgment.

But it may be now asked, how could he say that it was not the judgment of the Church to drink of the cup of God's wrath? He speaks comparatively, and this answer ought to suffice us. It is certain that the Israelites deserved all the evils which they suffered. God then justly chastised them; he did not act without reason or through sudden wrath, but executed what he had previously decreed. It was then God's judgment, even what he had determined and fixed; for judgment here is to be taken for God's decree, by which he apportions to each his own lot. It was not then a judgment to the Israelites to drink of the cup, when one compared them to the Idumeans, --- how so? Here a new question arises, for the Israelites had been worse than all others. The Idumeans had departed wholly from God; all light had become extinct among them; and then the law had not been given them: before Jacob went down to Egypt, who was to be from thence delivered according to the prefixed time made known to Abraham, they dwelt in mountains separated from the land of Canaan. They therefore possessed no part of God's law, except that they had the empty symbol of circumcision. But the Israelites, on whom had always shone the doctrine of the law, were altogether inexcusable. Why then does the Prophet say that there was no judgment to them? My answer is, that the reference here is not to the persons of men, but on the contrary to the grace of God, through which he had been pleased to embrace the children of Israel. As then God had chosen that nation, what is regarded here is special adoption; for it is right in God to indulge his children, and it is right also in him to pardon them rather than aliens. When any one is offended with his own son, he will be reconciled to him; but an alien will not find pardon.

We now then see that the Prophet does not regard what the people had deserved, nor consider how detestable had been their impiety, and of what grievous punishment they were worthy; but on the contrary, he refers to that grace of God through which he had chosen the seed of Jacob. He had indeed previously chosen the whole seed of Abraham; but the rejection of Esau followed, so that Jacob alone remained as the seed. Since then God had manifested himself as a father to the children of Jacob, the Prophet says that it was not their judgment to drink of the cup, because it was according to reason and common sense that God should forgive them rather than aliens, whom he had already rejected, and who were like putrid members: They, then, whose judgment was not to drink the cup, drinking shall drink, and shalt thou

escape free? The meaning is, that if the green wood is burnt, what will become of the dry? as Christ said. (Luke 23:31.) There is a similar consolation mentioned in 1 Peter 4:17, 18, where those afflictions are mentioned to which the Church of God is now exposed. Now, as we are tender and delicate, and the minds of many may be harassed, Peter says, that if God be so severe towards his own, those of his own household, what will become of the wicked? what dreadful vengeance awaits them?

We hence perceive the drift of the Prophet's words, and what doctrine may be hence deduced, even that when we see God's judgment beginning at God's house, as the Prophet elsewhere says, (Jeremiah 25:29) and as also Peter says; that is, when God chastises his own children, and seems in the meantime to pass by the wicked, we ought patiently to wait for the visitation previously mentioned; and this ought always to be remembered by us, ``If this be done in the green tree, what will be done in the dry?'' We shall not then envy the wicked, when God defers and does not immediately execute his judgment; for the punishments inflicted by God on his servants are only temporary and limited, and intended as medicine, inasmuch as all we suffer are helps to our salvation, as Paul teaches us. (Romans 8:28.) As then God paternally chastises us, let us not shun his paternal hand; nor let us think that God deals more kindly with the wicked because he suspends his judgments, for at length they will be hurried into their own ruin, as the Prophet says here.

In speaking of a cup, the Prophet uses a phrase common in Scripture, for the Scripture by a metaphor calls punishment inflicted on men for their sins a cup; because God apportions to each his just measure. It is taken then as allowed, that calamities are not by chance, but proceed from God's hand, as though he gave a cup to drink. Now when he afflicts his own, they are constrained to drink as it were his wrath; it is therefore a sour and a bitter cup. But the wicked shall hereafter drink poison. Even medicine, though displeasing to the taste because of its bitterness, is yet wholesome; but poison kills men, though its taste is like medicine. This then is the comparison that is used here by Jeremiah; Drinking, they shall drink the cup, even God's servants, who yet ought to have been exempted through a singular privilege, even because God had chosen them to be his peculiar people; shalt thou, he says, be exempted from drinking? He addresses all aliens.

We have before seen another mode of speaking, ``They shall drink to the dregs,'' as though he had said, ``God will not only give thee to drink a bitter cup, but its bitterness will kill and destroy thee, for God will constrain thee to drink the very dregs.'' But still the meaning is the same, though the phrase is different. He then asserts that the Idumeans would not be exempt from God's judgment, and why? because God does not spare even his own children. Here then is suggested to us the best consolation when God in various ways afflicts us: let us know that it cannot be otherwise, but that it is a prelude to the last judgment, when salvation shall surely be our portion, for God purifies us now by temporal punishments, that we may be then free from final vengeance. But when the ungodly are secure, let us know that God's judgment is indeed hidden, but yet certain, and will shortly overtake them; for when they say,

``Peace and security, then sudden destruction

will come upon them.'' (1 Thessalonians 5:3.)

But the clock strikes.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast not only in thine eternal counsel adopted us as thy children, but hast also inscribed on our hearts a sure sign and pledge of thy paternal favor towards us, --- O grant that we may accustom ourselves to bear thy scourges, and patiently to receive them without murmuring or complaining, but that we may ever look forward to the blessed rest and inheritance above, and at the same time dread the punishment that awaits the wicked, and that we may thus courageously persevere in our warfare, until thou at length gatherest us into that celestial kingdom which thine only-begotten Son has procured for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventy-fifth

Jeremiah 49:13

13. For I have sworn by myself, saith the LORD, that Bozrah shall become a desolation, a reproach, a waste, and a curse; and all the cities thereof shall be perpetual wastes.

13. Quia per me ipsum juravi, dicit Jehova, quod in vastitatem, in opprobrium, in desertum, et in maledictionem erit Bosra; et omnes urbes ejus erunt in vastitates seeuli (id est, perpetuas.)

Here the Prophet confirms what he had already prophesied respecting the Idumeans; but to remove every doubt, he says, that God had sworn; and he introduces God as the speaker, in order that his word might be emphatical. He then declares that God had made an oath respecting the destruction of Bozrah. What is particular is put for what is general; for he includes the whole nation under the name of this city. Nor does he simply declare that the Idumeans would be laid waste and destroyed, but he accumulates words: Bozrah, he says, shall be a waste; [399] secondly, a reproach; thirdly, a solitude, or desert; and fourthly, a curse

What the Prophet said was no doubt a thing difficult to be believed; for God did not without reason bring forth his own name. For as he would have us to use it seriously and reverently, so he does not interpose so precious a pledge except under the greatest necessity. It is then certain, that there was a weighty reason why God testified by an oath what we read here of the destruction of the people of Edom. Now I have said that what Jeremiah announced was hardly credible; and it was so, because there was no cause for war; and besides, the country was fortified by its own inclosures; for the Idumeans thought, as it seems, that they were impregnable. This, then, was the reason why God interposed an oath. At the same time his purpose was, as I have before reminded you, to consult the benefit of the faithful; for God makes an oath that he might apply a remedy to the weakness of our faith; for as we almost always vacillate, a simple testimony, without being sanctioned by an oath, would not be sufficient for us. This is then the reason for making an oath.

God is said to swear by himself, because there is none greater; as the apostle

[399] It is better to render it as in the Syr., “astonishment;” then “reproach” comes after it; and the next word, {,{חרב is properly ``a waste,'' and in the plural is rendered ``wastes'' at the end of the verse. There were two cities called Bozrah, one in Moab, Jeremiah 48:24, and one in Edom, Isaiah 63:1 --- Ed.

says, by whom he can swear. (Hebrews 6:13.) Men in doubtful and hidden things flee to God, who knows the heart, who is himself the truth, and from whom nothing is hid. And an oath, as we learn from many places of Scripture, is a part of divine worship. As then this honor peculiarly belongs to him, that is, that we should swear by his name, when he himself swears, he cannot derive authority from another, which may confirm his words: he therefore swears by himself. And we have heard what he declares by Isaiah,

``I will not give my glory to another.'' (Isaiah 42:8)

God then prescribes to us the form of swearing, when he swears by himself. God is said to swear sometimes by his soul, or by his life, and he is said sometimes to lift up his hand. These expressions are not strictly proper, but transferred to God from men. But the mode of speaking used by Jeremiah ought especially to be observed, for we see how an oath is to be rightly made, even when it is made by an appeal to God's name, for he is alone the fit witness and judge in things doubtful and hidden.

There is therefore under the Papacy a base and an intolerable idolatry, for the Papists swear by dead saints. This is nothing else but to rob God of his right; for since he alone, as it has been stated, is the truth, so he alone is the fit judge when things are hidden and cannot be ascertained by human testimony. And we ought to notice the words used in swearing, that is, when men submit to God's judgment, and implore him as a judge. Whosoever then swears by the saints, it is the same thing as to make them to occupy the place of God, so as to make them the judges of the world, and to ascribe to them all power.

``God is a witness to my soul,''

says Paul, (2 Corinthians 1:23;) and then we have such words as these,

``May God do this to me and add that.''

(Ruth 1:17; 1 Samuel 14:44; 2 Samuel 3:35, etc.)

By such expressions, as I have said, is set forth the authority and character of an oath. In short, we must bear in mind, that when necessity constrains us to swear, God is ever the sole judge, and that therefore his name is profaned when we swear by another.

Now what it is to be a reproach and a curse, is evident from other places, even when any one is set as it were in a theater, that he might be an example of disgrace, or when any calamity gives an occasion for execrations and maledictions, ``May God destroy thee as he destroyed the Idumeans:'' this is to be a curse, as we have elsewhere seen.

He adds cities, and thereby intimates that this desolation would not be confined to one part, but be extended to all parts. He also says that they would be perpetual wastes; and thus he took away every hope of restoration. When he prophesied before against the Moabites and the Ammonites, he mingled some consolation, but as to Edom, every hope is cut off. The nation, no doubt, deserved a heavier vengeance, for it had a nearer connection with the Israelites --- hence its cruelty was less to be borne. Besides, it appears that it exceeded in its barbarity all other nations; for it is not without reason said in the Psalms,

``Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom, who said in the day of Jerusalem, Let

it be erased, let it be wholly erased to its foundation.'' (Psalm 137:7)

We hence learn that the Idumeans raged most cruelly against their own blood: and this was the reason why God declared that their cities would become perpetual desolations; for the word {עולם}, oulam, which some render ``age,'' often means perpetuity. It follows ---

Jeremiah 49:14

14. I have heard a rumour from the LORD, and an ambassador is sent unto the heathen, saying, Gather ye together, and come against her, and rise up to the battle.

14. Auditum (hoc est, sermonem) audivimus a Jehova, et nuntius ad gentes missus est, Congregamini (vel, congregate vos,) et venite super eam, surgite ad praelium.

The Prophet again shews that God would be the author of the calamity of which he speaks; for if things were viewed by men, no one could have thought that the Idumeans could in so short a time be destroyed. It was therefore necessary for the faithful to raise upwards their minds. And this the Prophet had in view when he said that all this would be from God.

But most forcible are his words when he says, We have heard a hearing; some say, ``a report,'' but improperly, as I think; for though, {שמועה}, shemuoe, often means a report or rumor, yet here it ought to be taken for a proclamation, which God published as it were by his own heralds. For the similitude is taken from men, proclaiming war against their enemies by a solemn rite. Then Jeremiah says, that a voice was heard sent from above, because it was God's purpose publicly and openly to testify, that what we read here of the destruction of Edom would take place. We now then understand the meaning of the Prophet, when he says, A hearing have we heard from Jehovah

Then follows immediately a confirmation, a messenger, or an ambassador, is sent to the nations God, indeed, had no messenger or herald to proclaim war against the Idumeans, or to rouse up the Assyrians and Chaldeans; but the Prophets usually spoke thus, that men, being led to the very scene, might know that what was said was real, and would not be without its effect, as prophecies were as so many embassies. And according to this view, the prophets, as we have stated elsewhere, sometimes besieged and stormed cities, sometimes sounded the trumpet, even for this purpose, to show that their doctrine was linked with its execution, for God never spoke by them to no purpose or in vain. The Prophet at the same time reminds us that the Chaldeans and the Assyrians were in God's hand, so that he could by a nod or a hiss rouse them to war, as it is said elsewhere,

``God will hiss for the fly of Egypt.'' (Isaiah 7:18)

The Prophet then means, that the Chaldeans and the Assyrians would be ready to obey God, as though they were hired soldiers, and enlisted under his banner.

We now then see how forcible was this mode of speaking; for the faithful might hence learn, that it was in God's power to perform whatever he proclaimed by his servant, because he could by one word rouse, draw, arm, and lead to war the Assyrians and the Chaldeans, as he also says, Be ye assembled, and come against her, and rise up to battle And he speaks of many nations, lest any one should think that

the Idumeans would be able to resist, for he is not immediately conquered who is attacked by his enemies. But the Prophet meets this doubt, and says that there would be many nations, who, with their united strength, would come against the people of Edom, so that they would have no power to resist. Nearly the same words are found in Obadiah. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 49:15

15. For, lo, I will make thee small among the heathen, and despised among men.

15. Quia ecce parvum posui to inter gentes, contemptum inter homines.

Interpreters for the most part give this exposition, that the people of Edom would be contemptible, because God had determined to cast them down from their dignity, which they for a time possessed: and then they connect the next verse, in which the reason for this is given, ``Thy terror deceived thee, the pride of thy heart,'' etc. But this passage may be taken otherwise, --- that God derides the pride of that nation, which ought to have restrained itself, because it contended against nature, when it wished to elate itself so much. And it seems to me that this is the real meaning of the Prophet. I do not, indeed, pronounce the other view wrong, yet it behooves me to state what I prefer. I then think that there is to be understood here an implied comparison between the Israelites and the children of Edom, which is more clearly expressed by Malachi, (Malachi 1:2, 3;) for God there extols his kindness towards the Israelites, because he gave them a rich and fruitful land, and sent away the posterity of Esau, and confined them within rough mountains. As then the Idumeans, ejected from so pleasant and desirable an inheritance as had been given to the children of Abraham, were confined as it were to rugged mountains, the Prophet derides their pride, because they tried in a way contrary and repugnant to nature to elevate themselves: I made thee, he says, small among the nations, and contemptible among men And we know that less easily can that pride be borne, where there is no reason for boasting. When any one obscure from the lowest rank exalts himself above the most noble, all regard him with contempt, for it is a monstrous thing. It is for this reason that the Prophet now says, ``What have you, O Idumeans, that ye are so proud! What do you possess? what is your glory? for God has humbled you. It is then the same as though a fly wished to exceed in bulk the elephant.''

But if the other exposition be preferred, the meaning would be as follows, ``Behold, I will make thee small and contemptible among the nations, because thou hast been very proud.'' But I have stated what I approve, even that God here brings against the Idumeans their folly, because they ought not to have boasted without reason, ``Behold,'' he says; he shews, as by the finger, how mean and abject their condition was; 1 have made thee small among the nations, and contemptible among men And, doubtless, were it a threatening, it would not have been sufficiently forcible; for the Prophet has hitherto been thundering against the Idumeans, and he goes on in the same strain. If then he had now put in what we read, referring to their smallness, it would have been frigid. I doubt not, then, but that the Prophet describes the state of that nation, such as it had been in comparison with that of the chosen people, and even of other nations; for though they were rich, had always been free from disturbance, and suffered no losses, yet they lived, as it has been

stated, in mountains by no means fertile. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 49:16

16. Thy terribleness hath deceived thee, and the pride of thine heart, O thou that dwellest in the clefts of the rock, that holdest the height of the hill: though thou shouldest make thy nest as high as the eagle, I will bring thee down from thence, saith the LORD.

16. Superbia cordis tui, terror tuus, decepit to, quae habitas in fissuris petrae (vel, rupis,) quae occupas altitudinem collis (id est, collium, mutatio est numeri, sicur etiam in ,{עלס} ham significat rupes, plurali numero;) quamvis extollas tanquam aquila nidum tuum, illinc detraham to (descendere faciam, ad verbum,) dicit Jehova.

Some render the first words thus, ``Thine idol hath deceived thee;'' and others, ``Thy folly hath deceived thee.'' The verb has, indeed, this meaning, though there is a different reading, for some put a point over the right side of the letter, and others on the left. But the most suitable meaning is thus conveyed, Deceived thee has thy terror, the pride of thy heart Those who render the first word ``idol,'' consider that superstition is referred to, that the false confidence which the Edomites placed in their idols had deceived them. But this seems to be a forced explanation. Why others have rendered the word ``folly,'' I know not. The word properly means terror. The verb {פלץ}, pelets, means to terrify, and from this the noun is derived. And when the word is taken for an idol, it is so metaphorically, because idols terrify men, or because a terrible end awaits their worshippers. But I retain the proper meaning of the word. At the same time terror here is to be taken actively, because the Idumeans were a terror to other nations, and were thus blinded with pride on account of their conceit as to their power.

And the following words are explanatory, the pride of thy heart; for they who despise others fill themselves with empty pride, and thus elevate their own hearts. As then the Idumeans had gained for themselves the repute of being a warlike people, the terror entertained for them inflated their own hearts with pride: but the Prophet says, that they were deceived, as they arrogated to themselves too much power. At the same time he continues the subject which I have stated, as though he had said, ``How comes it, that as God has designed thee to be contemptible, thou takest to thyself such authority among the nations? Thou fightest against nature, for thou hast hitherto in vain terrified thy neighbors: hence it is, that thou art swollen with pride; but it is a mere delusion; thou art greatly mistaken, and deceivest thyself in thus thinking of thy strength, since thy condition ought, on the contrary, to make thee humble.'' We now see how well the whole passage runs, and how aptly the words agree together. He then says that it was a foolish confidence, by which the people of Edom, whom God had made contemptible, were deceived.

He now adds, by way of concession, Thou who dwellest in the fissures of rocks, and occupiest the heights of mountains In these words the Prophet concedes something to the Idumeans; but he afterwards adds, that the fortresses, by which they thought themselves to be protected, would come to nothing; though thou raisest high thy nest as the eagle, thence will I, says God, draw thee down We hence see that the Prophet concedes to the Idumeans some reason for boasting on account of their

mountains, because they presented on every side a defense against enemies; and yet he shews that all this would be useless to them; for he says, though thou raisest high thy nest as the eagle, that is, though thou ascendest, as they commonly say, above the very clouds, thence will I draw thee down

Now this passage teaches us first, that all who trust in their own earthly defences deceive themselves; and, secondly, that all who arrogate to themselves more than what is just and right, contend, as it were, against God, and that it cannot, therefore, be otherwise but that God will lay them prostrate. We are then taught by this doctrine to cultivate humility. Humility has its roots fixed deeply within; so that the state of those who willingly submit themselves, becomes firm and permanent; for the root, which appears not on the surface, sustains the tree. So also that humility, which is not known by men, is our real and solid prop and support. Whosoever takes the wing and flies, and seeks, through his own presumption, to raise up himself, provokes God as it were designedly: and here the Prophet shews what end awaits all those who thus raise themselves on high, seeking to set their nest on a summit like the eagle; for God will draw them down and lay them prostrate, as he did to the Idumeans. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 49:17

17. Also Edom shall be a desolation: every one that goeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss at all the plagues thereof.

17. Et erit Edom in vastitatem, quisquis transierit super ipsam obstupescet, et sibilabit super omnes plagas ejus.

Here again the Prophet confirms what he had said. We have before stated how necessary was such a repetition, because no one could have thought that destruction was so nigh the Idumeans. He did not then repeat what he had said, in order to explain more clearly what might have been otherwise obscure, but to fix more fully in the hearts of the faithful what appeared incredible.

He then says that Edom would become a waste; and then, that every one passing by it would be astonished and hiss on account of all her wounds, or strokes. Hissing may refer to derision, or to astonishment, or, at least, to wonder: for many hiss, or shake the head through mockery; and others hiss through wonder, when any unusual thing happens. And as he had said before, Whosoever shall pass through it shall be astonished, I am disposed to refer this also to what is produced by wonder or amazement. It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 49:18

18. As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD, no man shall abide there, neither shall a son of man dwell in it.

18. Secundum subversionem Sodomae et Gomorrae et vicinarum ejus, dicit Jehova, non habitabit illie vir, et non manebit in ea filius hominis.

He expresses more at large what he had briefly included in one word: he had said, that Edom would become a waste; but he now shews what sort of waste it would be, even such as that of Sodom and Gomorrah, and other cities; for God, as it is well known, destroyed the five cities against which he fulminated.

And hence again we learn, that there was no hope left for the Idumeans; as

though the Prophet had said, that their final overthrow was inevitable, because God would have them wholly destroyed, and their memory obliterated. It is yet probable that there were some remnant of the nation; but this was not inconsistent with this prophecy, because they who remained alive became so scattered, that they never formed one people, nor had any name. And though God might have chosen some from that nation, yet this favor remained hid, and, as it was unknown to men, it can hardly be taken to the account. However this may have been, we must bear in mind what I have before briefly referred to, --- that the Idumeans were so accursed, that their calamity was much severer than that of other nations; and this they had deserved by their unnatural cruelty and many contumelies towards the miserable Israelites, their own relatives. This, then, was the reason why Jeremiah compared the land to, Sodom and Gomorrah, and the other cities; no man shall dwell there, that is, the country shall be desolate.

And yet it appears, from history, that that country was afterwards inhabited, for even the Romans placed there a garrison. But the Prophet, as I have already said, meant that none of the Idumeans would survive to possess the land, so as to become a nation. Though, then, other inhabitants might have afterwards possessed the land, this was nothing to the Idumeans; for that people had perished, and from that time no restoration followed: this was sufficient as a fulfillment of this prophecy. Nay, it was a harder thing, that their land should receive aliens and strangers, than if it had been left desolate.

But we must also bear in mind the common mode of speaking adopted by the Prophets; for when they adduce Sodom and Gomorrah as examples, they speak hyperbolically; and there is no need here to accumulate passages to prove this; for they who are in any tolerable measure acquainted with Scripture, must know that whenever mention is made of Sodom and Gomorrah, all pardon and alleviation of punishment are excluded. Isaiah, extolling God's mercy towards his chosen people, says,

``Had not God left us a very small seed, we must have been as Sodom and like to Gomorrah.'' (Isaiah 1:9)

And this mode of speaking, as I have said, often occurs in Scripture; yea, even our Prophet threatened the Israelites with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, (Jeremiah 23:14.) The words, no doubt, are used hyperbolically; for God had not fulminated against other lands or nations and sunk them in the deep, as he had done to Sodom and Gomorrah. But in comparisons all parts do not correspond.

Now, some one may ask, Why does God thus exceed due limits in speaking? To this I answer, that it is not done without just reason and necessity. We indeed see that men are indifferent to God's judgments; for such is their sloth and insensibility, that they disregard as a light thing, or deem as nothing, what God threatens. As then men are so brutish, being unmoved by God's threatenings, it is necessary that such indifference should be roused and awakened. He therefore sets Sodom and Gomorrah before their eyes; and as Jude also says, there an example of all the punishments which await the reprobate has been exhibited. (Jude 7.) God therefore designed to represent once for all, as in a mirror, how dreadful will be his vengeance on all the

wicked. Since it is so, to the same end is this threatening, that God would destroy the Idumeans and all like them, as he did Sodom and Gomorrah, so that none would survive, though aliens might come and succeed the Idumeans and occupy their inheritance. I cannot now finish; we shall leave the other comparison.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast been pleased to stretch forth thine hand to us, we may be raised by faith above the world, and learn to submit to thee in true humility, and to know how miserable must be our condition and life, except we wholly recumb on thee alone, so that we may be made partakers of that glory which thou hast purchased for us in Heaven, and which thine only-begotten Son, our Lord, has obtained for us. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventy-sixth

Jeremiah 49:19

19. Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan against the habitation of the strong: but I will suddenly make him run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me?

19. Ecce tanquam leo ascendet ab elevatione Jordanis ad tabernaculum fortitudinis; postquam quiescere fecero, faciam currere ab ea; et quis electus super eam praeficiam? nam quis sicut ego? et quis contestabitur mecum? et quis hic pastor qui stet coram facie mea (vel, contra faciem meam.)

The Prophet here confirms what he had said, that such would be the violence of the Chaldean army, that the Idumeans would not be able to resist it. He then says, that the Chaldeans would come like lions, who ascend in great fury when compelled to change the place of their habitation; for so I explain what is said of the elevation of Jordan. The explanations are various; but the one I approve is, that Jeremiah compares the Chaldeans to lions, who every year, or at least when there was a great inundation, sought hiding-places on mountains or on elevated grounds, because they could not lie down on the plains. The elevation of Jordan is then to be taken for its swelling, that is, when it overflowed. We learn from many passages that the lions lodged around Jordan. As then they dwelt in the low plains, when the river swelled, they changed the place of their habitation. But this could not be without their rage being excited; for we know how savage these wild beasts are. Jeremiah had also a regard to the situation of Idumea, which was more elevated than Jordan and the country around it. He says the same also, in the next chapter, of the Babylonians. But it may be that he alluded in this place to what was common among the Idumeans, and this is probable.

The meaning then is, as I think, that as lions ascended to higher grounds when Jordan swelled and overflowed, so the Chaldeans would come to the Idumeans, and invade the country like furious wild beasts. This is one thing. Then he adds, to the habitation of strength Jerome's rendering is, ``to valiant beauty;'' the word is so explained almost everywhere, but it is to be taken here for a strong dwelling. He alludes to the situation of that land, for it seemed impregnable, because it was surrounded, as it has appeared elsewhere, by mountains. The situation of Babylon

was different, it being surrounded by the various streams of the Euphrates.

What follows is obscure, when I shall have made him to rest, I will make him to run from her. Some explain the particle {כי}, ki, differently. It is indeed a causative, but is often taken, as it is well known, as an adverb of time. But the meaning of the Prophet is ambiguous, and some have imagined that the chosen people are spoken of, as though the Prophet meant, that when the Lord gave rest to his people, he would then cause them to flee from the land of Edom. But this exposition is wholly inadmissible; and I wonder how they came to make such a mistake; for the Prophet, I have no doubt, means here that the Idumeans had a long time been at ease, but that a sudden calamity would come which would scatter them here and there, and force them to seek safety by flight; and this is the best meaning that we can elicit: When, therefore, I shall have made her to rest, or, from the time I shall have made her to rest, I will make him to flee from her; as though he had said, ``I have hitherto suffered this nation to rest in its abundance, and thus to remain quiet; but I will suddenly disperse the inhabitants here and there, and they shall see their own land occupied by their enemies.'' In short, there is here a comparison between two conditions; for the Idumeans had long remained in their own dregs, for there was no one who caused them any trouble. God had then granted them a continual quietness; but now he declares that he would make all of them to flee, and that suddenly. And it was necessary that this should be distinctly expressed, that the Idumeans might not in future trust in their tranquil state, as hypocrites do, who usually abuse God's indulgence, and think, when he bears long with them, that they have escaped every danger. Lest then such confidence should deceive the Idumeans, the Prophet says that they would have to flee after having been long in a state of tranquillity.

The words may at the same time be explained otherwise; for {רגע}, rego, means to rend, to cut, to break; and it may be so taken here, ``When I shall have made a rent;'' for the Idumeans, as it has been stated, were fortified by defences on every side. God now intimates that he would make an irruption, which he compares to rending; and this explanation is not unsuitable.

It afterwards follows, And who is the chosen one, that I may set him over her? God now summons all the strong ones, that he might set them over Idumea, not as pastors or such as might care for the welfare of the land and provide for its safety, but such as would oppress it with tyrannical cruelty: Who then is the chosen one? At the same time God shews that all men of war are in his hand and at his disposal; as though he had said, ``If the Idumeans think that they surpass all others in courage and strength, they are greatly mistaken; for I will find those who possess more courage, for I have ready at hand chosen men to set over them whenever I please, who will easily subdue the Idumeans, however superior they may think themselves to be in martial valor.'' Then God does not here ask a question as of a doubtful matter, Who is the chosen one, that I may set him over her? but he shews that it would be no difficult thing for him to destroy the Idumeaus, because he would send for the chosen one from any part of the world he pleased, and set him over Idumea, not as a pastor, as I have said, but as a cruel tyrant.

He then adds, For who is as I am? He confirms the last clause; for God extols his

own power, which is wont to be despised by the unbelieving. The sentence indeed seems to be a common truth, Who is as I am? for all allow this from the least to the greatest. The Prophet appears then to have announced something trite and ordinary by saying, that none is like God; for even the worst of men acknowledge this, and the least child confesses it, and it is the dictate of nature. But were any one duly to consider how great is the pride of men, he would find that this truth is not so common; for there is hardly one in a hundred who concedes to God what justly belongs to him. For when he comes forth either to promise salvation or to announce punishment, how little is any one moved? nay, they who hold this principle, that God can do all things, are yet carried away, when the least hinderance occurs, to vain imaginations, and at length become wholly lost. When any one is persuaded that God ought to be feared, if any occasion for a false confidence be presented, what he had at first entertained in his mind will be choked, and then wholly extinguished. In short, if we carefully consider how contemptibly men think of God, we shall understand that this truth is not in vain often repeated in Scripture, that God has none like him. For when any one dares to exalt himself against God, he immediately strikes all with terror; and yet the power of God is regarded as nothing. We see that even the faithful themselves deem the least thing stronger than God; nay, they hesitate not to set up flies and insects, so to speak, in opposition to God, and even to make them equal to him. This is indeed very shameful, and yet it is what has usually prevailed perpetually in all ages.

We now, then, understand why God declares here as a great matter and as it were incredible, that there is none like him And hence also we learn what the last clause means, when it is asked, Where is the chosen one whom I may set over her? for he follows up the subject by saying, There is no one like me. By these words he shews that the whole world is under his power.

He now adds, and who will protest against me? Some read, ``Who will prescribe to me the time?'' But they who thus render the words, obscure the meaning of the Prophet. The Prophet, I doubt not, means, that there is no one who will dare to dispute with God; or were any one to attempt this, it would be ridiculous, because God could with one breath dissipate all contentions which men might raise. When therefore he says, Who will protest against me? it is the same as though he said, ``Who will make himself a party against me?'' as it is commonly said. Who then will oppose himself to me? or, Who will dare to contend with me? or, Who will dare to dispute in judgment with me? I have therefore given this rendering, and who will protest against me? and this seems clearly to express the meaning of the Prophet.

He afterwards says, and who is this pastor that stands before my face? By the word pastor, he alludes to the comparison of a lion; for he thus compares the Idumeans to sheep. Though they were very ferocious, yet here their weakness is referred to. As, then, a sheep cannot defend itself against a lion, so the Prophet shews that the Idumeans would not possess sufficient courage to resist the attacks of the Chaldeans. In short, the Prophet means, that though the Idumeans had many protectors, yet there would be no one able to stand against God when he came forth armed to destroy that nation. The sum of what is said is, that there would be no

one, by right or by strength, equal to God, to defend the Idumeans; for he said first, Who will protest against me? and then, What shepherd will stand against me? We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet, that as the Idumeans had to carry on war with God, it could not possibly be but that they must perish, for though they might get aids on every side, yet they could not, either by right or by strength, withstand God. [400] It follows ---

Jeremiah 49:20

20. Therefore hear the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Edom; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the inhabitants of Teman: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out: surely he shall make their habitations desolate with them.

20. Propterea audite consilium Jehovae, quod consultavit contra Edom, et cogitationes ejus, quas cogitavit contra habitatores Theman; Si non minores gregiseos dejecerint, si non perdiderint super eos habitacula ipsorum (vel, si non perdant super ipsos habitacula ipsorum.)

The Prophet proceeds with his subject respecting the Idumeans and their destruction; but he makes a preface in order to gain credit to his words. He then says that this was God's counsel and his thoughts. He speaks after the manner of men; for he transfers to God what does not properly belong to his nature; for God does not deliberate or consult, but has once for all decreed before the creation of the world what he will do; nor does he toss about his thoughts in all directions, as men do, who do not immediately see what is right or what ought to be done. Nothing of this kind belongs to God. But this way of speaking is sufficiently common, when what strictly applies to man is transferred to God. It ought at the same time to be observed, that this is not done without reason, for when God speaks by his servants, we ever raise doubts, ``Is that said in earnest --- can it be changed --- is it revocable?'' In short, we receive what is light and frivolous, and immediately give credit to it; but when God declares anything, we subject it to comments, and raise up a hundred disputes on every subject, ``Oh, but this or that may happen; and it may be that God does not speak in earnest.'' As, then, men never acquiesce in God's word, as they ought to do, the Prophets borrow from common use these forms of speech, that God had thus thought, that he had thus decreed.

The meaning is, that whatever Jeremiah had hitherto predicted of the Idumeans, could not be retracted, for it was a settled decree, so fixed as though God had thought of it for a hundred or thousand years.

He now adds, the inhabitants of Teman; by whom he means the Idumeans. But the repetition deserves notice: he first mentions Edom, and then the inhabitants of Teman. And Teman and Seir are sometimes the same. If not, cast them down,

[400] This verse is variously rendered in the versions and in the Targum, and also by commentators. The following rendering I deem plain and literal, — Behold, as a lion from the swelling of Jordan, Will he ascend to the strong habitation; For suddenly will I cause him to run from it: And he who is chosen will I appoint over her; For who is like me? and who can meet me? And who is he, the shepherd, who can stand before me? The word {,ארגיעה as in Proverbs 12:19, is ``suddenly,'' or in a moment. ``Him'' is the lion, and ``from it,'' the swelling of Jordan. ``Over her'' is Edom. ``Who can meet me?'' that is, to contend with me, or resist me, according to the Sept. The verb is ,{יעד} though Calvin derived it from .{עוד} The ``shepherd'' is mentioned, because of the ``lion,'' whom no shepherd can resist when he attacks the flock. God speaks of himself as identified with his chosen one --- Ed.

etc.; the verb properly means to draw, and to draw in reproach and contempt, as when a carcase is drawn through the mire. Then the Prophet means here a throwing down, accompanied with reproach. And he says, If not, draw them forth shall the least of the flock He speaks here otherwise than before; for he called the Chaldeans chosen, and extolled their strength, that he might strip the Idumeans of their vain confidence; but he now proceeds further and says, that there was no need of great valor to put that nation to flight, because even the least could lay them prostrate on the ground, and also draw them in disgrace through the land. Now, though the manner of speaking is different, yet the meaning remains the same, even that God would arm the Chaldeans with courage, so that they would easily destroy the land of Edom; and then, that though the Chaldeans should not, according to the estimation of men, excel in valor, they would yet be superior to the Idumeans, because victory was in God's hand, and he could work by means of flies as well as by men, and by children as well as by giants.

The formula of swearing is adopted, when he says, If not, draw them, etc. It is an elliptical phrase, as it has often been observed; such an obtestation as this is understood, ``Believe me not hereafter,'' or, ``Regard me not as God.'' In short, it is a form of an oath, which is a stronger affirmation than if he had simply said, ``Draw them forth shall the least of the flock.''

Some render the last clause, ``If not, set shall they,'' etc.; as though the verb came from {שום}, shum, to put, to set; but it is from {שמם}, shemem, or {ימם}, imem, as some think, though rather {שמם}, shemem The Prophet, I have no doubt, means, that they would destroy, or lay waste over them their dwellings. It follows ---

Jeremiah 49:21

21. The earth is moved at the noise of their fall, at the cry the noise thereof was heard in the Red sea.

21. A voce ruinae ipsorum contremuit terra; clamor vocis eorum in mari rubro auditus est.

The Prophet in many words dwells on the same thing, in itself sufficiently clear; but as it was not easy to convince the Jews of what had been already said of the destruction of the Idumeans, the Prophet continues the same subject. He then says that the earth trembled at the sound of their fall By these words he means that such would be the calamity, that it would terrify all neighboring countries: as when a great mass falls, the earth shakes, so the fall of the Idumeans, who had long gloried in their wealth, could not but strike all their neighbors with terror. Lest the Jews should think that incredible which had been said, the Prophet says, that though the earth should tremble, yet God would overthrow that nation.

He then adds, the cry of their voice was heard at the Red Sea [401] This sea, called now Red, was at some distance. The word {סוף}, suph, properly signifies weedy, a name given to it on account of the bulrushes it produced; but the sea that is meant, is what is now called the Red Sea. I have said that the distance between these places was considerable, and what the Prophet means is, that so great and so dreadful

[401] The literal rendering is, — The cry — at the Red Sea was heard its sound. It is an instance of the nominative case absolute. — Ed.

would be the shaking of the land of Edom, that its noise would make this sea to tremble, though it was at some distance. It follows ---

Jeremiah 49:22

22. Behold, he shall come up and fly as the eagle, and spread his wings over Bozrah: and at that day shall the heart of the mighty men of Edom be as the heart of a woman in her pangs.

22. Ecce tanquam aquila ascendet, et volabit et expander alas suas super Bosra, et erit cor fortium Edom die illo sicuti cor mulieris anxiae.

He again speaks of the speedy coming of the Chaldeans, as though he had said, ``When the state of that nation shall seem peaceable, when they rest secure in their own nest, then shall the Chaldeans suddenly come, or rather fly.'' For he compares them to eagles, in order to show that it would be a very quick and ruinous expedition. At the time this prophecy was declared by the Prophet, no one could have suspected that the Chaldeans would become enemies to the Idumeans, for they were on the best terms with each other; nay, we know that they paid every attention to gain the favor of the Chaldeans. Hence it is said in the Psalms,

``Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom, who said in the day of Jerusalem, Let it be cut down, let it be cut down.''
(Psalm 137:7)

By these words is intimated the impious conspiracy of that nation with the Chaldeans. Nor is there a doubt but that they tried by all means to conciliate the Chaldeans for their own interest. Hence the Prophet here points out a sudden change, when he says that the Chaldeans would be like eagles, who would expand their wings over Bozrah We have seen elsewhere that this was the chief city of that nation.

The heart, he says, of the valiant men of Edom shall be like the heart of a sorrowful woman We have seen how great was the pride of the Idumeans. As then they thought themselves superior in valor and counsel, and all other things, the Prophet here shews that the heart of their valiant men would become effeminate; for it cannot be but the hearts of men are in God's hand. God then is alone he who can sustain and animate us and give us firmness; and he also, when he pleases, can debilitate our spirits; and these things he does every moment: and that day then is not expressed without reason; for God does not only impart to every one of us what valor he pleases, but also takes away, when he pleases, the courage which he had given. Hence it is, that the hearts of the brave become cowardly, and also, that the most timid become sometimes bolder than lions, even when it pleases God either to weaken or to strengthen the hearts of men.

But it ought to be noticed, that no hope is given here to the Idumeans as to any remnant. When the Prophet spoke before of other nations, he gave them some consolation; but here he does not mitigate God's vengeance: he dooms the Idumeans to final ruin, without giving them any hope; and for this reason, because God had for a long time borne with them, and they had most wickedly abused his forbearance. He had spared them from the time the children of Israel came up from Egypt; and when they denied a passage to them, the children of Israel made a long circuit with

great inconvenience, that they might not touch their land. It was a singular favor shown to them. And had they had the least drop of humanity in them, they must have acknowledged such a kindness; on the contrary, they had ever cruelly treated their own brethren, and never ceased to do so, though often warned. It is no wonder then that God should now give them up to ruin, and announce predictions full of despair. This ought to be carefully observed, so that we may learn not to make light of God's patience when he bears long with us, but in due time to repent, lest when he rises for judgment he should utterly destroy us. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 49:23

23. Concerning Damascus. Hamath is confounded, and Arpad: for they have heard evil tidings: they are fainthearted; there is sorrow on the sea; it cannot be quiet.

23. Ad Damascum: Pudefacta est Chemath, et Arphad, quia rumorem malum audierunt, liquefacti sunt; in mari pavoris ad quiescendum non potest (hoc est, quod quiescere non potest.)

Jeremiah speaks here of the kingdom of Syria, which he means by Damascus, where the kings, as it is well known, resided. The Syrians had been from the beginning very hostile to the Israelites; and histories, well known, record that they had continual wars for many years. At length the kings of Israel confederated with the Syrians for the purpose of attacking their brethren the Jews. Hence it was, that the Syrians caused great troubles to the Jews, and were friends to the Israelites until both kingdoms were subverted by the Chaldeans. It is hence probable that this prophecy was announced while the kingdom was yet standing, or at least before its final overthrow; for it was much weakened before it was wholly cut off, as it has been stated elsewhere.

It was necessary to make this preface, in order that we might know the design of God in proclaiming this prophecy against the Syrians, even because they had been from the beginning enemies to the Israelites, and also, because they had united their strength with them for the purpose of oppressing the Jews. They had therefore always been like the fans of the Devil in the work of consuming the church of God. God then shews here that the calamity which awaited them, was a just reward for the impious cruelty which they had exercised towards the chosen people. This we must bear in mind.

He now says, that Hamath is confounded; this is considered to have been Antioch in Syria. There were many celebrated cities of this name; but Hamath towards Cilicia was the most renowned. He then says that the city Hamath, that is, Antioch, was ashamed as well as Arpad, which was also an opulent city. He adds, because they heard a bad report, or an adverse rumor. By these words he intimates that the kingdom of Syria would be terrified by a report only. No one could have thought such a thing, for when they had united themselves with the Israelites, they thought that they had power enough to drive away their enemies. As then they supposed themselves to be thus strong, so as to be beyond danger, the Prophet derides their confidence, and says that they would be so terrified by mere report, that they would be ashamed as though conquered by enemies.

He then adds, that they would be melted; for {מוג}, mug, means to be dissolved or melted. But there is here a different reading; many copies have {דאגה} {בים}, beim dage, connected with this; and they who read thus are forced to wrest the words of the Prophet. This reading literally is, ``They are ashamed in the sea, dread to rest,'' or, make to rest, ``it cannot,'' or could not. We see how harsh is the expression; they, however, elicit this meaning, that these cities would be dissolved, as he who sails on the sea and cannot through dread make his heart tranquil. But, as I have already said, the words of the Prophet are thus perverted. Now, if we read for {ב}, beth, {כ}, caph, which denotes likeness, the meaning would be very suitable, as a sea of dread, or a turbulent sea (a noun in the genitive case instead of an adjective, a common thing in Scripture) which cannot rest or be still. [402]

As to the general meaning of the passage, there is not much difference; for the Prophet intends to show that the Syrians would be like a turbulent sea, which is tossed here and there, so that the waves conflict together. If any one prefers to refer this to sailors, the meaning would be still materially the same. The sum of what is said then is, that as the Syrians had been terrible to all, so they would be frightened at the mere report of war, and so much so as to melt away and not be able to stand their ground, like the sea, which, when a tempest rages, has no rest, but is driven in all directions. He afterwards adds, ---

Jeremiah 49:24

24. Damascus is waxed feeble, and turneth herself to flee, and fear hath seized on her: anguish and sorrows have taken her, as a woman in travail.

24. Remissa est (vel, debilitata) Damascus; convertit se ad fugam; et tremor apprehendit eam; angustia et dolores tenuerunt eam tanquam parturientem.

As the clock strikes, I will not proceed further.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou settest before our eyes memorable judgments which ought to benefit us at this day, so that we may be kept under thy yoke and under the fear of thy law, --- O grant, that we may not grow hard at such threatenings, but anticipate thy wrath, and so submit to thee, that whatever thou denouncest on the ungodly may turn to our comfort, and for a cause of joy, when we know that the salvation of thy church is thus promoted, of which thou hast been pleased to regard and acknowledge us as members in thy Son our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventy-seventh

Jeremiah 49:24

24. Damascus is waxed feeble, and turneth herself to flee, and fear hath seized on her; anguish and sorrows have taken her, as a woman in travail.

24. Remissa est (vel, debilitata) Damascus; convertit se ad fugam; et tremor apprehendit eam; angustia et dolores tenuerunt eam tanquam parturientem.

The Prophet goes on with the same subject, for as the kingdom of Syria had flourished, and had been eminent in wealth and power, it was hardly credible that it could

[402] There are several copies in which the {כ caph, is found, and it is evidently the most suitable reading, --- Confounded is Hamath and Arpad; For an evil report have they heard, --- they melt away; Like the sea the agitation, the quieting none can effect. The melting away was through fear. They were moved or agitated, and, like the sea, they could not rest or be still. {אל} may be often rendered none or nothing. --- Ed

so soon be overthrown. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet, according to his usual manner, describes at large the ruin of that kingdom in order to confirm what he said.

He then says, relaxed, or weakened, is Damascus This verb, indeed, sometimes means to cease: he means that she was broken in strength. But under the name of this city, he includes, as it was stated yesterday, the whole kingdom of Syria, which was celebrated for its riches, largeness, and number of men. She turns, he says, to flight By these words he intimates that no safety remained for the Syrians except by fleeing into other countries. And it is a miserable safety when men cannot otherwise secure it than by a voluntary exile. He adds the reason, Trembling has laid hold on her, anguish and pangs have seized her as a woman in travail Whenever this comparison occurs in Scripture, some sudden and unexpected evil is intended. The Prophet then no doubt means that the ruin of Syria would be sudden; and he says this, that it might not trust in its own power, and that others might not think her to be beyond danger, because they saw that it was fortified by the number of its men, and by the abundance of all other things. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 49:25

25. How is the city of praise not left, the city of my joy!

25. Quomodo non est relicta urbs laudis? civitas gaudii mei?

Some think ``my'' to be redundant, and therefore render it ``the city of joy;'' [403] but they seem to be induced by no good reason; for they think it absurd that it should be called a city of joy to the Prophet, since he ought not to have regarded Damascus with any love or kindness. But the prophets, we know, do not always speak according to their own feelings, but assume the persons of others. We might then fitly read the words as they are, the city of my joy! Besides, Jeremiah very cuttingly exults over Damascus, when he thus expresses his wonder at its destruction: ``How can this be,'' he says, ``that the city of praise, that is, a celebrated city, and the city of my joy, that is, a spectacle so noble as to cause joy to all, --- how can it be that this city should not be left, that is, should not be spared?'' For by ``left'' he does not mean forsaken by its inhabitants, or reduced to solitude; for by ``left'' he means untouched or safe. [404]

But we must ever bear in mind what we have often stated, that the prophets, when they thus speak in astonishment, do not adopt an elevated style as rhetoricians do, to show their eloquence, but have always a regard to what is profitable. It was necessary powerfully to impress the minds of men, when the Prophet spoke of the ruin of so great a city. Then this astonishment includes what they call an anticipation; for it obviated a doubt which might have prevented credit from being given to this

[403] So the versions, (except the Sept.) and also the Targ., the {{ iod being regarded as paragogic. So Grotius. --- Ed.

[404] The Syr. rendered it "spared;" the Vulg. has left out the negative not. There are two difficulties, the verb {{ עזב is not used in the sense of sparing, though Gataker labours to shew this; then the connexion: the next verse begins with a ``therefore.'' Take the verb here in its usual sense, and then ``therefore'' will have its force. He asks, Why was not this city, under the circumstances previously mentioned, forsaken or abandoned, notwithstanding its being a celebrated and a joyous city? But as it was not forsaken, ``therefore,'' he says, ``her young men shall fall in her streets,'' etc. Venema's view is different; his version is, --- Why not? forsaken has been the city of praise, The city of my joy. That is, Why should not Damascus be compelled to flee, since Jerusalem had been forsaken, the city of praise and of his joy. ``Therefore,'' in this sense, refers to the slaughter of those who would not flee. --- Ed.

prophecy. This might have immediately occurred to every one, ``How can it be that Damascus is to perish?'' Then the Prophet anticipates this, and shews, that though this was contrary to the judgment commonly formed, yet, as the Lord had so decreed, the destruction of that city was certain. We now then perceive the design of the Prophet. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 49:26

26. Therefore her young men shall fall in her streets, and all the men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the LORD of hosts.

26. Propterea cadent electi ejus (aut, robusti juvenes, ,{מיוחב} enim propria sunt electi, sed transfertur hoc nomen ad eos qui sunt in pleno vigore aut flore oetatis) in compitis ejus; et omnes viri militares silebunt (alii vertunt, excidentur, to metaphorice accipitur illo sensu hoc verbum) in die illo, inquit Jehova exercituum.

Here the Prophet in a manner corrects himself, and declares, that though the ruin of Damascus would astonish all, yet it was certain; and so I explain the particle {לכן}, lacen

It is regarded by the Hebrews as a particle assigning a reason --- therefore, for this cause. They then think that a reason is here expressed why God had decreed to destroy that city, even because it had formerly made war with the Israelites, and then with the Jews, and thus it had not ceased to persecute the Church of God. But it is to be taken here in a simpler way, as an affirmative, according to its meaning in many other places. The Prophet then checks here the astonishment which he had expressed, as though he had said, ``However this may be, yet it is so appointed by God, though all should be astonished at the destruction of Damascus, yet fall shall its young men, etc.'' The meaning is, that no power under heaven was such as could resist God. Then Damascus, as it was devoted to destruction, could not avoid that judgment, though it was, according to the opinion of men, impregnable.

And this passage deserves particular notice, for when hinderances occupy our minds, and are presented to our thoughts, we ought ever to set up this as our shield, ``Whatever God has appointed must be fulfilled.'' Though, then, heaven and earth may seem united to impede the celestial decree, let us know that we ought to acquiesce in God's word, and this particle ``yet,'' or nevertheless, {לכן}, lacen, ought always to be remembered by us. For we have said that it was Jeremiah's purpose, in a manner, to bring into subjection whatever men might plan in their own minds; for this alone is sufficient, God has decreed what he declares. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 49:27

27. And I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, and it shall consume the palaces of Benhadad.

27. Et accendam ignem in muro Damasci, et consumet palatia Benhadad.

Here God himself speaks, and declares that he would be the author of the destruction of which Jeremiah prophesied. And he employs the similitude of fire, because there is nothing more violent or more dreadful than burning; for we know that the greatest cities are soon consumed and reduced to ashes when fire begins to blaze. God then compares the destruction of the city to burning, though no fire was applied to destroy the walls and the palaces of the king; but the Prophet means by

this metaphor, that such would be the destruction of the city, as though it was consumed by fire. He at the same time reminds the faithful of God's judgment, that they might know that whatever happened to the Syrians proceeded from his hand; because such calamities would have availed but little, except this doctrine was also added, that just punishments are inflicted by God on the wickedness of men.

But when he speaks of the palaces of Ben-hadad, he briefly points out the cause why God would deal so severely with the Syrians. We have said already that they had been always hostile to God's chosen people. They first tried to overthrow the kingdom of Israel; afterwards they confederated with the kings of Israel, but it was for the purpose of overthrowing the kingdom of Judah; and many were the confederacies for this end. But Ben-hadad, as we read in the first book of Kings, grievously distressed the Israelites. We indeed learn from the history of those times, that there were many kings of Syria who bore this name, for it was a common name, as the kings of Egypt were called Pharaohs; and other kings also took a popular name, as the emperors of Rome called themselves Caesars. But we read that the last Ben-hadad was the son of Hazael, who was also the king of Syria; and as I have said, it was not a private name. Since, then, sacred history clearly shews that there were many who were called Ben-hadad, the Prophet, I have no doubt, refers to the first who began to disturb and harass the Israelites. He then points out the cause why God had determined to destroy Damascus, for he had in his forbearance borne for a long time with the Syrians. But when he saw that they did not repent, but on the contrary added sins to sins, at length ascending his tribunal, he says, that the fire which he would apply to the walls of Damascus, would also consume the palaces of Ben-hadad, that is, the palaces whence so many evils had proceeded, and so much cruelty, by which the miserable Church had been distressed. This is the meaning. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 49:28

28. Concerning Kedar, and concerning the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon shall smite, thus saith the LORD; Arise ye, go up to Kedar, and spoil the men of the east.

28. Ad Kedar, et regna Hazor, quae percussit Nabuchadrezar, rex Babylonis, sic dicit Jehova, Surgite, ascendite adversus Kedar, et perdite filios Kedem (vel, orientis).

There is here another prophecy added respecting the Kedareans, who inhabited a part of Arabia. There is elsewhere mention made of them, and it is probable that they were neighbors to the Syrians and not far from Judea; for David complained (if he was the author of that psalm) that he dwelt among the children of Kedar,

``Woe to me, because I am compelled to dwell in Mesech and with the children of Kedar,'' (Psalm 120:5)

Whoever, then, composed that psalm, it is a probable conjecture that the Kedareans, though not contiguous to Judea, were not yet far distant; and we have said that they were the inhabitants of Arabia. And the Prophet adds, the children of Kedem; so some render the word, as though it were the name of a nation; and Moses tells us that Kedem was one of the sons of Ishmael. It may be that for this reason Jeremiah joined this people to the Kedareans, (Genesis 25:13-15.) But I am, however, inclined

to the opinion, that he mentions here the children of the East, that is, with respect to Judea; not that they were nigh the Persians or other oriental nations, but he only points out a land to the east of Judea.

But why God took vengeance on that people, the cause is not expressed. It may yet have been that they formerly had much injured the Israelites; God therefore having long spared them at length appeared as their severe judge. And though the reason was unknown, yet it did good to the Jews to know, that God's hand was extended to every part of the world to execute vengeance; for they might have hence concluded that they were justly punished, because they had rebelled against God; for we know that a servant who willfully and disdainfully disobeys his master, deserves double punishment. (Luke 12:47) When the Jews then saw that these barbarians, who were like wild beasts, could not escape God's vengeance, they might have thought within themselves how just must have been God's judgments executed on them, who had knowingly and willfully despised him. This then was one of the benefits to be derived from this prophecy.

And then, as we have elsewhere said, this general rule ought to be borne in mind, that when changes happen in the world, it is necessary, as men's thoughts and feelings are evanescent, that this warning should be given, that God so rules in all these changes, that chance has no place in them. For when calamities, like a deluge, spread over the whole world, then we think, as it has been stated, that such a confusion happens by chance, and without any cause. For when God afflicts some portion, the difference may lead us to some reflection, --- ``One part is afflicted and another escapes;'' but when evils overwhelm the whole world, then, there being no difference, we think that all things are in a state of confusion, nor can we collect our thoughts so as to know, that God so takes vengeance on all, that he yet regulates his judgments, as it is right, according to his infinite and incomprehensible wisdom and justice. As then this adjustment which God makes, as to his judgments, is not evident to the mind and perception of men, it was necessary, when God was at the same time fulminating through the whole world, that the Jews should be reminded to be ever attentive to the operations of his hand. They saw themselves ruined, they saw the same thing happening to the Egyptians and to all other contiguous nations; at length Assyria was to have its turn, then Chaldea, and afterwards the Medians and Persians. As then no part was to remain untouched, who would not have thought that all things revolved, as it were, through blind and uncertain fate? God, therefore, did not, without reason, forewarn the faithful, lest they should think, that in so great vicissitudes and violent changes, all things were indiscriminately mixed together, but that they might know that God, from heaven, regulated and overruled all these confusions. This is the reason why the Prophets so particularly spoke of the calamities of all nations.

Let us come now to the Kedareans: To Kedar, he says, and the kingdoms of Hazor These kingdoms, no doubt, included a large country, for it is hardly credible that Hazor was the name of a city; for who would have said, the kingdoms of Hazor, had it been only the name of a city? It is, indeed, certain, that there was a city of this name, as it is mentioned by Joshua. But here it means a large region, contiguous to the

Kedareans. And he says that all these nations had been smitten by Nebuchadnezzar, because these barbarous men were probably but little known to the Jews. It must yet be observed, that they had not been as yet smitten by Nebuchadnezzar, that is, at the time the Prophet spoke of their destruction. But Jeremiah spoke thus, in order to confirm his prophecy, as though he had said, that what many disregarded, and even treated with disdain, was at length really fulfilled. For when he threatened ruin to these remote nations, it is probable that he was derided by his own people; and hence he says, that he had not spoken in vain, but that by the event itself his vocation was proved, because these were smitten as he had predicted.

And this is the prophecy, Arise ye, ascend against Kedar, and destroy the children of the East [405] Here the Prophet speaks of the Babylonians, and in the person of God, as his herald. And we have said that God's servants commanded and ordered what was future with supreme authority, in order to gain more reverence and honor to their words or doctrine. For prophecies were despised by ungodly men, and they insultingly said, that they were only words. Hence the servants of God, to show that their words had accomplishment connected with them, assumed the person of God. Thus they boldly commanded the greatest kings, as Jeremiah does here, Arise ye; for whom does he here address? the king of Babylon, that greatest of monarchs, and also the Assyrians as well as the Chaldeans: and he commanded them to arise and to ascend, as though he had them ready for his service, even because he did not speak except by God's command.

And such mode of speaking ought to be especially observed, that we may learn to embrace whatever is announced in God's name, as though the thing itself were already before our eyes, and that we may also know that the power of the whole world, is in such a way under God's control, that all the kingdoms of the earth are ready to fulfill his word. When, therefore, God himself speaks, we ought so to regard the efficacy of his word, as though heaven and earth were ready to obey and to fulfill what he has commanded. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 49:29

29. Their tents and their flocks shall they take away: they shall take to themselves their curtains, and all their vessels, and their camels; and they shall cry unto them, Fear is on every side.

29. Tentoria ejus (tabernacula ejus) et greges ejus tollent, et cortinas ejus, et omnia vasa ejus, et camelos ejus sument sibi, et clamabunt contra eos, Terror undique.

The Prophet, in speaking of tents and curtains, had regard to the way of living adopted by that nation; for the Arabs, we know, dwelt in cabins and tents, as they do at this day, and they were also shepherds. They had no cultivated fields, but led their flocks through the deserts; and they had a great number of camels. This is the reason why the Prophet mentions tents, curtains, camels, and flocks, while speaking of the Kedareans; for they dwelt not in a fertile country, they possessed no arable lands, nor had they much other wealth, neither cities nor palaces. The sum of what is said is, that the Kedareans were doomed to destruction, and were therefore exposed as a prey to their enemies.

[405] It is "Kedem" in the Sept., and "East" in the other versions and the Targum. — Ed.

But as this was difficult to be believed, he adds, They shall cry to them, Terror on every side By these words the Prophet means, that there would be so much dread, that all would suffer their possessions to be plundered, not daring to make any resistance, because terror on every side would lay hold on them. They who read, ``They shall call them terror on every side,'' think that this is said metaphorically of the soldiers, as they were terrible. Some also say, ``The king of Babylon shall call'' or summon ``terror on every side against them.'' But the former explanation is the most probable, that when enemies called or cried out, Terror, terror, as conquerors, they would overcome them by their voice alone. This is, as I think, the real meaning of the Prophet. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 49:30

30. Flee, get you far off, dwell deep, O ye inhabitants of Hazor, saith the LORD; for Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath taken counsel against you, and hath conceived a purpose against you.

30. Fugite, abite procul valde (profundaverunt ad habitandum incolae Hasor, dicit Jehova); quia consultavit super vos Nabuchadnezar rex Babylonis consilium, et cogitavit contra vos cogitationem.

Jeremiah continues here the same subject, but more clearly expresses what he had said, Flee, he says, depart far away What follows I read as a parenthesis, Deep have they made to dwell, the inhabitants of Hazor Then Jeremiah proceeds with his subject, because consulted against you has Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, etc. He then bids them to flee to a distance, because Nebuchadnezzar had resolved to destroy them. By counsel and thought or purpose, the Prophet means the secret means by which he subdued the people when they feared no such thing. As then these shepherds lived securely on their mountains, Nebuchadnezzar prepared his forces, and divided them; and thus were these taken by his counsel and craft less than by strength. What the Prophet says here of the counsel and device of Nebuchadnezzar is not superfluous, because he indirectly touched on the sloth of that nation, who exercised no vigilance and thought, their desert being a sufficient cover to them. As then they thus lived securely, the Prophet here reminds them that they would have to do with a cunning enemy, who would contrive and form his counsels at home, and then would execute in due time what he had long meditated.

But a parenthesis follows, Deep have they made; to make more clear the sense, an adversative particle must be considered as understood, Though deep have they made to dwell; for without this exception the prophecy would have been less credible. For Kedareans were on every side fortified, because no one envied them, as they were not only frugal men, but also barbarous and contented with an austere and wretched living. As then they thought themselves thus safe, some one might have raised this objection and said, ``Why dost thou bid them to flee? wherefore should they flee? for there is no one so foolish as to attack them.'' So also the Scythians laughed at Alexander when he attacked them. ``What is your object? you think that you have to do with men; we are wild beasts: and then if you seek wealth and riches, you will not find them with us.'' Such then was the state of those nations mentioned here. When, therefore, the Prophet bids them to flee, because Nebuchad-

nezzar would suddenly attack them, he at the same time adds, Though deep have they made to dwell [406] He had before used this mode of speaking: to make deep to dwell, means to have a safe and hidden standing, remote from all danger. They are then said to be deep in their dwellings who dwell in fortified cities, or who inhabit deserts, or who are hid in some poor country, as the Kedareans and their neighbors. But the Prophet says, that this would not prevent the Babylonians from invading their land, and taking possession of it. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 49:31

31. Arise, get you up unto the wealthy nation, that dwelleth without care, saith the LORD, which have neither gates nor bars, which dwell alone.

31. Surgite, ascendite contra gentem securam, habitatorem (eum qui habitat) in fiducia, dicit Jehova; non portae nec vectes ei, solus habitat.

He confirms the last verse, repeating what he had already said, Arise, ascend; but he adds, against a quiet nation This was the deep dwelling of which he had spoken; for the Kedareans, as they thought themselves to be as it were in another world, were secure; and hence he says, against a secure nation. The word {שליו}, sheliu, means delicate, as we have seen elsewhere, but in this place its meaning is secure. For though there might be no joys there, it is yet said to be a secure nation, {גוי} {שליו}, gui sheliu, a nation which feared nothing. And then he explains himself, a dweller in confidence, one without fear and anxiety.

And he gives the reason, because they had no need of gates and bars, and they dwelt alone Some interpreters think that the pride of the Kedareans is denoted, because they would not protect themselves in the usual way, and regarded gates and bars as nothing. But the Prophet's meaning is different, that as they were barbarians and shepherds and beyond the reach of envy, they thought that no enemy would ever come to them. For what are the causes of wars but avarice and ambition? and who would wish to rule over barbarous nations living on their mountains? and then wealth cannot be found in a wild uncultivated country. As then the Kedareans were such, the Prophet says that they dwelt securely, though they were not fortified by gates and bars, but lived alone. He then says that they lived alone, not because they thought much of themselves as being solitary, and regarded themselves as being above kings --- for solitude often produces pride and obstinacy; but the meaning of the Prophet, as I have said, is quite different, even because the Kedareans thought that they had no need of friends and assistants, because they depended not on their neighbors for aid, but were contented with their own deserts. And at the same time they did not think that any enemy would disturb them, as there was no cause and no occasion.

We now then perceive again why the Prophet says, that they made deep to dwell, that is, that they had their dwelling deep, even because poverty and the absence of all riches were to them a sort of safe fortress: as they had no splendor and no

[406] This verb is deemed by most to be in the imperative mood, like the two foregoing verbs; and it is so given in the Sept., the Vulg., and the Targ. In the Syr., all the verbs are in the past tense, which is not consistent with the context. Blayney's version is, — Flee ye, move off apace, Retire deep for to dwell, etc. The meaning is, as he says, that they should go into deep caverns to hide themselves from their enemies. See Judges 6:2; 1 Samuel 13:6. — Ed.

dignity, they thought themselves exempt from the common lot of other men. But nevertheless he says that the Chaldeans would come and plunder them of what they had. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 49:32

32. And their camels shall be a booty, and the multitude of their cattle a spoil: and I will scatter into all winds them that are in the utmost corners; and I will bring their calamity from all sides thereof, saith the LORD.

32. Et erunt cameli eorum in direptionem, et copia pecorum ipsorum in praedam; et dispergam eos ad omnem ventum, extremos anguli, et ab omnibus lateribus ejus adducam perditionem ipsorum, dicit Jehova.

The explanation shall be given tomorrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that though the things related to us today from thy Prophets, concerning ancient nations, may seem as grown out of use, O grant that we may however be seriously impressed whenever we read of thy judgments as executed on any part of the world, so that we may learn at this day wholly to submit to thee and flee to thy mercy, and that whatever may happen to us, we may never doubt but that thou wilt be propitious to us, if we seek thee with a sincere heart, and with unfeigned faith in Christ Jesus, our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture One Hundred and Seventy-eighth.

In the verse we read yesterday, Jeremiah again repeated that the Kedareans would be so plundered by their enemies that nothing would remain for them. He therefore speaks again of camels and of cattle: he says that the abundance of cattle and the camels would be for a spoil and plunder But why he names camels and cattle rather than fields and vineyards, I briefly explained yesterday. For when a fertile country is the subject, whether abounding in corn or in vines, the Prophets spoke of such possessions; but when, as now, a reference is made to a country abounding in cattle and also mountainous, the Prophet speaks only of camels and of cattle; for the mode of living in that nation, as it has been stated, was austere and hard, and almost below the condition of man. When food for their cattle failed them, they went elsewhere, and carried in their waggons all their furniture.

It now follows, 1 will disperse them to every wind Here Jeremiah predicts the scattering of that nation. It sometimes happens that a country is plundered by enemies, when yet the inhabitants, stripped of their goods, remain there and live in poverty. But together with poverty, Jeremiah declares that there would be no ordinary exile, for the words are emphatical, I will scatter them to every wind There is here an implied contrast between that people and chaff; for as the chaff is carried away in all directions by blasts of wind, so would be, as Jeremiah shews, the scattering of that people. And he mentions also the utmost corners, {פאה} {קצוצי}, kotsutsi pae Jerome usually renders the words, ``shorn of hair,'' but very improperly; for there is no reason why the other people mentioned before should be thus called; for in Jeremiah 7 and Jeremiah 25 Jeremiah did not speak of the Kedareans, and yet he called many nations {פאה} {קצוצי} kotsutsi pae The verb {קצף} kotsets, whence this word comes, means to cut off; and {פאה} pae, signifies the extremity of anything.

This phrase then is the same as though he mentioned those bordered by an extremity or a corner. And this is most suitable to this passage; for it was not probable that they who dwelt in recesses should be thus scattered. When any wealthy country is plundered by enemies, they flee here and there in all directions; for instance, were a part of Italy laid waste, they would flee to those parts who could receive fugitives; but when a nation dwells in an extreme corner, where could it betake itself, when routed by enemies? The Prophet therefore enhances the misery of exile when he says, that people at the extremities would become fugitives, so as to be scattered through all parts of the world.

He adds, and from all its sides will I bring their destruction. He confirms the same thing; for when an evil enters on one side, neighbors may assist; but when calamity urges on every side, miserable men must then of necessity be scattered; and they must seek some distant exile, as there is no part that can show them hospitality. All this then refers to their scattering. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 49:33

33. And Hazor shall be a dwelling for dragons, and a desolation for ever: there shall no man abide there, nor any son of man dwell in it.

33. Et erit Hazor in habitationem draconum, vastitas usque in perpetuum (in seculum;) non habitabit illic vir, et non manebit illic (aut, peregrinabitur in ea) filius hominis.

Here Jeremiah concludes his prophecy concerning the Kedareans; he says that their land would be deserted. The Prophets often make use of this way of speaking, that the land, deserted by its inhabitants, would become the habitation of dragons. And this is more grievous than when the land remains empty; for when dragons succeed men, it is a dreadful thing. Hence, that God's judgment might produce more impression on men's feelings, the Prophets often declare that a deserted place would become the dwelling of dragons. He adds what imports the same thing, A waste shall it be for an age: but {עולם}, oulam, means perpetuity. And it is added, Not dwell there shall a man, nor live there shall a son of man There seems indeed to be a superfluity of words, for it would have been sufficient in one sentence to say, that the land would be deserted and not inhabited. But he first assigns it to dragons: then he adds that it would be a waste or solitude; and lastly, he says that no one would dwell there, and not only so, but having mentioned man, he adds the son of man Some indeed think that by man the nobles are referred to, and that by the son of man, or Adam, we are to understand the common people, the multitude. But as we have said elsewhere, this is too refined. It is a repetition which increases the effect, though in the second clause he speaks more generally and expresses the thing more clearly, as though he had said, that no one of the human race would become an inhabitant of that land. [407] It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 49:34-35

34. The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet against Elam in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah king of Judah, saying,

[407] The difference in the two clauses is properly distinguished by Blayney, in his version, — There shall not a man dwell there, Nor shall a son of man sojourn therein. — Ed

34. Qui fuit sermo Jehovae ad Jeremiam, prophetam, contra Elam, principio regni Zedechiae, regis Jehudah, dicendo,

35. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, the chief of their might.

35. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Ecce ego frango arcum Elam, principium fortitudinis ipsorum.

By Elam some interpreters understand Persia, and it is the most common opinion. I however think that the Elamites were not the same with the Persians; I should rather say that they were the Parthians, were it not that Luke, in Acts 2:9, makes them a distinct people from the Parthians. At the same time it is not right, as it seems to me, to regard the Persians as generally designated by Elam; for the Persians were remote from the Jews, and the Jews never received any injury from that people. There was therefore no reason why the Prophet should denounce punishment on them. The country of Elymais was known as bordering on the Medes, and contiguous to the Persians. But that people must have joined the Assyrians and Chaldeans against the Jews. As then the Babylonians had them as auxiliaries, it was God's purpose to avenge the injury done to his people. Besides, Pliny also speaks of Elamites as being contiguous to the Nabatheans; but they were occupying, as it were, the middle place between Persia and Judea. They were indeed, as he shews elsewhere, a maritime people; for he speaks often of Elymais, but names the Elamites only once. However this may have been, they were orientals as the Persians were, but not so far from Judea; and as they were, at it has been said, near the Medes, the probability is that they joined themselves with the enemies of the Church, when Nebuchadnezzar drew with him the vast forces which he had everywhere gathered, that he might extend his dominion far and wide; for we shall see in what follows that God was grievously displeased with the Elamites. [408] We hence conclude that they were very hostile to the chosen people, whose cause God here undertakes.

This much as to the name: when, therefore, Jeremiah speaks here of the Elamites, let us know that a particular nation is referred to, and one distinct from the Persians, and then that this nation assisted the Chaldeans in oppressing the Jews. Let us now see what the Prophet declares respecting them.

He says, first, that this word came to him in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah Nebuchadnezzar, then, greatly harassed the Jews, while yet they remained in their obstinacy; and it is probable that the Elamites formed a part of the Chaldean army. When, therefore, the Jews considered how various were their enemies, and when they did not expect that they would ever be punished, it was a trial that must have greatly distressed the minds of the godly. What Jeremiah then declared, no one could have thought of, that is, that the Elamites would not escape unpunished, because they so furiously attacked the chosen people under the banner of King Nebuchadnezzar. This, then, was the reason why the Prophet specified the time: this word, then, came in the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah

Then God, in the first place, declares that he would break the bow of Elam The

[408] They were the descendants of Elam the son of Shem, Genesis 10:22. They were a powerful kingdom in the days of Abram, Genesis 14:1. Isaiah speaks of them as hostile to the people of Israel, Isaiah 22:6. Shushan is said to have been in the province of Elam, Daniel 8:2 — Ed.

Parthians and other Orientals, we know, were very skillful archers; for every nation possesses its own peculiar excellency in connection with war. Some excel in the use of one kind of weapons, and others in the use of another kind. Formerly light infantry were in high repute among the Italians; the Gauls excelled in mailed horsemen. Though, now, all things are changed, yet still every nation differs as to its peculiar art in war. Now historians testify that the Orientals were very skillful in the use of the bow and arrow. It is, then, no wonder that the Prophet speaks of the bow of this people, and calls it the chief part of their strength, as they excelled in this sort of fighting. The Parthians were indeed much dreaded by the Romans; they pretended to flee, and then they turned back and made an impetuous attack on their enemies. They had also arrows dipped in poison. By these means they conquered large armies. For the Romans laid by their darts and fought hand in hand, and carried on a standing fight, so to speak; but when the Parthians kept discharging their arrows, they almost always fought unsuccessfully with them. I refer to this, that we may know that the bow was not without reason called the chief of their might, for it was by it that they were superior to other nations, though they could not fight hand in hand nor with drawn swords. It afterwards follows ---

Jeremiah 49:36

36. And upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds; and there shall be no nation whither the outcasts of Elam shall not come.

36. Et adducam contra Elam quatuor ventos a quatuor finibus coelorum, et dispergam eos ad omnes ventos istos; et non erit gens ad quem non veniat quispiam profugus (est mutatio numeri, sed quae sensum non obscurat, quispiam ex iis qui expulsi fuerint) ab Elam.

He now adds that four winds would come, which would dissipate the whole people. God himself speaks, in order that the word might be more powerful and have more weight. I will rouse up, he says, four winds And we know that the air is in a moment put in motion whenever it pleases God; and when Scripture extols the power of God, it does not without reason refer to the winds; for it is not a small miracle when the whole world is on a sudden put in motion. It is now tranquil, and then in half an hour the winds rise and conflict together in mid air. And God alludes to what is usual in nature: as then he suddenly rouses up winds which make, as it were, the whole world to shake and tremble; so he says he would raise up winds from the four ends of the world. But he speaks metaphorically; by winds he understands enemies, who would on all sides unite their powers to oppress the Elamites. I will bring, he says, on Elam the four winds from the four quarters of the world By the last words he expresses more clearly what I have just said, that God alludes to that formidable power which is daily presented to our eyes in nature. As, then, a sudden change disturbs the whole earth when winds arise, so God declares that he would rouse up four winds from the four quarters of the heavens. And he calls them the quarters of the heavens; for though the winds arise from the earth, yet their blowing is not perceived until they ascend into mid air: and though sometimes they seem to be formed above the clouds, they yet arise from the earth; for the origin of the wind is

cold and dry exhalation.

We now understand the reason why the Prophet speaks of the winds. There is yet no doubt but that he denotes some enemies by the four winds; but this prophecy was not fulfilled as long as the Persian monarchy ruled and flourished. It is, then, probable that the destruction denounced by the Prophet took place many ages after, even when the soldiers of Alexander contended about the supremacy; for we know how grievously distressed were all the Orientals when Alexander made an irruption into those countries. It was, indeed, a horrible tempest. But as he enjoyed the empire of the east but for a short time, what is said by the Prophet here was not then fulfilled. But those countries were afterwards so miserable, torn by intestine wars, that the Prophet does not without reason compare those contrary and opposite movements to four winds; for never has there been a fiercer emulation between enemies, and each of them had strong armies. Hence, then, it was, that that land was not oppressed by one enemy, but exposed to various and almost innumerable calamities. This is the reason that leads me to interpret this prophecy as fulfilled in the calamities which followed the death of Alexander the Great.

I will scatter them, he says, to these four winds; that is, as one wind breaks out at one time, and another at another time, so the Elamites shall flee here and there. For no one ruled long peaceably in the East, till almost all the soldiers of Alexander were consumed by mutual slaughters. Then Seleucus obtained Syria, and exercised the cruelest tyranny. But, as I have said, before Seleucus obtained peace and security, the whole of that part of the world had been inundated with blood. This is the reason why the Prophet says that the Elamites would be scattered to these four winds

The end of the verse remains: and there shall be no nation to which some of the fugitives from Elam shall not come We cannot, certainly, show from histories when this was fulfilled which the Prophet now says; but it is probable that that people were scattered at the time when the chiefs contended about the supremacy, that is, those who obtained power under Alexander. At the same time there would be nothing unreasonable were we to say that the Prophet spoke hyperbolically; and no doubt he exceeds due limits when he says ``There shall be no nation to which some of the fugitives from Elam shall not come.'' He indeed understands all the neighboring nations. But it may also have been that they did not flee to the Asiatics, but rather departed towards the Persian sea or to the Indies. We have already stated why the servants of God sometimes introduced hyperbolical expressions into their teaching, even because they had to do with men who were slow and stupid, who would not hear God when speaking in a simple manner, and could hardly be moved when he thundered. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 49:37

37. For I will cause Elam to be dismayed before their enemies, and before them that seek their life: and I will bring evil upon them, even my fierce anger, saith the LORD; and I will send the sword after them, till I have consumed them.

37. Et expavefaciam Elam coram hostibus ipsorum, et coram his qui quaerunt animam ipsorum; et adducam super eos malum excandescentiae irae meae, dicit Jehova; et emittam post eos gladium usque dum consumpsero ipsos.

This verse especially shews that the Elamites were of the number of those who had inhumanly raged against God's people, for he did not without reason set forth the severity of his vengeance towards them. We must, then, bear in mind that the Elamites had been among the chief of God's enemies, or at least had been in no ordinary way cruel, delighting in slaughters. Hence he says, I will dismay, or affright, etc. The verb {חתת}, chetat, means to tear in pieces, or to break; it may therefore be rendered, ``I will break.'' They who render it ``I will lay prostrate,'' do not seem to know the difference between consternere, to lay prostrate, and consternare, to dismay. But the most suitable meaning is, that God would terrify the Elamites, for he had spoken before of their flight and exile.

He then mentions the cause of their dread, even because God would dismay them and frighten them before their enemies, so that they would not be able to stand before them. By these words he intimates, that however warlike the Elamites were, they yet would not stand their ground when it seemed good to God to render to them their reward, for in his hand are the hearts of men. Though, then, the Elamites were brave, yet the Prophet declares that they would be so faint-hearted at the sight of enemies, as immediately to flee away, even because God would terrify them.

He afterwards adds, I will send the sword after them He means by this clause that he would not be content with terrifying them, but that when they began to flee, he would take them, because he would follow them, that is, urge on their enemies. And it ought ever to be observed, that what proceeds from men is ascribed to God, because men, however little they may think of it, yet execute his purpose, and are not only the proclaimers of his wrath, but also the instruments of it.

But he mentions the evil of the indignation of his wrath [409] This mode of speaking seems indeed harsh; but we have elsewhere stated, that the Prophets did not without reason join together these words, which appear somewhat harsh. Now wrath does not in a strict sense belong to God, for no feelings of this kind appertain to him. But when heat of wrath or indignation is mentioned, it doubles its vehemence in order to shake off the torpor of men, who would otherwise, as I lately said, be wholly insensible and indifferent. In short, by indignation the Prophet means no other thing than that vengeance is dreadful, and ought to astonish all mortals, so that they ought to fall down immediately as it were lifeless, as soon as they hear that God is displeased with them. In the meantime he shews what I have stated, that God was grievously offended with that people whom he threatens with extreme punishment, for he says, until I shall have consumed them We see what I have said, that this people were not slightly chastised, according to what has been mentioned of others: it hence follows that their wickedness had been very atrocious. The two clauses seem however to be inconsistent, --- that God would scatter the Elamites through all nations, --- and that he would consume them, for dispersion and consumption widely differ. But consumption refers to the body of the nation or to its name, as though he had said, that no Elamites would survive, because they would be merged in other nations, and disappear like chaff. It follows ---

[409] "The indignation of his wrath" is in apposition with "evil." So the Vulg., the Syr., and the Targ. And I will bring on them evil, The burning of my wrath, saith Jehovah. The evil was the effect of God's high displeasure. — Ed.

Jeremiah 49:38

38. And I will set my throne in Elam, and will destroy from thence the king and the princes, saith the LORD.

38. Et statuam solium meum in Elam; et perdam illinc regem et principes, dicit Jehova.

He confirms what I have just referred to as to their consumption; but he at the same time adds, that God would be in such a way the avenger as though his tribunal was erected in that land. He threatens that he would destroy the king and the princes; and this, as I have explained, was the consumption; for though some individuals would remain alive, yet the name of the people would not survive, the whole race as such would become extinct.

But these words ought to be noticed --- that God would erect his throne. God is said to erect his throne when he rules; but his kingdom is not to be taken always in a good sense. God is properly said to rule or reign among the faithful, whom he governs by his Spirit. So God's kingdom begins and has its origin when regeneration takes place. But sometimes, as I have already said, God is said to reign in the midst of his enemies, as we have seen respecting the Egyptians. He then erected his throne when he executed his recorded judgment on the Elamites, for though the Elamites were blind, yet God's power was made really evident, and by the effect he proved that he was the King of that people whose wickedness he punished with so much severity. In short, as God is said to be silent, to sleep, or to lie down, when he does not execute his vengeance; so in this place he is said to erect his throne when he discharges the office of a Judge. It follows ---

Jeremiah 49:39

39. But it shall come to pass in the latter days, that I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the LORD.

39. Et erit in posteritate dierum (hoc est, diebus sequentibus, vel successu dierum) convertam (vel, reducam) captivitatem Elam, dicit Jehova.

Here God mitigates the severity of the prediction, because he would at length gather some of the Elamites and restore them, so that they might again obtain some place or honor. He says not in the end of days, but after many days, It shall be in course of time that I will restore the captivity of Elam If it be asked when this was fulfilled, doubtless there has not been a restoration of that nation recorded in history. But the Prophet no doubt gives here a hope to the Elamites, which he gave before to other nations, even that they should be united again under Christ as their head. Though then the Elamites were not afterwards known, yet they have found out that this was not said in vain; nor does the Holy Spirit without reason mention them by the mouth of Luke among others who were converted to Christ. (Acts 2:9.) For though the Elamites were almost unknown, yet he connects them with the Medes and Parthians, ``Parthians and Medes and Elamites.'' This then was the time of which Jeremiah had prophesied, when he said that the Elamites would again be gathered together, that they might not be perpetually captives. And though they might not have then returned into their own country, yet it was a condition far better and more desirable when they obtained a name and a place in the Church than if they had

enjoyed every other blessing in the world. And we know that it is said of Christ, that God would gather under his hand all things scattered both in heaven and earth. (Colossians 1:20.) A part of this scattering was God's vengeance on the Elamites. Gathered then have been Elamites with others; and thus God at that time stretched forth in a manner his hand to them through Christ the Mediator, and opened to them the door of hope as to eternal life.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou didst favor despairing men with some consolation when justly and extremely indignant with them, --- O grant that whenever we at this day provoke thy wrath, we may at the same time taste of thy paternal mercy, and learn to flee to thee, and to put our hope in thine only-begotten Son, so that we may never despond, but ever look forward to that gathering, whose beginning is now seen, and whose final and complete accomplishment awaits us in heaven, through the same Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Jeremiah 50

CHAPTER 50

Lecture One Hundred and Seventy-ninth

Jeremiah 50:1

1. The word that the LORD spake against Babylon, and against the land of the Chaldeans by Jeremiah the prophet.

1. Sermo quem loquutus est Jehova super Babylone, super terra Chaldaeorum, in manu Jeremiae prophetae.

Our Prophet has been hitherto speaking of neighboring nations who had cruelly harassed the chosen people; and it was some consolation when the children of Abraham understood that God undertook their cause and would be the avenger of those wrongs which they had suffered. But this of itself would have been no great consolation, yea, it might have been viewed as nothing by many, while there was no hope of restoration; for it would have been but a small consolation to have others as associates in misery. If, indeed, Jeremiah had only taught that none of the nations who had troubled God's Church would escape unpunished, the Jews might have raised an objection, and said, that they were not freed from their own calamities, because the monarchy of Babylon still flourished, and that they were buried as it were in a perpetual grave. It was therefore necessary that what we read here should be predicted. And though this prophecy is given last, we ought to notice that the Prophet had from the beginning expressly spoken, as we have seen, of the calamity and destruction of Babylon. But this prophecy is given as the conclusion of the book, to mitigate the sorrow of the miserable exiles; for it was no small relief to them to hear that the tyranny by which they were oppressed, and under which they did live as it were a lifeless life, would not be perpetual. We now then understand why the Prophet spoke of the Babylonians and of their destruction.

But a longer preface would be superfluous, because those acquainted with Scripture well know that the Jews were at length so reduced by the Babylonians that

their very name seemed to have been obliterated. As then they were reduced to such extremities, it is no wonder that the Prophet here affirms that the Babylonians would be at length punished, and that not only that God might show himself to be the avenger of wickedness, but also that the miserable exiles might know that they were not wholly repudiated, but on the contrary that God had a care for their salvation. We now perceive the design of this prophecy.

The word of Jehovah, he says, which he spoke concerning Babylon, concerning the land of the Chaldeans, by the hand of Jeremiah the Prophet He testifies in his usual manner that he did not bring forward what he himself had invented, but that God was the author of this prophecy. He at the same time declares that he was God's minister; for God did not descend from heaven whenever it pleased him to reveal his favor to the Jews, but, as it is said in Deuteronomy, he was wont to speak by his servants. (Deuteronomy 18:18.) In short, Jeremiah thus recommends the things he was about to say, that the Jews might reverently receive them, not as the fictions of men, but as oracles from heaven. It follows ---

Jeremiah 50:2

2. Declare ye among the nations, and publish, and set up a standard; publish, and conceal not: say, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, Merodach is broken in pieces; her idols are confounded, her images are broken in pieces.

2. Nuntiate in gentibus, audire facite (hoc est, promulgate,) et tollite signum, promulgate, ne taceatis (ad verbum, ne occultetis,) dicite, Capta est Babylon, pudefactus est Bel, contritus est Merodach, pudefacta sunt simulachra ejus, contrita sunt idola ejus.

He predicts the ruin of Babylon, not in simple words, for nothing seemed then more unreasonable than to announce the things which God at length proved by the effect. As Babylon was then the metropolis of the East, no one could have thought that it would ever be possessed by a foreign power. No one could have thought of the Persians, for they were far off. As to the Medes, who were nearer, they were, as we know, sunk in their own luxuries, and were deemed but half men. As then there was so much effeminacy in the Medes, and as the Persians were so far off and inclosed in their own mountains, Babylon peaceably enjoyed the empire of the whole eastern world. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet expresses at large what he might have set forth in a very few words.

Tell, he says, among the nations, publish, raise up a sign, and again, publish To what purpose is such a heap of words? even that the faithful might learn to raise up their thoughts above the world, and to look for that which was then, according to the judgment of all, incredible. This confidence shews that Jeremiah did not, in vain, foretell what he states; but he thundered as it were from heaven, knowing whence he derived this prophecy. And his proclamation was this, Babylon is taken, Bel is confounded, and Merodach is broken I know not why some think that Merodach was an idol: for as to Bel, we know that the Babylonians trusted in that god, or rather in that figment. But the Prophet mentions here evidently the name of a king well known to the Jews, in order to show that Babylon, with all its defences and its wealth, was already devoted to destruction: for we know that men look partly to

some god, and partly to human or temporal means. So the Babylonians boasted that they were under the protection of Bel, and dared proudly to set up this idol in opposition to the only true God, as the unbelieving do; and then in the second place, they were inebriated with confidence in their own power: and hypocrisy ever rules in the unbelieving, so that they arrogate to themselves much more than what they ascribe to their idols. It is then the same thing as though he had said, that Babylon was taken, that Bel was confounded, and that the kingdom was broken, or broken in pieces. [410]

The name Merodach, as I have said, was well known among the Jews, and mention is made of a father and of a son of this name, by Isaiah and in sacred history. (Isaiah 39:1; 2 Kings 20:12.) It is no wonder, then, that the Prophet should name this king, though dead, on account of the esteem in which he was held, as we have seen in the case of the kingdom of Syria, he mentioned Ben-hadad, though no one supposes that he was then alive; but as Ben-hadad distinguished himself above other kings of Syria, the Prophet introduced his name. For the same reason, in my opinion, he names Merodach here.

The sum of the whole is, that though Babylon thought itself safe and secure through the help of its idol, and also through its wealth and warlike power, and through other defences, yet its confidence would become vain and empty, for God would bring to shame its idol and destroy its king. He again returned to the idols, and not without reason; for he thus called the attention of his own nation to the only true God, and also reminded them how detestable was the idolatry which then prevailed among the Chaldeans. And it was necessary to set this doctrine before the Jews, and to impress it on them, that they might not abandon themselves to the superstitions of heathens, as it happened. But the Prophet designedly spoke of images and idols, that the Jews might know that it was the only true God who had adopted them, and that thus they might acquiesce in his power, and know that those were only vain fictions which were much made of through the whole world by the heathens and unbelieving. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 50:3

3. For out of the north there cometh up a nation against her, which shall make her land desolate, and none shall dwell therein: they shall remove, they shall depart, both man and beast.

3. Quoniam ascendet contra eam gens ab aquilone, quae ponet terram in vastitatem, et (ut) non sit habitator in ea ab homine usque ad bestiam; fugerunt, abierunt.

Let what I have before said be borne in mind, that the Prophet makes use of many words in describing the ruin of Babylon; for it was not enough to predict what was to be; but as weak minds vacillated, it was necessary to add a confirmation. After having then spoken of the power of Babylon and its idols, he now points out the way in which it was to be destroyed --- a nation would come from the north, that is, with

[410] Most consider that "Merodach" here was a false god; first probably a king, afterwards deified. As confounded, or put to shame, is applied to Bel, the other verb {,{nn should be rendered ``dismayed'' or terrified, a meaning which it often has, --- Taken is Babylon, Confounded is Bel, Terrified is Merodach; Confounded are her images, Terrified are her idols. The word for ``images'' means labor, and refers to the labor and pains taken by those who made them; and the word for ``idols'' means a trunk or log of wood from which they were made. --- Ed.

reference to Chaldea. And he means the Medes and Persians, as interpreters commonly think; and this is probable, because he afterwards adds that the Jews would then return. As then Jeremiah connects these two things together, the destruction of Babylon and the restoration of God's Church, it is probable that he refers here to the Medes and Persians. If, at the same time, we more narrowly view things, there is no doubt but that this prophecy extends further, and this will appear more evident as we proceed.

He simply says now that a nation would come from the north, which would turn the land to a waste This clause shews that this prophecy could not be fitly confined to the time when Babylon was taken by Cyrus; for we know that it was betrayed by two Satraps during a siege; and that it was at a time when a feast was held, as though there was peace and security, as Daniel testifies, with whom heathen writers agree. Now Xenophon testifies that Cyrus exercised great forbearance and humanity, and that he used his victory with such moderation, that Babylon seemed as though it had not been taken. It had, indeed, changed masters, but such was the change that the citizens readily submitted to it. But it was afterwards more hardly dealt with, when Darius recovered it by the aid of Zopyrus; for Babylon had revolted from the Persians, and shook off the yoke. Darius having in vain stormed it, at length recovered it by the help of one man; for Zopyrus, having cut off his nose, and mutilated his ears and his face, pretended, in this deformed manner, to be a fugitive, and complained of the cruelty and barbarity of his king, with whom yet he was most intimate. The city was soon afterwards taken by treachery in the night. Then about four thousand of the Persians were hung in the middle of the Forum, nor did Darius spare the people. The Prophet then seems to include this second destruction when he predicted that the whole land would be made desolate. Nor ought this to be deemed unreasonable, for the Prophets so spoke of God's judgments, that they extended what they said further than to the commencement, as was the case in the present instance.

When, therefore, Babylon was taken by the Persians, it received the yoke; and she which ruled over all other nations, was reduced to a state of servitude. For the Persians, as it is well known, were very inhuman, and Isaiah describes them so at large. In the meantime, the city, as I have said, retained its external appearance. The citizens were robbed of their gold and silver, and of their precious things, and were under the necessity of serving strangers: this was bitter to them. But when Darius punished their perfidy and hung so many of the chief men, about four thousand, and also shed indiscriminately the blood of the people, and subjected the city itself to the plunder of his soldiers, then doubtless what the Prophet says here was more fully accomplished. It was yet God's purpose to give only a prelude of his vengeance, when he made the Babylonians subject to the Medes and Persians. It now follows ---

Jeremiah 50:4

4. In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the LORD their God.

4. Diebus illis et tempore illo (sed {עת} proprie significat condictum aut proefixum tempus,) dicit Jehova, venient filii Israel ipsi, et filii Jehudah simul, eundo et flendo

venient, et Jehovam Deum suum quaerent.

The Prophet now explains more clearly the purpose of God, that in punishing so severely the Chaldeans, his object was to provide for the safety of his Church. For had Jeremiah spoken only of vengeance, the Jews might have still raised an objection and said, ``It will not profit us at all, that God should be a severe judge towards our enemies, if we are to remain under their tyranny.'' Then the Prophet shews that the destruction of Babylon would be connected with the deliverance of the chosen people; and thus he points out, as it were by the finger, the reason why Babylon was to be destroyed, even for the sake of the chosen people, so that the miserable exiles may take courage, and not doubt but that God would at length be propitious, as Jeremiah had testified to them, having, as we have seen, prefixed the term of seventy years. He was derided by the Jews, who had so habituated themselves to hardness of heart, that they counted as nothing, or at least regarded as fables, all the reproofs and threatenings of God, and also gave heed, as we have seen, to the flatteries of the false prophets.

Jeremiah now promises that God would be their liberator after the time of exile had passed, of which he had spoken. Thus we perceive the design of this passage, in which the Prophet, after having referred to the destruction of Babylon, makes a sudden transition, and refers to God's mercy, which he would show to the Jews after they had suffered a just punishment: In those days, he says, and at that time --- he adds the appointed time, that the Jews might not doubt but that the Chaldeans would be subdued, because God had appointed them to destruction.

He says, Come shall the children of Israel, they and the children of Judah together; and he says this, that they might still suspend their desires. He commends here the greatness of God's favor, because the condition of the Church would be better after the exile than it was before. The ten tribes, as we know, had separated from the kingdom of Judah; and that separation was as it were the tearing asunder of the body. For God had adopted the seed of Abraham for this end, that they might be one body under one head; but they willfully made a defection, so that both kingdoms became mutilated. The kingdom of Israel became indeed accursed, for it had separated from the family of David, and this separation was in a manner an impious denial of God. As then the children of Israel had alienated themselves from the Church, and the kingdom of the ten tribes had become spurious, their condition was doubtless miserable (though the Jews as well as the Israelites were alike inebriated with their own lusts).

But what does our Prophet now say? They shall return together, the children of Israel and the children of Judah; that is, God will not only gather the dispersed, but will also apply such a remedy, that there will no more be any separation; but that on the contrary a brotherly concord will prevail between the ten tribes and the tribe of Judah, when God shall restore them again to himself. We now then perceive what the Prophet had in view: there is, indeed, here an implied comparison between their former state and that which they could yet hardly hope for, after their return from exile; for there is nothing better than brotherly concord, as it is said in the Psalms,

``How good and how pleasant it is for brethren

to dwell together in unity.'' (Psalm 133:1)

For the kingdom and the priesthood, the pledges, as it were, of the people's safety, could not stand together, without the union of the Israelites with the Jews. But they had been long alienated from one another, so that the chief favor of God had been extinguished by this separation. The Prophet says now, that they would come together.

And he adds, Going and weeping they shall come This may seem contrary to what is said in the Psalms,

``Going they shall go, and weep as those who sow; but coming they shall come with joy, carrying their handfuls.'' (Psalm 126:6)

The Prophet says here, that they shall come with tears. How can these two things be consistent? even because weeping may be taken for that which flows from joy or from admiration; for we know that tears gush out not only through sorrow, but also through rejoicing; and further, when anything unexpected happens, tears will flow from our eyes. We can then take the Prophet's words in this sense, that they would come weeping, because they would then find God merciful to them. But it is better to regard sorrow as simply meant; and the two things may be thus reconciled, --- that the Jews would come with joy, and also with sorrow, not only because the memory of their exile could not be immediately obliterated from their minds, but because it behooved them to remember their sins: they saw the Temple overthrown, the land wasted --- sights sufficient to draw tears a hundred times from the hardest. On one side there were reasons for joy; and on the other, reasons for tears. We know that there were tears shed; for the Prophet Haggai expressly tells us, that the old men, who had seen the former Temple, were much cast down, because there was then no such glory as they had seen. (Haggai 2.)

However this may have been, the Prophet means, that though the return would not be without many troubles, yet the Jews would come; coming, he says, they shall come, that is, going they shall go, and weep, as it is said in the Psalms, that they would come through desert and dry places. (Psalm 84:6.) The meaning then is, that though the journey would be hard and laborious, yet the Jews would return with alacrity into their own country, so that no labors would so fatigue them as to make them to desist from their course.

He subjoins the main thing, that they would come to seek their God Their change of place would have been useless, had they not come animated with the desire of worshipping God; for the worship had ceased during the time of exile, as it is said again in another Psalm,

``How shall we sing songs to our God in a foreign land?'' (Psalm 137:4)

Then the Prophet here reminds them, that God's favor would be real and complete, because the Jews would not only return to their own country, so as to possess it, but that they would also set up the worship of God, and dwell as it were under his protection. It follows ---

Jeremiah 50:5

5. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the LORD in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

5. Sion interrogabunt viam (hoc est, interrogabunt de via) versus Sionem, illuc facies eorum: Venite, et copulate vos Jehovae foedere perpetuo, quod oblivione non delebitur (subaudiendum est relativum pronomen, quod omissum est.)

He explains himself more at large, that they would ask those they met the way, that their faces would be towards Sion, that they would also exhort one another to seek God and join themselves to him by a perpetual covenant. The Prophet includes here all the tribes, and says that the Jews and the Israelites would not only return into their own country, to partake of the produce of that rich and fruitful land, but that they would also render to God the worship due to him, and then that nothing would be so vexatious to them but that they would be able to overcome all difficulties and all obstacles.

He says first, that they would ask the way --- a proof of perseverance; that they would ask the way to Sion, that is, ask how they were to proceed that they might come to Sion. By these words, the Prophet, as I have just said, denotes their constancy and indefatigable resolution, as though he had said, that though they journeyed through unknown lands, yea, through many devious places, they would yet be in no way disheartened so as not to inquire of those they met with until they came to Sion. This is one thing. Then he adds to the same purpose, Thither their faces We indeed know, that plans are often changed when adverse events impede us; for he who undertakes an expedition, when he sees his course very difficult, turns back again. But the Prophet declares here that there would be no change of mind that would cause the Jews to relinquish their purpose of returning, because their faces would be towards Sion, that is, they would turn their eyes thither, so that nothing would be able to turn them elsewhere. There is added, in the third place, an exhortation, Come ye; and they shall join themselves to Jehovah their God, by a perpetual covenant Here the Prophet first shews, that the Jews would be so encouraged as to add stimulants to one another; and hence it is said, Come ye; and, secondly, he adds, they shall cleave (there is here a change of person) to Jehovah by a perpetual covenant which shall not by oblivion be obliterated [411]

He again repeats what he had said, that the exiles would not return to their own country, that they might there only indulge themselves, but he mentions another end, even that they might join themselves to God. He means, in short, that God would do for them something better and more excellent than to allure them by earthly pleasures.

But we must notice the words, they shall cleave (so it is literally) to Jehovah by a perpetual covenant; for there is an implied contrast between the covenant they had made void and the new covenant which God would make with them, of which Jeremiah spoke in Jeremiah 31. God's covenant was, indeed, ever inviolable; for God did not promise to be the God of Abraham for a certain term of years; but

[411] The two verbs are rendered by the versions, except the Syr., and by the Targ., in the future tense, "They shall come and be joined," etc.; and one MS., says Blayney, has {.ויבאו This would read better. Then the verse would. run thus --- To Zion will they ask the way, Hither their faces; They shall come and be joined to Jehovah, By an everlasting covenant, which shall not be forgotten. ``Hither'' and not ``thither,'' for the Prophet was at Jerusalem; and so the particle means, and it is so given in the Sept. and Vulg. The last clause requires ``which'' in our translation, though not in Welsh, for, like the Hebrew, it can do without it --- nad anghofir literally the Hebrew. What is here predicted was literally accomplished, as recorded by Nehemiah, (Nehemiah 9:38; Nehemiah 10:29.) --- Ed.

the adoption, as Paul testifies, remains fixed, and can never be changed. (Romans 11:29.) Then on God's part it is eternal. But as the Jews had become covenant-breakers, that covenant is called, on this account, weak and evanescent: and for this reason the Prophet said,

``In the last days I will make a covenant with you, not such as I made with your fathers, for they have broken, he said, that covenant.'' (Jeremiah 31:31, 32)

Jeremiah now repeats the same thing, though more briefly, that the Jews would return to favor with God, not only for a moment, but that his covenant might continue and remain valid; and the way by which this would be done is expressed in Jeremiah 21, even because God would inscribe his law on their inward parts, and engrave it on their hearts. For it is not in man's power to continue so constant as that God's covenant should never fail; but what the Prophet omits here must be supplied from the former passage, that when the Jews returned, God's covenant would again become so valid and fixed, that it would never fail, even because their hearts would be renewed, so that they would be faithful to God, and never become apostates any more like their fathers.

He then adds, This covenant shall not be forgotten. We hence conclude, that the perpetuity of which he speaks, was founded rather on the mere benevolence of God than on the virtue of the people. He calls then the covenant which God would never forget, perpetual, because he would remember his mercy towards the chosen people; and though they were unworthy to receive such a favor, yet he would continue perpetually his mercy towards them to the coming of Christ; for the passage clearly shows that this prophecy cannot be otherwise explained than of Christ's spiritual kingdom. The Jews indeed returned to their own country, but it was only a small number; and besides, they were harassed by many troubles; God also visited their land with sterility, and they were lessened by various slaughters in wars: how then came the prophets thus to extol in such high terms the favor of God, which yet did not appear among the people? even because they included the kingdom of Christ; for whenever they spoke of the return of the people, they ascended, as we have said, to the chief deliverance. I do not yet follow our interpreters, who explain these prophecies concerning the spiritual kingdom of Christ allegorically; for simply, or as they say, literally, ought these words to be taken, --- that God would never forget his covenant, so as to retain the Jews in the possession of the land. But this would have been a very small thing, had not Christ come forth, in whom is founded the real perpetuity of the covenant, because God's covenant cannot be separated from a state of happiness; for blessed are the people, as the Psalmist says, to whom God shows himself to be their God. (Psalm 144:15.) Now, then, as the Jews were so miserable, it follows that God's covenant did not openly appear or was not conspicuous; we must therefore come necessarily to Christ, as we have elsewhere seen, that this was commonly done by the Prophets. The Prophet now enters on a new argument, ---

Jeremiah 50:6

6. My people hath been lost sheep: their shepherds have caused them to go astray, they have turned them away on the mountains: they have gone from moun-

tain to hill, they have forgotten their resting-place.

6. Grex perditus fuit populus meus, pastores eorum errare fecerunt ipsos, per montes abierunt, a monte in collem profecti sunt, obliti sunt accubitus sui.

As the clock strikes, I must stop here.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that we may not be inebriated with the sweetness of earthly blessings which thou bestowest continually on us, but learn to ascend to the hope of celestial life and eternal felicity, and in the meantime have such a taste of thy blessings, that we may know that thou art an inexhaustible fountain of all felicity, so that we may cleave to thee with a sincere heart and in perfect integrity, until we shall at length be brought to the full fruition of that kingdom, which thine only-begotten Son has procured for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTIETH

THE, Prophet in the sixth verse compares God's people to lost sheep: he therefore says, that the Jews wandered on the mountains and went from mountain to hill He throws the blame on the shepherds, by whom the miserable people had been led astray. Notwithstanding, God does not extenuate the fault of the people; nor did he accuse the pastors as though their wickedness and perfidy absolved the people; but on the contrary, he commends the greatness of his own grace, that he had mercy on a flock that was lost and without hope. We now then understand the design of the Prophet when he thus spoke in the person of God, My people have become lost sheep, and the shepherds have seduced them, on the mountains have they made them to go astray, from mountain to hill have they gone; and he says, that they had forgotten their lying down; [412] for when there is no fixed station, the sheep have no place to rest. Flocks, we know, return in the evening to their folds. But the Prophet says that the Jews, when scattered, forgot their lying down, because they had no settled habitation. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:7

7. All that found them have devoured them: and their adversaries said, We offend not, because they have sinned against the LORD, the habitation of justice, even the LORD, the hope of their fathers.

7. Omnes qui invenerunt eos comederunt, et adversarii eorum dixerunt, Non peccamus, quia scelerati fuerunt contra Jehovam; habitaculum justitiae et expectatio (vel, spes) patrum ipsorum, Jehova.

Jeremiah goes on with the same subject; for he tells us how miserable was the condition of the people until God looked on them to relieve them from their evils. And this comparison, as I have before said, more fully sets forth the favor of God, because he raised up his people as it were from hell at a time when they were reduced to despair.

He says first, All who found them devoured them; that is, all who came in contact

[412] I render the verse thus, — 6. Lost sheep have become my people; Their shepherds have caused them to err, Having turned them here and there on the mountains; From mountain to hill have they gone; They have forgotten their resting-place. The meaning of {{שובבים is given by the Sept. and Vulg., ``causing them to wander;'' the verb {שב} is to turn; being here a reduplicate, it means to turn much, or again and again, or here and there; and this is confirmed by what follows --- they went, through the teaching of their pastors, from ``mountain to hill,'' that is, from one form of idolatry to another; and ``forgotten their resting-place,'' which was God. --- Ed

with them thought them a prey. He, in short, means that they were plundered by all who met them; and then that enemies were so far from sparing them that they gloried in their cruelty towards them. Hence he adds, Their enemies said, We sin not, because they have acted wickedly against Jehovah. By these words the Prophet intimates, that their enemies indulged in greater wantonness, because they thought that what they did would not be punished. Almost the same sentiment is found in Zechariah, where it is said,

``All who devoured them sinned not, and they who devoured them said, Blessed be the Lord who has enriched us.'' (Zechariah 11:5)

But we must more closely consider the design of the Holy Spirit. The Prophet indeed shows that the Jews were reduced to extremities, so that they were not only cruelly treated by their enemies, but were also exposed to the greatest contempt. He, however, reminded them at the same time of their duty to repent, for when the whole world condemned them, it was but right that God should call them to an account for their sins. As then he had set over them all men as their judges, he indirectly touched and goaded their consciences, so that they might know that they had to do with God. When therefore Zechariah said,

``All who devoured thee said, Blessed be the Lord,''

he meant, that the sins of the people were so manifest to all, that all the heathens declared that they deserved extreme punishment; for by the words, ``Blessed be the Lord who hath enriched us,'' he intimated that heathens, in spoiling and plundering the Jews, would be so far from feeling any shame, that they would rather glory in being enriched with prey as it were by the hand of God. So also in this place, All who found them devoured them, and their enemies said, We sin, not, --- and why? because they have acted wickedly against Jehovah.

In short, the Prophet means, that the Jews would not only be exposed to the rapacity, avarice, and cruelty of enemies, but also to the greatest contempt and reproach. At the same time he exhorted them to repent; for if they were thus condemned by the judgment of the whole world, it was not unreasonable to direct their thoughts to the tribunal of God. Nor was it a strange thing that the unbelieving referred to God, for it is what we commonly meet with in all the prophets; and it was ever a principle held by all nations, that there is some supreme Deity; for though they devised for themselves various gods, yet they all believed that there is one supreme God. So the name, Jehovah, was known in common by all nations: and hence the Prophet here introduced the Chaldeans as speaking, that the Jews had acted wickedly against Jehovah; not indeed that they ascribed to God his honor, but because this opinion, that there is some God, was held by all; and this God they all indiscriminately worshipped according to their own forms of religion, but they still thought that they worshipped God.

What follows, interpreters explain as though the Prophet in the person of enemies intended to exaggerate the sin of the chosen people; they therefore connect the words thus, ``They have been wicked against Jehovah, who is the habitation of justice, and has always been the hope of their fathers.'' If we take this meaning, it is no wonder that their sin is amplified, because the Jews had forsaken not some

unknown God, whose favor and power they had not experienced, but because they had been perfidious against the God who had by many proofs testified his paternal love towards them. It was then an impiety the more detestable, because they had thus dared to forsake the only true God.

But I approve of a different meaning, --- that the Prophet answers by God's command, that their enemies deceived themselves, when they thus confidently trod under foot the chosen people, and thought that everything was lawful for them. The Prophet, I doubt not, now checks the wantonness of which he speaks, as though he had said, ``Ye think that this people are wholly rejected by me, and hence there are no limits to your cruelty; but I have so adopted them, that my covenant can never be rendered void.'' We may better understand what Jeremiah means by a similar example: when Isaiah answered King Hezekiah that God would be the defender of the city, when they recited to him the words of Sennacherib or of Rabshakch, who brought his orders, (Isaiah 37:24) he said,

``But he thinks not that I have founded Sion.'' [413]

That answer seems to me to be wholly like this passage. Sennacherib said, ``I will go up and take the city and the temple;'' he, in short, triumphed as though he was a conqueror; but God, on the other hand, restrained his confidence in these words, ``But that impious and proud enemy knows not that I have created Sion, and have been from the beginning its maker: can I then now bring upon it such a destruction as would wholly cut off the memory of it? Many cities have indeed perished, and there is no place so illustrious which may not sometime be destroyed; but the condition of the holy city (says God) is different.'' And he adds the reason, Because he had created it. So in this place, Jehovah is the habitation, of justice and the hope of their fathers For God's enemies almost always form their judgment according to the present state of things; for in prosperity they are inflated with so much pride that they dare insolently to utter blasphemies against God. For though the Chaldeans had spoken thus, that they sinned not, because the Jews had been wicked, there is yet no doubt but that their boasting was insulting to God, as it is said in Isaiah 37:22, 23,

``The virgin, the daughter of Zion, hath despised and derided thee, and drawn out the tongue against thee; me, the God of hosts, he says, hath he despised.''

By these words God shows that he was derided in the person of his Church. For this reason, then, God himself now comes forth and declares that he is the habitation of justice and the hope of his chosen people, in order that the Chaldeans might not promise themselves prosperity perpetually.

We hence see that these sentences are set in opposition one to another rather than connected together, and spoken in the person of the ungodly. The Chaldeans said, ``We sin not, because they have acted wickedly against Jehovah;'' then the Prophet responds and shows that they deceived themselves if they thought that God's covenant was abolished, because he for a time chastised his people, as it is said by Isaiah,

[413] Calvin, in his exposition of Isaiah 37:26, applies what is said to Sion, and not to Sennacherib, as it is commonly done. — Ed.

``What shall the messengers of the nations declare?''

or,

``What shall be told by the messengers of the nations? that God hath founded Sion.'' (Isaiah 14:32)

When he spoke of the deliverance of the people and city, he added this acclamation, that it would be a memorable benefit, the report of which would be known among all nations, that is, that God had founded Sion, that it had been wonderfully delivered as it were from present destruction.

He first calls God the habitation of justice; and he alludes, as I think, to the tabernacle; and then he more clearly expresses himself, that God was the hope of their fathers The Jews were indeed unworthy of being protected by God; but he speaks not here of their merits, but, on the contrary, God himself affirms the perpetuity of his covenant, and the constancy of his faithfulness, in opposition to the ungodly. For since the Chaldeans had already possessed the greater part of the country, and had taken all the cities except Jerusalem, they thought that the people were forsaken by their God; and this tended to cast reproach on God himself. Hence he declares here, that though the Jews had been wicked, yet his covenant was so far from being extinct, that he was a habitations, that is, like a place of refuge. And he calls him the habitation of justice, that is, firm or faithful; for justice is not to be taken here in its proper sense, but, as in many other places of Scripture, it means firmness or rectitude; as though he had said, ``God has once extended his wings to cherish his people, (as it is said elsewhere;) he will therefore be always a sure habitation.''

He had also been the hope of their fathers, according to what is said by Isaiah, that he had created Sion from the beginning; but he renews the memory of his covenant, as though he had said, ``It is not today that I have first received this people into favor, but I made a covenant with their father Abraham, which will remain fixed.'' So, also, he says in this place, that he was the hope of their fathers, even because he had adopted the whole race of Abraham, and showed them mercy through all ages. Then the Prophet indirectly infers that it would not be possible for their enemies perpetually to possess power over them, because God, after having chastened his people, would again gather the dispersed, and thus heal all their evils. [414]

A useful doctrine may be hence gathered, that whenever the Church seems to be so oppressed by enemies as to exclude any hope of restoration, this ought always to be borne in mind by us, that as God has once chosen it, it cannot be but that he will manifest his faithfulness even in death itself, and raise from the grave those who seem to have been already reduced to ashes. Let this passage, then, come to our minds, when the calamities of the Church threaten utter ruin, and nothing but despair meets us; and when enemies insolently arrogate everything to themselves, and boastingly declare that we are accursed. But God is a habitation of justice, and

[414] The most approved exposition is the first, which makes the latter words to be in apposition with Jehovah, as given in the Versions, though the last clause seems to be a separate sentence, — Because they have sinned against Jehovah, The habitation of righteousness; And the hope of their fathers was Jehovah. By calling God the habitation of righteousness, what is implied is, as Lowth suggests, that they would not have been banished, had they not justly deserved to be so treated, God being the seat or dwelling-place of justice or righteousness. And in addition to this, he had been the hope of their fathers. See Jeremiah 40:3, where we have an example of what their enemies alleged. — Ed.

was the hope of our fathers; let us, then, recumb on that grace which he has once promised, when he deigned to choose us for himself, and to adopt us as his peculiar people. Such is the import of the passage. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:8

8. Remove out of the midst of Babylon, and go forth out of the land of the Chaldeans, and be as the he-goats before the flocks.

8. Fugite e medio Babylonis, et e Chaldaea egredimini, et sitis tanquam hirci ante gregem.

This verse confirms the exposition which I have given; for God does not now reprove his people, nor does he condemn their sins; but on the contrary, he exhorts them to entertain good hope, though they were overwhelmed with extreme miseries, he then pursues the same subject when he bids them to flee from Babylon and to go forth from Chaldea; for he promises deliverance to the faithful, and at the same time reminds them of the coming ruin of the Chaldean empire, so that they who went the farthest off would best consult their own safety. For the Prophet intimates that all found in Chaldea would be exposed to the violence of enemies; hence he bids them to flee and to go forth quickly. But as I have before said, he promises a free exit to the Jews; for he would have in vain exhorted them to depart had they been shut up, for we know that they had been confined as within inclosures. Had they then been thus captives, the Prophet would have spoken in mockery by saying to them, Flee and go forth But he shows that their captivity would not be perpetual, because God would remove all obstacles and open a way for the miserable exiles to return to their own country.

He bids them to be as he-goats before the flocks: by which he means that they were to hasten with all confidence. For the he-goats possess more boldness than sheep, and they go before the flock because no fear restrains them. So God takes away every fear of danger from the Jews when he bids them to be as he-goats before the flock; as though he had said that they were no more to fear, lest the Chaldeans should punish them for avowing their wish to return to their own country; for it was a capital offense to speak of their return as long as the Chaldeans ruled over the Jews. But God now promises a change, for he would dissipate the terror by which they had been for a time restrained. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:9

9. For, lo, I will raise and cause to come up against Babylon an assembly of great nations from the north country: and they shall set themselves in array against her; from thence she shall be taken: their arrows shall be as of a mighty expert man; none shall return in vain.

9. Quia ecce ego excito (excitans, ad verbum, et adducens) et adduco super Babylonem congregationem gentium magnarum e terra aquilonis, et ordinabunt contra eam (aciem scilicet.) unde capietur; sagittae ejus tanquam fortis prudenter agentis; non redibit frustra,

Here, again, God declares that enemies would come and overthrow the monarchy of Babylon; but what has been before referred to is here more clearly expressed. For he says, first, that he would be the leader of that war --- that the Persians and

Medes would fight under his authority. I, he says (the pronoun {אנכי}, anki, is here emphatical,) I am he, says God, who rouse and bring, and then he adds, an, assembly of great nations The Chaldeans, as we know, had devoured many kingdoms, for Babylon had subjugated all the neighboring nations. Except, then, this had been distinctly expressed, they might have disregarded the prophetic threatenings. But Jeremiah speaks here of the assembly of great nations, lest the Chaldeans, relying on their power, the largeness of the monarchy, and the multitude of their men, should promise themselves victory, and thus lie asleep in their indulgences. God then, in these words, shortly intimates that there would be ready at hand those who in number and power would surpass the Chaldeans.

He afterwards adds, They will set in order against her. Something is to be here supplied --- that they would set the battle in order. Now, by this expression, the Prophet sets forth the boldness of the Persians and Medes, as they would be immediately ready for the conflict; they would not long consult, but quickly advance to the fight. In short, he refers to the quickness and boldness of the Persians and Medes, when he says, They shall set in order against her; for they who distrust their own strength, take convenient positions, or contrive ambushes, or withdraw for a time until they know all the plans of their enemies; but the Prophet says that the Persians would by no means be such, because they would be prepared for battle at the first onset, and have the army set in order against the Babylonians.

It follows, thence taken shall be Babylon. The word {משם}, mesham, means from that place. But the Prophet intimates that the Persians would become conquerors by one battle only, so that the Chaldeans would no more dare to resist. We indeed know that those once put to flight, do often prepare new forces and renew the battle; this is indeed usually the case, and it seldom happens that any one is conquered in one battle. But the Prophet here declares that Babylon would be taken at one time; as soon, he says, as the fight begins, the enemies shall not only overcome, but shall by one assault take Babylon, so as to make it captive.

We now, then, perceive the design of the Prophet; but, doubtless, this prophecy was a derision to the unbelieving, for he seemed to speak of a thing impossible: thus he sang a fable to the deaf. But God, however, did not without reason predict that Babylon would be so taken, that it would, as it were, in one moment fall into the hands of enemies. We said, indeed, yesterday, that it was long besieged and taken by treachery in the night; but we also said that this prophecy is not to be confined to one period; for Babylon was often taken. It was taken through the contrivance of Zopyrus, as we said yesterday, when it thought itself sufficiently strong to resist, and Darius had nearly despaired. We shall therefore find nothing inconsistent in this prophecy, when we consider how great and how supine was the security of that people even at the time when they were suddenly overthrown.

He now adds, Its arrows as of a valiant man; some render it, as of a bereaving man, because some put the point on the right side and some on the left. The word {שכל}, shecal, means to act prudently, to be prosperous, and also to be bereaved. But I agree with those who take the first sense, for it immediately follows, it shall not return in vain Those who render the word ``bereaved,'' understand thereby that the

arrows of the Persians would be deadly or fatal. But the context does not correspond, for an explanation is afterwards given, that it would not return in vain. It seems, then, that by this word Jeremiah denotes their dexterity, as though he had said that the Persians would be so skillful in throwing arrows, that they would not discharge one arrow in vain; as those who are well exercised in that art always aim directly at an enemy, and never shoot their arrows here and there without effect. So then the Prophet says that the arrows of the Persians would be those of men shooting skillfully, who know how to take a right aim. [415] And he calls them valiant or strong; for it is not enough to send arrows straight against an enemy, except there be also nerve and strength to shoot them; for arrows might touch one, but not penetrate into his body, or hardly hurt his skin. But the Prophet refers to both these things --- that arrows would be hurled with sufficient force to strike and wound the Chaldeans --- and that they would also have always a direct aim, so that no one would miss its object. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:10

10. And Chaldea shall be a spoil: all that spoil her shall be satisfied, saith the LORD.

10. Et erit Chaldaea in praedam; quicunque praedati fuerint ipsam, saturabuntur, dicit Jehova.

Here he mentions the effect of the victory, that he might more fully confirm what he had said; for it is sometimes the case, that they who are conquered flee to their cities. The country is indeed laid waste, but the enemies depart with their spoils. But the Prophet here says, that the whole of Chaldea would be plundered: he further adds, that the plunderers would be satiated, as though he had said, ``The enemies shall not only seize on all sides, as it sometimes happens, on what may fall into their hands, but they shall heap together all the treasures of Chaldea until they shall be satiated.'' He means, in short, that Chaldea would be wholly emptied; for these two things ought to be deemed as set in opposition the one to the other, --- that the enemies would be filled to satiety, and that the Chaldeans would be reduced to poverty. Then the satiety of which the Prophet speaks, implies that the Chaldeans would be brought to extreme penury and want. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:11-12

11. Because ye were glad, because ye rejoiced, O ye destroyers of mine heritage, because ye are grown fat as the heifer at grass, and bellow as bulls;

11. Certs laetati estis (in futuro quidem tempore, laetabimini,) et exultabitis quum diripietis haereditatem meam; multiplicabimini (hoc est, augescetis) tanquam vitula herbae, et hinnietis tanquam equi fortes:

12. Your mother shall be sore confounded; she that bare you shall be ashamed: behold, the hinder most of the nations shall be a wilderness, a dry land, and a desert.

12. Pudefacta est mater vestra valde, erubuit genitrix vestra; ecce postremum gentium, desertum, vastitas, solitudo.

God shows here, that though the Chaldeans insolently exulted for a time, yet their

[415] Their arrows, like those of a skilful warrior — Blayney. In the next line there is an instance of {{לא being in the sense of none, --- ``None shall return empty,'' or void; i.e., without effecting its purpose. See Isaiah 55:11. --- Ed.

joy would not continue; and at the same time he points out the cause of their ruin, even because they dealt so arrogantly with the people of God. He then says in the former clause, Ye exulted and rejoiced in plundering my heritage; and then he adds, Ye became fat (for to be multiplied means here to become fat) as a heifer, well fed, or of the grass; for some think that the word is used for {דשאה}, deshae; but some render it, ``herbified,'' or fed on grass; while others derive the word from {דוש}, dush, to thresh or tread out corn. [416] It is then added, Ye neighed like strong horses, or ye bellowed like bulls, as some render the words; for {אבירים}, abirim, sometimes mean bulls, and sometimes strong horses; and the verb {צהל}, tzal, means to cry aloud, but is taken sometimes in the sense of neighing, as we have seen in Jeremiah 5, ``Every one neigheth on his neighbor's wife;'' the Prophet said so in condemning the people for their lusts; and they who apply this passage to bulls are obliged to change the meaning of the verb --- for bellowing, and not neighing, is what belongs to bulls. [417]

Now it was necessary, for two reasons, for the Prophet to speak thus; first, it was hardly credible, that the Chaldeans, after so many and so remarkable victories, could be broken down and laid prostrate by new enemies; for they had been terrible to the whole world, they had subdued all their neighbors, they had extended on all sides their borders; it was then the same as though they had set their nest in the clouds. Then the Prophet says here, that though they exulted and gave loose reins to their joy, yet this state of things would not be perpetual, because they should at length be brought to shame. This is one thing. And the second reason why the Prophet spoke thus was, because God intended that it should be testified to his own people, that though he permitted so much liberty to the Chaldeans, he had not yet forgotten his covenant; and for this reason he mentioned the word heritage. Though then the calamity of his people was apparently a sort of repudiation, as though God designed to have nothing more to do with them, yet he says that they were his own heritage; and thus he shows, that God would give a specimen of his favor towards the Jews, by thus severely chastising the Chaldeans. This then is the reason why he says, Ye have rejoiced in plundering my heritage, but your mother is ashamed. He expresses here more than if he had said, ``Ye shall at length lie down confounded with shame;'' but he names their mother, that he might intimate the destruction of the whole of that monarchy, which had been so terrible to all the neighboring nations. [418]

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that though we cease not daily to provoke thy wrath by our many sins, we may yet, with confidence, flee to thy mercy, and that though thou seemest for a time to cast us away, we may not yet cast away hope, founded on thy eternal word, but that, relying on that Mediator in whom we always find the price

[416] Several copies have {דשה}, threshing. Being allowed to eat at pleasure, the threshing heifer became fat and frisky. It is so taken by Blayney and Henderson, though not countenanced by the Versions or the Targ. --- Ed.

[417] Jeremiah having twice before (Jeremiah 8:16; Jeremiah 47:3) used the word for steeds or horses, we may conclude that he means the same here. — Ed.

[418] The connection of these two verses will be more evident, if we render {כי when, as proposed by Gataker, and not surely, as by Calvin, nor because, as in our version, --- 11. When ye shall rejoice, when ye shall exult, Ye plunderers of mine heritage, When ye shall skip as a fed heifer, And neigh like steeds, 12. Ashamed greatly shall be your mother, Confounded shall she be who bare you; Behold, the last of the nations shall she be, A desert, a dry land, and a wilderness. The reference seems to be to the rejoicings of Babylon, when it was taken. --- Ed.

of expiation, we may not hesitate to call on thee as our Father; and may we, in the meantime, find thee by experience to be such towards us, so that we may cheerfully look forward to that celestial inheritance, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thy only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY FIRST

WE explained yesterday why the Prophet denounced shame and reproach on the Babylonians, even because they had arrogantly exulted over the children of God. And he says that Babylon would be the extremity of the Nations.

The Chaldeans had flourished in power and wealth, and possessed the empire of the East. It was then an extraordinary revolution to be reduced to the lowest condition, to be, as it were, the dregs of all the nations. And to the same purpose he adds, a barren land, a desert, and a solitude It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:13

13. Because of the wrath of the LORD it shall not be inhabited, but it shall be wholly desolate: every one that goeth by Babylon shall be astonished, and hiss at all her plagues.

13. Ab indignatione Jehovae non habitabitur (hoc est, praee indignatione, aut, propter indignationem,) et erit vastitas tota; quisquis transierit per Babylonem stupebit, et sibilabit super omnibus plagis ejus.

Jeremiah again repeats that the destruction of Babylon would be an evidence of God's vengeance, because the Chaldeans had unjustly raged against the Church. But the name of God seems also to have been designedly mentioned, that the faithful might more readily receive this prophecy: for had they thought that what Jeremiah said came from man, they would have hardly believed his words, for what he said exceeded the comprehension of men. He then mentioned the indignation of God, that the faithful might know that it was absurd to form an opinion concerning the ruin of Babylon according to the present aspect of things, because God would do a work there beyond the common course of things.

He then says, that it would become a waste, so that every one passing through it would be astonished, and yet would not pity it. This way of speaking often occurs in the Prophets, when they wish to describe a waste exceeding what is common. In the meantime, what follows ought to be noticed, that this arrangement would excite no commiseration, but rather mockery, which the Prophet denotes by the word hissing. It then follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:14

14. Put yourselves in array against Babylon round about: all ye that bend the bow, shoot at her, spare no arrows: for she hath sinned against the LORD.

14. Ordinate contra Babel per circuitum; quicunque tenditis arcum projicite (vel, jaculamini) super earn, (contra eam,) ne parcatis sagittee; quia contra Jehovam scelerat egit.

The Prophet now turns to address the Medes and Persians, and instigates them, in the name of God, to destroy Babylon. We have already said, why the Prophets assume authority over all nations, even that they might show that God's power is connected with his word. For men do not easily apprehend the efficacy of God's

word, and think that the air is to no purpose beaten by an empty sound. Hence the Prophets show that God has his hand extended whenever he speaks, so that nothing is announced in vain. This then is the reason why the Prophet now, as before, commands the Persians and Medes strenuously to exert themselves in attacking Babylon.

He says, first, Set in order, that is, the battle, or the assault; set in order against Babylon; and then, around, so that no escape might be open to them. He adds, All ye who bend the bow, for this mode of fighting was common among the Medes and Persians, as it appeared elsewhere; and the Orientals still follow the same practice, for they throw darts at their enemy, and move here and there, for they do not engage in pitched battles. he afterwards says, Throw or shoot at her, spare not the arrow; the singular is here used for the plural, he adds the reason, because they have acted wickedly against God. [419]

Though the iniquity of Babylon was manifold, there is yet no doubt but that God here undertakes the cause of his Church. Then, of all the sins of the Chaldeans, the chief was this, that they had oppressed the Church of God; for we know with what favor God regards his children, so that he who hurts them toucheth the apple of his eye, as he testifies elsewhere. (Zechariah 2:8.) This singular effect of love Jeremiah sets forth when he says, that the Chaldeans had acted wickedly against Jehovah, even because they had tyrannically oppressed his Church.

Now God will have nothing, as it were, apart from his children: and hence we learn a useful doctrine, --- that the salvation of his Church is so precious in the sight of God, flint he regards the wrong done to the faithful as done to himself. Thus there is no reason why we should torment ourselves, when the ungodly harass us, because God will at length really show that our salvation is not less dear to him than their own eyes are to men. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:15

15. Shout against her round about: she hath given her hand: her foundations are fallen, her walls are thrown down: for it is the vengeance of the LORD: take vengeance upon her; as she hath done, do unto her.

15. Vociferamini contra eam per circuitum; dedit manum suam; ceciderunt fundamenta ejus, diruti sunt muri ejus, quia ultio Jehovae haec; ultionem sumite de ea; quemadmodum fecit, facite ei.

Jeremiah proceeds in exhorting the Persians and the Medes, not that he had ever spoken to them; but this mode of speaking, as it has been said, availed to confirm the minds of the godly, so that they might feel assured that what had proceeded from the mouth of Jeremiah was not vain. Here, then, he assumes the person of God himself, and with authority commands the Persians and the Medes as to what they were to do. He says again, Cry aloud against her. By crying aloud or shouting, he means the cry of triumph which soldiers send forth when a city is taken, or rather, as I think, the encouraging cries, by which soldiers rouse one another when they make an attack; for battles are never without shoutings, nor the storming of cities. God titan bids the soldiers to animate one another in their usual way to make a strenuous

[419] Or literally, "Because against Jehovah has she sinned." — Ed.

effort. Shout, he says, and then adds, all around.

He then says, She hath given her hand By these words he intimates that Babylon would not be able to resist. Hands are wont to be given as a token of union; but he is also said to give his hand who confesses himself to be conquered. In this sense we may take the words of Jeremiah, that Babylon had given her hand, because she could not defend herself against the Medes and Persians. But as we know flint the city was taken by treachery, in this manner also was fulfilled what Jeremiah had announced, when two Satraps, in order to revenge private wrongs, sent for Cyrus: for thus it happened that Babylon, or those within it, willingly stretched forth the hands.

It is added, her foundations have fallen, and her walls have been overthrown; not that Cyrus attacked the city with warlike engines, for he entered in by the fords; but still the soldiers readily mounted the walls. Jeremiah then speaks figuratively, as though he had said, that the Chaldeans were mistaken in thinking that they had strong fortresses, because the walls would avail them nothing, however high and wide they were. And we know what ancient historians relate of these walls and towers. The event was almost incredible; for no one could have thought it possible that a city so fortified could be taken by assault. But the Prophet derides this confidence, and declares that the walls would be overthrown, together with their foundations [420] But as it was a thing difficult to be believed, he again adds a confirmation, that it would be the vengeance of Jehovah; as though he had said, that the destruction of Babylon ought not to be estimated according to the thoughts of men, because God would there put forth his wonderful power. In the meantime, he animates again the Persians and the Medes to take vengeance, and to render to the Babylonians what they had deserved. The Prophet in short intimates that the Persians and the Medes would be armed to execute God's vengeance on the Babylonians.

But we must notice the last clause, Do to her as she has done to others; for we hence learn, what we have also observed elsewhere, that a reward is rendered to every one, so that they who have been cruel to others, do find how dreadful is God's judgment. God does not always execute his judgment by men; but still this is ever true,

``Woe to thee who plunderest, for thou shalt be plundered;''

and also this,

``Judgment without mercy shall be to him
who hath showed no mercy;''

and still further,

``With what measure any one measures,
the same shall be rendered to him.''

(Isaiah 33:1; James 2:13; Matthew 7:2.) This truth, then, remains fixed and unchangeable. But God in various ways renders to the ungodly their reward; for he sometimes punishes them by the hand of man, and sometimes he suspends his judgment. Here he shows that the Persians and the Medes would be the executioners of his vengeance, even as the Chaldeans themselves had been as it were

[420] Rather "battlements" or ramparts, as given by the Sept.; for it is not proper to say that "foundations" have fallen. — Ed.

his scourges when he chastised his people for their sins; for he had employed the Chaldeans in carrying on war against the Jews. But God has many ways by which he calls each one to an account. Thus at length he punished the Chaldeans, because they indulged only their avarice and ambition in oppressing the Jews; for it was not their purpose to punish the Jews as they deserved; but their own lust, as I have just said, led them to cruelty and slaughter. It was, therefore, but just that they should in their turn be chastised by God's hand. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:16

16. Cut off the sower from Babylon, and him that handleth the sickle in the time of harvest: for fear of the oppressing sword they shall turn every one to his people, and they shall flee every one to his own land.

16. Excidite seminantem e Babylone, et qui apprehendit falcem tempore messis; coram gladio opprimente, quisque ad populum suum respiciet, quisque ad terram suam fugiet.

He still addresses the Medes and the Persians, and bids them cut off from Babylon both the sowers and the reapers; but by stating a part for the whole he includes also all others. Husbandmen in a manner preserve the life of men, as other arts and occupations are not capable of doing so. Were there no sowing and reaping, all would of necessity perish. When, therefore, the Prophet bids them take away those who sowed and reaped, it was the same as though he had said, ``Strike with the sword and kill all the inhabitants, so that nothing may remain but the land reduced to solitude.'' He then commands the Chaldeans to be slain, so that no husbandmen should remain to sow and reap.

This, indeed, was not fulfilled by Cyrus, as we have elsewhere seen. But what I then reminded you of ought to be borne in mind, that the Prophet extends his threatenings much further, for Babylon was often smitten by God's hand, and at length wholly destroyed. The assault of Cyrus was a prelude, but other calamities followed, when it was more severely oppressed.

He adds, From the face of the oppressing or wasting sword every one shall flee to his people and to his own land As that country was wealthy, many strangers had come there, and they had also drawn together captives from all parts. Thus many foreigners no doubt dwelt in Chaldea when the empire flourished. There were there many husbandmen and many artificers. The Chaldeans ruled, and yet many were content with small means, and even paltry; or it may be that the Chaldeans compelled conquered nations to do servile work in agriculture and in works of art. The Prophet now says, that in the revolution which was to happen, each would look to his own land and flee there, as there could be no delight in a country deserted and desolate. Then from the face of the oppressing sword shall every one look to his own people and to his own land; and those who before pretended to be wholly devoted to the Chaldeans, would forsake them in their necessity, because nothing would be better for them than to consult their own safety. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:17

17. Israel is a scattered sheep; the lions have driven him away: first the king of Assyria hath devoured him; and last this Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon hath

broken his bones.

17. Grex dispersus (vel, agnus dispersus aut haedus; {שה} significat interdum gregem, interdum etiam significat singulos agnos, vel singulas oves; grex ergo dispersus fuit) Israel; leones expulerunt eun; primus voravit eum rex Assyriae, et hic postremus contrivit ossa ejus Nebuchadrezer rex Babylonis.

Here the Prophet more clearly shows what he had briefly referred to, even that God was thus incensed against the Babylonians, because he had undertaken the cause of the people whom he had chosen. Then Jeremiah's design was to show to the faithful, that though God severely chastised them for a time, he had not wholly divested himself of his paternal regard towards them, because he would at length make it openly evident that they to whom he had been so rigid were dear to him. He then mitigates the severity of punishment, that the Jews might not succumb to despair, but call upon God in their miseries, and hope that he, after having turned them, would at length be propitious to them.

The sum of what is said is, that whatever punishments God inflicts on his Church are temporary, and are also useful for salvation, being remedies to prevent them from perishing in their vices. Let us then learn to embrace the promises whenever we are wounded with extreme sorrow under the chastisements of God: let us learn, I say, to look to his mercy; and let us be convinced of this, that though signs of his wrath may appear on every side, yet the punishments we suffer are not fatal, but on the contrary, medicinal. For this reason, the Prophet exhorted the faithful of his time to be patient, by showing that God, after having been a Judge, would be again a Father to them.

He then says that Israel was like a scattered flock, or a straying sheep, which is the same thing. He expresses how they became so, the first who devoured them was the king of Assyria; for we know that the kingdom of Israel was overthrown by the Assyrians, and the land of Judah was also very much pillaged by them; a small portion remained. Then God says, that the people had been consumed by the calamities which the Assyrians had occasioned. But he compares what remained to bones, as though a wild beast devoured a sheep, and left only the bones. There was then no flesh or skin in Israel after the Assyrians had cruelly treated them, and that often. But as the kingdom of Judah remained, he says that it was like bones; and hence he adds, and this last, Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, hath broken, his bones, [421] that is, hath broken in pieces and devoured the bones which remained.

We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet. Moreover, he exaggerates the miseries of the chosen people, that he might in a manner open a way for mercy. God, then, here assumes the feeling of man, who is touched with a sad spectacle, when he sees a miserable and harmless sheep devoured, and the bones cast away, and then sees another wild beast, still more savage, who breaks the bones with his teeth and devours them. Since God then thus speaks, there is no doubt but that he meant to express with what tender feeling he regarded his chosen people, and that

[421] Literally, “and boned him;” which is to be taken in a privative sense, “and unboned him.” There are similar words in Hebrew: to neck is to break the neck. (Exodus 13:13.) To tail is to cut off the tail. (Joshua 10:19.) To root is to root up. (Psalm 52:5.) The Vulg. here is exossavit — Ed.

he also meant to give the godly the hope of salvation. It afterwards follows,---

Jeremiah 50:18

18. Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will punish the king of Babylon and his land, as I have punished the king of Assyria.

18. Propterea sic dicit Jehova exercituun, Deus Israel, ecce ego visito super regem Babylonis, et super terram ejus, quemadmodum visitavi regem Assyriae.

What I have said may hence with more certainty be inferred --- that the similitude which God employed was intended for this end, that having assumed the person of one in sorrow, he might represent as it were to their eyes his sympathy, he then shows that he would be the avenger of the cruelty which the Chaldeans had practiced, as he had already been the avenger of all the evils which the Assyrians had done to his people.

We must bear in mind the time --- for the meaning of this passage depends on history. The Assyrians were stronger than the Chaldeans when they harassed the kingdom of Israel: for we know that in the time of Hezekiah the king of Babylon sent to him to seek his favor, and to allure him to a confederacy. While then the monarchy of Assyria was formidable, the Assyrians were very hostile to the Israelites and also to the Jews: what followed? Nineveh was overthrown, and Babylon succeeded in its place; and so they who had ruled were constrained to bear the yoke, and thus Babylon made the Assyrians captive to itself. God now refers to this judgment, which was known to all. The Assyrians themselves did not indeed think that the God of Israel was the avenger of his people, but yet it was so. Hence God here declares that he had already given a manifest proof of the solicitude which he had for the welfare of his people: as then he had punished Assyria, so he declares that he would take vengeance on the Babylonians. And thus, by an example, he confirms what might have appeared incredible. For who could have thought that that monarchy could so suddenly fall? And yet it happened beyond what any could have anticipated. God here repeats what had taken place, that the faithful might feel assured that the judgment which the Assyrians had experienced, awaited the Babylonians. This is the plain meaning of the Prophet. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:19

19. And I will bring Israel again to his habitation, and he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, and his soul shall be satisfied upon mount Ephraim and Gilead.

19. Et reducam Israelem ad caulas suas, et pascetur in (monte) Carmel et Basan, et in monte Ephraim et Gilead; satiabitur anima ejus.

Jeremiah pursues here the same subject, and sustains the minds of the faithful in their miseries, lest they should wholly despond. It is then the same as though he stretched forth his hand to the shipwrecked, or gave support to those lying down as it were lifeless; for exile to God's children was not only sad, but was like death, because they perceived the vengeance of God as though they had been wholly repudiated. It was therefore necessary to give them some consolation, that they might not altogether despair. The object, then, of our Prophet now is, to encourage the Jews to bear patiently their troubles, and not to think the stroke inflicted on them to be fatal. Hence God promises a restoration to their own country, which would be an

evidence of pardon and of mercy; for when God gathered his people, it was the same as though he had openly showed that their adoption remained unchanged, and that the covenant which seemed for a time to fail was still valid.

We now then see why Jeremiah spoke of the restoration of the people; and then he adds, to their own folds, or to their own habitation. This mode of speaking, we know, is found everywhere in the Prophets, for they compare God to a shepherd, and the Church to a flock of sheep. This similitude then is sufficiently common, nor could God better express how much he was concerned for the welfare of his people, than by setting himself forth as their shepherd, and by testifying that he would take care of his flock. But as we said at the beginning of the book, Jeremiah had a special reason for using this similitude, because he was from a town of pastures, and had been from his childhood among shepherds: there is therefore no wonder that he often uses expressions to which he had been accustomed; for education in a great measure forms the language of men. Though then the Prophet speaks according to the usual phraseology of Scripture, there is yet no doubt but that he retained, as it has been said elsewhere, his own habitual mode of speaking.

He then says, that after the people had been gathered, they would inhabit, rich and fertile mountains, even Carmel and Bashan. The fruitfulness of these mountains is spoken of in many places, but it is not necessary to quote them. The meaning however is, that God, after having again gathered his chosen people, would be as it were a faithful shepherd to them, so that they might feel assured that there would be not only a free return to their own country, but that God would be also the guardian of their safety, so as ever to protect them, to exercise care over them, to defend them against their enemies.

But that God might more fully set forth his kindness, he adds, and satisfied shall be his soul Soul here is to be taken for desire, as in many other places. Now the former doctrine ought to be borne in mind, that God is never so angry or displeased with his Church but that he remembers his covenant. Then, as to the faithful, after they have undergone their temporary punishment, God at length stretches forth his hand to them; nor is he once only propitious to them, but continues his mercy, and so cherishes them, that he is not less solicitous for their welfare than a shepherd is, to whom his flock is not less dear than his own life, so that he watches in the night, endures cold and heat, and also exposes himself to many dangers from robbers and wild beasts in order that he might protect his flock. But the Prophet points out as by the finger the very fountain of all this when he adds, ---

Jeremiah 50:20

20. In those days, and in that time, saith the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found: for I will pardon them whom I reserve.

20. In diebus illis et tempore illo, dicit Jehova, quaeretur iniquitas Israel, et nulla erit, scelus Jehudah, et non invenietur; quia propitius ero his quos fecero residuos.

As I have already said, the Prophet now shows the primary cause why God purposed to deal so kindly and mercifully with his people, even because he would remit their sins. And doubtless whatever is said of the remission of sins is cold and un-

meaning, except we be first convinced that God is reconciled and propitious to us. The unbelieving indeed seek no other thing than to be relieved from their evils, as the sick who require nothing from their physician but that he should immediately remove pain. If the sick man thirsts, ``Take away thirst,'' he will say. In short, they regard only the symptom, of the disease they do not say a word. Such is the case with the ungodly, they neglect the chief thing, that God should pardon them and receive them into favor. Provided they are exempted from punishment, this is enough for them. But as to the faithful, they can never be satisfied until they feel assured that God is propitious to them. In order, then, to free from disquietude and all misgivings the minds of the godly, our Prophet says that God would be propitious, so that he would bury all the sins of Israel and Judah, so that they might no more be remembered or come to judgment.

This passage is remarkable, and from it we especially learn this valuable truth, that when God severely chastises us, we ought not to stop at the punishment and seek only a relief from our troubles, but on the contrary we ought to look to the very cause of all evils, even our sins. So David, in many places, when he seeks from God a relaxation of evil, does not only say, ``Lord, deliver me from mine enemies; Lord, restore to me my health; Lord, deliver me from death;'' --- he does not simply speak thus, but he earnestly flees to God and implores his mercy. And on the other hand, when God promises deliverance from punishment, he does not simply say, ``I will restore you from exile or captivity, I will restore you to your own country;'' but he says, ``I will forgive you your sins.'' For when the disease is removed, the symptoms also which accompany the disease disappear. So also it happens in this case, for when God shows that he is propitious to us, we are then freed from punishment, that is, what we have for a time suffered, or what awaited us, had not God spared us according to his infinite mercy and goodness. [422]

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast been so merciful towards thine ancient people, and however grievously thou mightest have been offended, yet thou didst preserve some remnant to whom thou gavest tokens of thy mercy, --- O grant that it may please thee so to allure us also at this day; and however we may deserve a thousand times to be condemned by thee, yet deign to receive us in thine only-begotten Son, and through him show thyself reconciled to us to the end of our life; and be thou our Father in death itself, so that we may live and die to thee, and acknowledge this to be the only true way of salvation, until we shall at length enjoy that celestial inheritance which has been obtained for us by the blood of the same, thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY SECOND

IN the last lecture we began to explain what the Prophet says, that when God

[422] The idea of this verse is rightly given in these words: the punishment for iniquity and sins would not be exacted, because God would pardon the remnant; hence they appeared not. The removal of punishment, the restoration from exile, would shew that iniquity and sins no longer existed, God having fully pardoned them, and thus obliterated them. The iniquity of Israel was false worship, the worship of the calves, and the sins of Judah were especially idolatry and the rejection of God's messages by his prophets. For these evils more particularly they were banished, and their exile proved a remedy for them, as they never afterwards fell into these sins. — Ed.

redeemed his people he would be so propitious as to blot out all their sins. We said also that the Prophet shows that the people had for just reasons been treated with severity. Here then we have to observe the justice of God in all his judgments. For the Prophet reminds us that the Jews could not have been reconciled to God, except they acknowledged that they had been justly punished. And hence we learn also a useful doctrine, that whenever God smites us with his rods, we are not only to seek that relief may be given us from external evils or sorrow, but that God may also forgive us. The reason also is to be observed, for the Prophet teaches us that there would be no iniquity because God would be propitious. We hence learn that there were also just reasons why God chastised his people, but that as he designed to forgive their sins he became their deliverer. Let us then know that we are counted just before God, not because he sees no iniquities in us, but because he freely forgives them. It is, in short, the only true way of being reconciled to God, when he buries as it were our sins so as never to call them to judgment.

Moreover, that this favor properly belongs to the kingdom of Christ may be gathered from the thirty-first chapter, where the Prophet, having spoken of the new covenant, lays down this as the principal thing,

``I will pardon their iniquities,'' (Jeremiah 31:34)

and he uses here the same verb. This promise then ought not to be confined to that short time when the people returned from their Babylonian exile, but ought on the contrary to be extended to the kingdom of Christ, for it was then that this prophecy was fully accomplished, because our sins do not appear before God when he is reconciled to us.

Yet the Prophet intimates that this favor would not be general, for he adds that God would be propitious only to the remnant; and it was needful to express this, because the faithful after their return might have otherwise desponded, when they saw that a few only of the people were restored. Had their restoration been indiscriminately promised, the faith of the godly might have faltered on seeing that almost the whole people disregarded the favor offered to them; for a part only of the tribe of Judah availed themselves of the kindness of Cyrus and Darius; and the ten tribes chose rather to dwell in Chaldea and in other places. And it was not only once that God restricted the promise given here; for it is said by Isaiah,

``Were thy people as the sand of the sea,
a remnant only shall be saved.'' (Isaiah 10:21, 22)

The people gloried in their number and boasted of what had been said to Abraham,

``Number if thou canst the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea, so shall thy seed be.'' (Genesis 15:5)

God then shows that the Jews were greatly mistaken when they thought that they would be always in a safe state. Hence the Prophet says here that God would not be propitious indiscriminately to all, but to those whom he would make the remnant. And God also intimates that it was to be ascribed to his gratuitous goodness that any remained alive, according to what is said in Isaiah 1:9,

``Except some seed had been left to us, we must have been as Gomorrah, and

like to Sodom,''

God then declares here that the remnant would not otherwise be saved than through his gratuitous mercy, as Paul also says, that the Jews were not to hope for salvation, except through the free mercy of God. (Romans 11:5.) And he especially noticed this passage and similar passages, because the Jews then in opposing the Gospel raised the objection, that they were the seed of Abraham, and the chosen people; but Paul gave them this answer, that it was not a new thing that God gathered a small remnant from his people; and he assigns as the cause his gratuitous election. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:21

21. Go up against the land of Merathaim, even against it, and against the inhabitants of Pekod: waste and utterly destroy after them, saith the LORD, and do according to all that I have commanded thee.

21. Super terram exasperantium ascende super eam (sod abundat) et super habitatores visitationis (et habitatores visitationis;) occide et disperde post eos, dicit Jehova; et fac omnia quae praecepi tibi.

The Prophet here undertakes the office of a herald, and animates the Persians and the Medes to make war with Babylon. This prophecy indeed never came to these nations, but we have stated why the Prophets proclaimed war and addressed at one time heathen nations, at another time the Jews --- now one people, then another; for they wished to bring the faithful to the very scene of action, and connected the accomplishment with their predictions. By this mode of speaking, the Prophet then teaches us, that he did not scatter words into the air, but that the power of God was connected with the word which he spoke, as though God had expressly commanded the Medes and the Persians to execute his vengeance on Babylon. And doubtless Jeremiah did not thus speak; according to his own thoughts, nor did he thus speak in the person of man; but on the contrary, he introduced God as the speaker, as it appears front the end of the verse.

He then says, Ascend on the land of the exasperating; others read, ``of bitterness,'' but improperly. God indeed calls the Chaldeans rebellious, for though they were for a time the scourges of his wrath, they yet had cruelly treated many nations, being impelled only by their own pride and avarice; he justly calls them ``the exasperating,'' and then adds, Slay the inhabitants of visitation Some regard {פקוד}, pekud, as a proper name; and they first imagine that it was a town of some note in Chaldea, which is groundless; and then they give a frigid explanation by saying that it was some mean and obscure place. There is then no doubt but that the Prophet calls the Chaldeans the inhabitants of visitation, because God's vengeance awaited them, nay, it was even suspended over their heads, as he afterwards declares. But this way of speaking frequently occurs in the Prophets. [423]

[423] Merathaim and Pekod are appellatives, and not proper names, in the early versions, and the first is so in the Targ. and rendered "rebellious;" but by the Sept. "bitterly;" by the Vulg. "rulers;" and by the Syr. "exasperating." The most probable derivation of the word is from {,{מרה to rebel, with a dual termination, doubly rebellious, i.e., very rebellious. As to ``Pekod,'' the versions give it the idea of visiting by way of punishment: ``Avenge thou with the sword,'' is the Sept.; ``Visit her inhabitants,'' the Vulg.; ``Assail ye her and her inhabitants,'' the Syr.; the Targ. has ``the inhabitants of Pekod.'' It is better to take both words as appellatives: --- 21. Against the land of the most rebellious, against her ascend, And to the inhabitants of visitation; Slay and utterly destroy their posterity,

He afterwards adds, and destroy after or behind them There is an alliteration in the words {אתריהם} {החרם}, etherem acheriem; and he means that the slaughter would be extreme, so that the Medes and Persians would not cease to destroy until they had extinguished the name of Babylon. Yet we know that this was not done by Cyrus and Darius; for as we have already stated several times, the city was taken by fraud and treachery in the night, and the king and the princes were slain, for Darius, or rather Cyrus, spared the rest of the people; for though Darius had the name of being king, yet Cyrus was by far the most renowned, as he was a valiant soldier, and only on account of his fame accompanied his father-in-law and uncle. As then the sword did not destroy all the Chaldeans when Babylon was taken, we conclude that the Prophets, when they denounced slaughter and destruction on Babylon, did not confine what they said to that time, but included also other slaughters; for Babylon was often taken. It revolted from the Persians; and when it was recovered, it suffered very severe punishment; for, by way of reproach, those who were first in power and authority were hung, and there was also great cruelty exercised towards men and women. There is no doubt then but that the Prophets, in speaking of the destruction of Babylon, referred to God's judgments inflicted at various times. However this may have been, we learn that though God may long connive, or suspend extreme judgments, yet the ungodly cannot possibly escape his hand, though they may long be spared.

He then adds, Do to them as I have commanded thee This prophetic mode of speaking ought also to be noticed; for the Medes and the Persians never thought that they fought under the authority of God; why then is the word ``commanded'' used? even because God rules by his secret power ungodly men, and leads them wheresoever he pleases, though nothing of the kind is ever thought of by them. To explain the matter more fully, we must observe flint God commands in two ways; for he commands the faithful when he shows to them what is right and what they ought to follow. Thus daily God may be said to exercise his authority or right of ruling, when he exhorts us to do our duty, when he sets his law before us. And it is the proper way of commanding, or of exercising authority, when God expresses what he would have us to do, or what he requires from us. But God commands the unbelieving in another way; for though he does not declare to them what he would have them to do, he yet draws them, willing or unwilling, where-ever he pleases. Thus, by his secret operation, he induced Cyrus and Darius to take up arms against Babylon.

We now then understand what the Prophet meant by this expression; for he did not mean that Darius and Cyrus obeyed God from the heart, because they knew not that he was the leader and author of that war; no such thing ever entered into their minds. The former mode of commanding, as I have said, is peculiar to the Church; for God is pleased to bestow on us a peculiar privilege and favor, when he shows to us what is right, and prescribes the rule of life. But yet his hidden providence, by which he influences the ungodly, takes the place of a command, as it is said,

``The king's heart is in the hand of God.'' (Proverbs 21:1)

saith Jehovah, And do according to all that I have commanded thee. As to Babylon being ``rebellious,'' see Jeremiah 50:24, 33. ``Inhabitants of visitation'' were such as were to be visited, i.e., with judgment; see Jeremiah 50:31. The repetition, ``against her,'' is emphatical. ``posterity,'' i.e., children, or young men, as in Jeremiah 50:30. See 1 Kings 16:3. --- Ed.

But Solomon speaks of a king rather than of common men, because, if there be any liberty among mankind, it belongs to kings, for they seem exempt from every yoke; and Solomon declares that the hearts of kings are ruled by God. Though then Darius and Cyrus were carried away by their own cupidity when they made war, yet God, as we shall hereafter see more clearly, guided their hearts. So also he is said to command the heavens and the earth-not that the heavens, being without ears and reason, hear his voice, but because God powerfully moves and influences the heavens; for when he intends to punish us, he commands the heaven not to rain. This command of God the heaven executes, and the earth also obeys God; but there is no word of command given to them, --- what then? it is God's providence which is hid from us. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:22

22. A sound of battle is in the land, and of great destruction.

22. Vox praelii in terra et contritio magna.

The Prophet continues the same style of speaking, for he says that there would be the voice or the sound of battle Could he rouse up the Medes and the Persians? not indeed by his own power, but here he exalts the efficacy of his doctrine; as though he had said, that the vengeance he denounced on the Babylonians would be in readiness when the time came, as Paul says that the ministers of the gospel had vengeance ready at hand for all those who despised it. We now then see why the Prophet mentions the word battle, and says that breaking, or ruin, would be great in the land. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:23-24

23. How is the hammer of the whole earth cut asunder and broken! how is Babylon become a desolation among the nations!

23. Quomodo excisus est et contritus malleus universes terrae? quomodo redacta est (fuit) in vastitatem Babylon inter gentes?

24. I have laid a snare for thee, and thou art also taken, O Babylon, and thou wast not aware: thou art found, and also caught, because thou hast striven against the LORD.

24. Illaqueavi to, atque etiam (vel atque, ideo, {גם}, hic ponitur loco rationalis particuloe, ideo) capta es Babylon, et tu nescivisti; inventa es atque adeo deprehensa, quoniam contra Jehovam to miscuisti (litigasti.)

Here, in the first place, Jeremiah asks in astonishment how it happened that the hammer of the whole earth was broken, when it had before broken all nations. God afterwards gives an answer, even because ``I am he who have taken Babylon.'' The question availed to rouse the people to a greater attention. We neglect God's judgments or are blind to them, even because we do not carefully consider them; for little things often excite us, when that which God works in an unusual manner is deemed by us as nothing. As then our apathy as to the works of God is so great, it is necessary to stimulate us. And this is what is done now by Jeremiah, when he says in astonishment, How? for he intimates that to cut down Babylon would be incredible, for no one could have thought that that monarchy could have ever fallen; for it had arrived to the highest eminence, and was surrounded on all sides by so

many fortresses, that no danger could be feared. In short, all thought that Babylon could not be endangered without a concussion of heaven and earth.

Then the Prophet here wonders at a thing unusual, and says, How is the hammer of all the earth broken and shattered to pieces? [424] and then, How has Babylon become a waste among the nations? for it had subjugated to itself not only the neighboring nations, but the remotest parts of the earth. And in this manner he animated the faithful to entertain hope, lest they should despond, for the power of that monarchy was terrible.

He then immediately answers in the person of God, I have ensnared thee, and therefore thou Babylon art taken Here God declares, that though it could not be possible that Babylon and its empire should fall through human means, yet its destruction was in his hand. Thou, he says, art taken, even because I ensnared thee; as though he had said, that the Chaldeans would not have to do with men, because he himself would carry on the war and guide and direct the Persians and the Medes, and also endue them with power: He would, in short, fight himself until he had overcome the Babylonians.

When he says, thou knewest not, he not only reproves the insensibility of that people, but at the same time derides their security, as though he had said, ``Thou thinkest thyself beyond the reach of harm, but thou wilt find that no one can escape my hand.'' We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet. It is indeed true that the unbelieving, when God punishes them for their wickedness, do not acknowledge his hand; but the Prophet means another thing, --- that though Babylon trusted in its strength and feared nothing, it would yet be taken, because it could not evade the snares.

He adds, Thou art found and therefore caught; and he states the reason, because she had contended with God. We shall presently explain how Babylon contended or litigated with or against God, even because God had taken under his protection and patronage the Israelites. This, then, is said with reference to the Church, as I shall presently explain more at large. It must be here briefly observed, that God so undertakes the cause of his people, as though he himself were injured, according to what he promises that they would be to him as the apple of his eye. (Zechariah 2:8.) It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:25

25. The LORD hath opened his armoury, and hath brought forth the weapons of his indignation: for this is the work of the Lord GOD of hosts in the land of the Chaldeans.

25. Aperuit Jehova thesaurum suum, et protulit vasa irae suae, quia opus hoc Domini, Jehovae exercituum, est in terra Chaldaeorum.

The Prophet here expresses more clearly what he bad touched upon, even that this war would not be that of the Persians, but of God himself. He then says, that

[424] The first verb, {,{yn means to cast off as well as to cut off; the breaking is expressed by the following verb. According to order often found in the Prophets, the final act, casting off, is first mentioned, and then the previous act, the breaking of it, --- 23. How has the hammer of all the earth Been cast off and broken! How has Babylon become a wonder among nations! ``A wonder'' or astonishment, for so the word is evidently to be taken here, according to the Syr., though rendered ``extinction'' by the Sept., and ``desert'' by the Vulg. and Targ. Blayney and Henderson render it ``astonishment.'' --- Ed.

God had opened his treasure, even because he has various and manifold ways and means, which cannot be comprehended by men, when he resolves to destroy the ungodly. That monarchy was impregnable according to the judgment of men; but God here says that he had hidden means by which he would lay waste Babylon and reduce it to nothing. Then what is by a similitude called the treasure of God, means such a way as surpasses the comprehension of men, that is, when God executes his judgments in a way hidden and unexpected.

As, then, the faithful could hardly conceive what Jeremiah said, he raises up their thoughts to God's providence, which ought not to be subjected to human judgment; for it is absurd in men to judge of God's power according to the perceptions of the flesh; it is the same as though they attempted to include heaven and earth in the hollow of their hand. God himself says, that he takes heaven and earth in the hollow of his hand. When, therefore, men seek to comprehend the power of God, it is like a fly attempting to devour all the mountains. Hence the Prophet reproves this presumption to which we are all by nature inclined, even to determine according to the comprehension of our minds what God is about or ought to do, as though his power were not infinite.

This is the reason why the Prophet says, God hath opened his treasury; and then, he hath thence brought forth the instruments of his wrath, that is, from his treasury, even in a way and manner which was then incomprehensible. [425] And subjoined is the reason, Because this is the work of God alone, the God of hosts, in the land of the Chaldeans [426] Here the Prophet briefly concludes, intimating, that the faithful ought quietly to wait until what he taught came to pass, even because it was the work of God. And there is nothing more absurd than for men to seek to measure God's power, as it has been said, by their own judgment. It follows, --- but I cannot explain the verse now.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast been pleased to set before us thy judgments on the unbelieving, we may not only fear thee, but also learn to cast on thee the hope of our salvation, so that we may make progress in the truth, that we may neither be insensible as to thy threatenings, nor tremble in our extreme evils, but so learn to raise up to thee our eyes, that we may, during the whole course of our life, call on thee through Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY THIRD

Jeremiah 50:26

26. Come against her from the utmost border, open her storehouses: cast her up as heaps, and destroy her utterly: let nothing of her be left.

26. Venite contra eam a fine, aperite apothecas ejus, calcate earn tanquam acervos, et disperdite eam, ne sint ei reliquiae.

The Prophet again addresses the Persians and the Medes, and encourages them to come against Babylon. We stated yesterday that the prophets are went to speak

[425] "Treasury" here means an armory or arsenal, as rendered by Blayney: and then "instruments" signify weapons, drawn from the armory. — Ed.

[426] Literally it is, — For a work — this the Lord Jehovah of hosts has In the land of the Chaldeans. — Ed.

with authority, because they sustained the person of God; and we mentioned how necessary this mode of speaking was, for the world does not acknowledge that God speaks effectually.

Then he says first, Come ye against her; [427] and then, Open her storehouses The word {מאבס}, meabes, means a cornhouse or a repository of any kind: hence some render it ``granaries.'' But it seems to me that the word is thus too much restricted, for the Prophet no doubt speaks of the treasures of Babylon. Now storehouses, (apothecas,) the Greeks call those repositories which contain all sorts of things, not only wine and oil, but goods of merchants, and also money. We call them in French, Arrieres-boutiques, or, magasins. But this word is to be extended to wine, to every kind of fruit, and then to treasures, and also to arms; for they were repositories of arms, of weapons of every kind. It is the same as though Jeremiah had said, that nothing would be so hidden among the Chaldeans but that the Medes and the Persians would find it out.

He then adds, Tread her as heaps. The word {ערמים}, oremim, means not heaps of stones, but on the contrary, of sheaves. Then he intimates that the Persians and the Medes would act cruelly, and tread them as corn is trodden on the floor. [428] He lastly says, Destroy her utterly, that there way be to her no remnant He seems indirectly to set this in contrast with what God promised always to his people, that there would be some remnant, he then says that nothing would remain when God had executed his vengeance on the Chaldeans. The sum of what is said is, that the punishment of which the Prophet speaks would be such as would obliterate the very name of the Babylonian monarchy. This, as we said yesterday and also previously, was not completed in one day. But when the Prophets speak of God's judgments, they do not regard only the preludes, but their words extend to the last judgment that awaits all the reprobate. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:27

27. Slay all her bullocks; let them go down to the slaughter: woe unto them! for their day is come, the time of their visitation.

27. Occidite omnes juvencos ejus; descendant ad mactationem: vae illis! quia venit dies eorum, tempus visitationis eorum.

He goes on with the same subject; he bids the Persians and the Medes to slay every strong man in Chaldea; for by bullocks he no doubt means by a metaphor all those who excelled in strength, or in power, or in wealth. The sum of what he says is, that the vengeance of which he now speaks, would not only be against the common people, but also against the highest and the choicest among them. He includes then the nobles as well as all the men of war; for he refers not only to strength of body, but also to power and authority.

Slay, then, he says, all her bullocks, that is, whatever is most valued in Chaldea:

[427] It is added, "from the extremity," i.e., of heaven, according to a parallel passage in Isaiah 13:5. They were to come from the farthest parts of the earth then known. — Ed.

[428] The most approved rendering is, "Cast (or throw) her up as heaps," i.e., of rubbish, according to Jeremiah 51:37. It is said that the verb here never means to tread under foot, "Make her, of a goodly, stately city, nothing but heaps of earth, stones, and rubbish." Gataker. — Ed.

that was to perish when the day of vengeance came. [429] He afterwards says, let them descend to the slaughter We must ever bear in mind what I have said, that the Prophet gave orders as though he had the Medes and the Persians under his own hand and authority, because the whole world is subject to God's word. He says, Woe to them! for their day is come, and the time of their visitation This was added, because the faithful might have disputed with themselves and said, ``How can it be that Babylon should perish so quickly?'' For God seemed to have favored that monarchy for a long time, as though he intended to protect it perpetually. Hence the Prophet speaks here of the time of visitation, so that the faithful might not doubt respecting this prophecy, because God had not as yet put forth his band. He then reminded them that God has his fixed times, and that he does not every day visit nations, that is, that he does not execute his judgments every moment, but at the time which he has appointed. Whenever, then, the ungodly securely exult and triumph, let us ever remember this truth, that the time is not yet come for God to execute his judgment; how so? because there is a fixed time of visitation, and that is dependent on God's will. Let us then learn to bear patiently all our trials until it shall please God to show that he is the judge of the world. It follows,---

Jeremiah 50:28

28. The voice of them that flee and escape out of the land of Babylon, to declare in Zion the vengeance of the LORD our God, the vengeance of his temple.

28. Vox fugientium et qui evaserint e terra Babylonis ad annuntiandum in Sion vindictam Jehovae Dei nostri, vindictam templi ejus.

The Prophet again shows, that God in punishing Babylon, would give a sure proof of his favor towards his Church. For this prophecy would have been uninteresting to the faithful, did they not know that God would be an enemy to that great monarchy, because he had undertaken the care of their safety. Then the Prophet often calls the attention of the faithful to this fact, that God's vengeance on the Babylonians would be to them a sure proof of God's favor, through which he had once embraced them, and which he would continue to show to them to the end.

This, then, was the design of the Prophet, when he said, The voice officers and of those who escape from the land of Babylon, etc.; as though he had said, ``Babylon is on many accounts worthy of destruction, but God in destroying it will have a regard to his own people, and will effectually show that he is the Father of the people whom he has adopted.'' Jeremiah afterwards exhorts the faithful to show their gratitude. There are here, then, two things; the first is, that when God destroyed Babylon, the people would hence with certainty perceive how dear they were to God; and secondly, from this truth flows an exhortation, that the faithful were not to be mute at such a singular benefit of God, but were to proclaim their deliverance. Hence he says, The voice of fleers and of those who escape from the land of Babylon, to

[429] The Sept. and Syr. take {פרי here as signifying fruit, i.e., of the womb --- children, offspring; and what is said in Isaiah 13:16-18, favours this meaning, as well as what is said in Jeremiah 50:21, if we render ,{אחריהם} ``their posterity.'' The Vulg. and the Targ. render the word here ``valiants,'' expressing the meaning of ``bullocks.'' The first version is the most suitable, --- Slay ye all her fruit (or offspring;) Let them descend to the slaughter. It is descending to the slaughter that led critics to render {פרי} bullocks, but we find this expression unconnected with bullocks in Jeremiah 48:15; where ``chosen young men'' are said to ``descend to the slaughter.'' To descend denotes degradation, and to ascend dignity. The Targ. has, ``Let them be delivered to the slaughter.'' --- Ed.

announce in Sion, etc. By saying in Sion, he shows for what end God intended to gather his people, even that he might again be worshipped as formerly-in his own Temple.

He adds, to announce in Sion the vengeance of our God The vengeance of God is to be taken here in an active sense, signifying the vengeance which God would execute. The vengeance of the Temple, which immediately follows, is to be taken passively, as meaning the vengeance by which God would avenge the indignity offered to the Temple. God then takes vengeance, and God's Temple is defended from contempt and reproach.

We now then see the meaning of this passage. The Prophet first teaches us, that God would have a regard to his people in so rigidly punishing Babylon; and secondly, he adds an exhortation, lest the faithful should be unthankful to God, but acknowledge that God, for the sake of their deliverance had undertaken war against that monarchy; and lastly, he shows the end, even that the people who had been scattered, as it is said in Psalm 147:2,

``God is he who gathers the dispersed of Israel,''

might again be collected together. As, then, the Jews were as a mutilated body among the Chaldeans, the Prophet shows that that monarchy would be dispersed, in order that the faithful might again be gathered, and that all might worship God together in the Temple, or on mount Sion. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:29

29. Call together the archers against Babylon: all ye that bend the bow, camp against it round about; let none thereof escape: recompense her according to her work; according to all that she hath done, do unto her: for she hath been proud against the LORD, against the Holy One of Israel.

29. Convocate contra Babylonem potentes, omnes qui intendunt arcum; obsidete earn in circuitu, ne sit evasio; reddite ei secundum opus suum, secundum omnia quae fecit facite ei; quia contra Jehovam superb egit, contra sanctum Israelis.

The Prophet adopts various modes of speaking, and not without reason, because he had to thunder rather than to speak; and then as he spoke of a thing incredible, there was need of no common confirmation; the faithful also, almost pining away in their miseries, could hardly entertain any hope. This is the reason why the Prophet dwells so long and so diffusely on a subject in itself not obscure, for there was not only need of amplifying, but also of great vehemence.

Then, as though he had many heralds ready to obey, he says, Call together the mighty against Babylon Some read ``many,'' but the word {רבים}, rebim, means both; and I think that ``the mighty'' or strong are meant here. Why some render it ``arrows'' I know not. It is, indeed, immediately added, all who bend the bow, -{כל} {קשת} {דרכי}, caldereki koshet. But the word, without anything added to it, never means an arrow. They refer to a place in Genesis 21:20, where Ishmael is said to be ``an archer,'' {רבה}, rebe; but the word ``bow'' follows it. We cannot then take {רבים}, rebim here but as signifying many or the mighty; and the latter is the most suitable word. Then the Prophet bids the strong and the warlike to come together, and then he mentions them specifically, --- all who bend the bow, even all skillful

archers. For the Persians excelled in this art, they were archers of the first order. It was indeed a practice common among eastern nations, but the Persians surpassed all others. The Prophet then points them out when he bids archers to assemble. [430]

He adds, encompass or besiege her around, that there may be no escape This also was a thing difficult to be believed, for Babylon was more like a country than a city. Then one could have hardly thought that it could have been besieged around and at length taken, as it happened. Therefore the Prophet here testifies that what exceeded the opinion of all would take place. But he had said before that this would be the work of God, that the faithful might not form a judgment according to their own measure, for nothing is more absurd, as it has been said, than to measure the power of God by our own understanding. As then the Prophet had before declared that the siege of Babylon would be the work of God, he bids them now, with more confidence, to besiege it around, that there might not be an escape

It is then added, Render to her according to her work; according to what she has done, do to her By these words the Prophet shows that the vengeance which God would execute on the Chaldeans would be just, for nothing is more equitable than to render to one what he had done to others.

``With what measure ye mete to others,'' says Christ, ``it shall be rendered to you.'' (Luke 6:38)

As, then, nature itself teaches us that the punishment is most just which is inflicted on the cruel themselves, hence the Prophet reminds us here that God would be a just avenger in his extreme violence against the Babylonians. But he looks farther, for he assumes this principle, that God is the judge of the world. Since he is so, it follows that they who unjustly oppress others must at length receive their own reward; as also Paul says, that the judgment of God, otherwise obscure, will be made evident, when he shall give relief and rest to the miserable who are now unjustly afflicted, and when he shall render their reward to oppressors. (2 Thessalonians 1:6, 7.) The Prophet then takes occasion of confidence from this truth to animate the faithful and to encourage them to entertain hope. How so? Since God is the judge of the world, the Jews ought to have considered what sort of people the Babylonians had been; nay, they had already sufficiently experienced how cruel and barbarous they were. As, then, the avarice and cruelly of the Chaldeans were sufficiently apparent, the Prophet here reminds them, that as God is in heaven, it could not be otherwise but that he would shortly call them to judgment, for otherwise he would not be God. Surely he would not be the judge of the world, were he not to regard the miserable unjustly oppressed, and bring them help, and stretch forth his hand to relieve them; and were he not also, on the other hand, to punish the avaricious and the proud and the cruel. We now understand the meaning of the Prophet.

He adds, in the last place, because she has acted proudly against Jehovah, against the Holy One of Israel By saying that the Babylonians had acted proudly, he means that they had not only been injurious to men, but had been also insolent towards

[430] The early versions and the Targ. render {,{רבים ``many;'' and the rendering of the Sept. and Vulg. is to this effect, --- Proclaim ye to the many at Babylon, To all who bend the bow, --- ``Encompass her around, Let there be no escape,'' etc. The first part is a charge like what we find in the second verse; and the second states what they were to do. ``Proclaim ye to,'' is literally, ```'Make ye to hear,'' --- ``Make ye the many at Babylon to hear,'' etc. --- Ed.

God himself; for the verb here used denotes a sin different from that which happens through levity or want of thought. When any one sins inconsiderately, he is said to have erred; but when one sins knowingly, it is a deliberate wickedness, and he is said to be proud; and this we learn from Psalm 19:12; for David there sets pride in opposition to errors:

``errors,'' he says, ``who can understand?''

and then he asks God to cleanse him from all pride. David indeed had not designedly raised his horns against God, but he yet feared lest the wantonness of the flesh should lead him to pride. When, therefore, the Prophet now says that the Chaldeans had acted proudly towards God, it is the same as though he accused them of sacrilegious pride, even that they designed to be insolent towards God himself, and not only cruel to his people.

But an explanation follows, against the Holy One of Israel The Babylonians might have raised an objection, and said, that it was not their purpose to act proudly towards God. But the Prophet here brings forward the word Israel, as though he had said, ``If there be a God in heaven, our religion is true; then God's name dwells with us. Since, then, the Babylonians have basely oppressed the people whom God has chosen, it follows that they have been sacrilegious towards him.'' And he meant the same thing when he said before, the vengeance of Jehovah our God Why did he add, our God? that the Jews might know that whatever wrongs they had suffered, they reached God himself, as though he were hurt in his own person. So also in this place the Prophet takes away from the Babylonians all means of evasion when he says, that they had acted proudly towards the Holy One of Israel When, therefore, the ungodly seek evasions and say that they do not contend with God, their pretenses are disproved, when they carry on war with his Church, and fight, against his faithful people, whose safety he has undertaken to defend. For God cannot be otherwise the protector of his Church than by setting himself up as a shield in its defense whenever he sees his people unjustly attacked by the reprobate. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:30

30. Therefore shall her young men fall in the streets, and all her men of war shall be cut off in that day, saith the LORD.

30. Propterea cadent electi ejus (vel, adolescentes,) in plateis ejus, et omnes viri militiae ejus (hoc est, omnes viri bellicosi) redigentur ad silentium (alii vertunt, compescentur; nam {דמם} significat utrumque) in die illo, dicit Jehova.

He confirms the same thing, and shows that the destruction of Babylon would be such, that everything valuable would be destroyed. Fall, he says, shall her strong men in the streets; which is worse than if he had said, ``They shall fall in battle.'' Babylon was so taken that all her armed men were slain in the middle of the city. Cyrus indeed spared, as it has been already said, the common people; but he slew all the chief men and the armed soldiers. As the Babylonians were taken while keeping a feast, as we read in Daniel, hence Jeremiah mentions the streets. He afterwards adds, ---

Jeremiah 50:31

31. Behold, I am against thee, O thou most proud, saith the Lord GOD, of hosts:

for thy day is come, the time that I will visit thee.

31. Ecce ego contra to, superbe, dicit Dominus Jehova exercituum quia venit dies tuus, tempus visitationis tuae.

Jeremiah, in order more fully to confirm what he had said, again introduces God as the speaker. And we have stated how necessary this was, because he could have hardly gained credit otherwise to his prophecy; but when he introduced God, he removed every doubt. Behold, he says, I am against thee, O proud one He again calls the Babylonians proud, even because they had not been led to war by levity or folly, or vain ambition, but because they had assailed God and men without any reverence and without any regard to humanity.

He says that the time had come, because the faithful would have otherwise interrupted him and said, ``How is this, that God so long delays?'' That they might then sustain and cherish hope until the time which God had prescribed for his vengeance, he says, that the day had come, and the time of visitation Whenever this mode of speaking occurs, let us know that all the natural instincts of our flesh are checked; for there is no one of us who does not immediately jump to take vengeance when we see the faithful oppressed, when we see many unworthy things done to our brethren, when we see innocent blood shed, and the miserable cruelly treated by the ungodly. When, therefore, all these instances of barbarity happen, none of us can contain himself; hence God puts on us a bridle, and exhorts us to exercise patience, when he says, that the time of visitation is not yet completed.

As long then as God delays, let us know that the fit time is not yet come, because he has a fixed day of visitation, unknown to us. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:32

32. And the most proud shall stumble and fall, and none shall raise him up: and I will kindle a fire in his cities, and it shall devour all round about him.

32. Et impinget superbus et cadet, et nemo qui eum erigat; et accendam ignem in urbibus ejus, qui consumet omnia quae sunt in circuitu (per circuitus ejus, ad verbum.)

The Prophet continues the same subject: as then he had announced in God's name that the time of visitation would come when God would rise up against the Chaldeans, he now adds, stumble shall the proud, and fall The verb {כשל}, cashel, means also to fall; but as it is added, {ונפל}, vanuphel, and fall, it ought to be rendered stumble here. Stumble, then, shall the proud, and fall --- for the Prophet denotes a gradation. Some render the words, ``Fall shall the proud and tumble down:'' but more suitable is the rendering I have given, that the proud would stumble, and then that he would fall. And no one, he says, shall raise him up By these words, God intimates, that though Babylon had many nations under its authority, yet there would be no help given to it, when the time of visitation came. It indeed often happens that many busy themselves, and make every effort to assist the wicked, but without any success. When, therefore, God declares that there would be no one to raise up Babylon when fallen, the meaning is not, that courage would be wanting to all, but that the efforts of all would be of no avail, even because God, when Babylon fell, would be against her, so that were the whole world to unite for her relief, all

their attempts would be useless.

And for the same purpose, he adds, I will kindle a fire which will consume or devour all his cities God calls slaughter, by a metaphor, fire; for slaughter, like fire, raged so as to consume the whole monarchy --- not only the city, but also all the neighboring nations --- for the war reached even to Asia. Cyrus, as it is well known, passed over the sea and depopulated Phrygia. In short, though victory might have been mild, yet it was no doubt like fire, as it devoured all the neighboring nations. It follows,---

Jeremiah 50:33-34

33. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; the children of Israel and the children of Judah were oppressed together: and all that took them captives held them fast; they refused to let them go.

33. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Oppressi fuerunt filii Israel et filii Jehudah pariter; et omnes qui captivos ceperunt praevaluerunt contra ipsos, et renuerunt ipsos dimittere.

34. Their Redeemer is strong; the LORD of hosts is his name: he shall throughly plead their cause, that he may give rest to the land, and disquiet the inhabitants of Babylon.

34. Redemptor (inquit) eorum fortis, Jehova exercituum nomen ejus; litem litigando litigabit, (hoc est, disceptando disceptabit causam ipsorum,) ut terram ipsam reddat tranquillam, (ut alii vetrunt, sed ego potius ita interpretor, ut terram scindat,) et contremiscere faciat habitatores Babylonis.

Our Prophet returns again to his former subject --- that God, in destroying the Babylonian monarchy, would have a regard to his chosen people. But the comparison made here is very important; for in the first place, the Prophet refers to an occasion of diffidence and even of despair, which might have closed up the way against all his prophecies. For this objection might have always been made, ``We are driven into exile, we are in a far country, and in places distant from one another; it is the same as though we were in another world, and we can hardly move a foot without our conquerors being enraged against us.'' Thus the Jews, according to the aspect of things at that time, could not otherwise than despair of returning to their own country. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet says here, by way of concession, ``It is, indeed, true that the children of Judah and the children of Israel are oppressed with cruel tyranny:'' as when we wish to secure faith, we state what seems to be opposed to us, and then dissipate it; so now the Prophet does in this place, as though he had said, ``I see what his own mind may dictate to every one, even that the children of Judah, as well as the children of Israel, are held captive, and shut up by such fastnesses that no way of escape is open to them.''

When he speaks of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, we must remember that the ten tribes had been led into exile, and also that the whole kingdom had been destroyed; and at length, after a considerable time, the Chaldeans took possession also of the kingdom of Judah. Hence then it was, that both the Israelites and the Jews became subject to a cruel oppression. He therefore adds, They who led them captive have prevailed, or, as some render the last word, ``have held them;'' for {חזק}, chesek, means to hold, to lay hold; but the Prophet seems to mean an-

other thing, even that their conquerors so prevailed as securely to rule over them; and hence it is added, they have refused to let them go; and we learn the same thing from the next verse, in which the strength and power of God is set in opposition to the power of their enemies. As far as things appeared to men, there was certainly no way of deliverance for the people. The Prophet then concedes what might have taken away every hope from them.

But he immediately after removes this ground of despair, and says, Their redeemer is strong He then sets this strong, {חזק}, chesek, in opposition to the verb used before, ``prevailed'' or ruled, {בם} {החזיקו}, echesiku beem, ``prevailed'' or domineered ``over them,'' so that they were stronger. But now, on the other hand, he calls the Redeemer of Israel strong; for were you only to consider, he seems to say, how great the power of Babylon is, you might despond; but can God, in the meantime, do nothing? Is there any power on earth which can overrule him? Since then their redeemer was strong, he would prove superior to the Chaldeans.

He afterwards adds what is of the same import, His name is Jehovah of hosts; that is, neither Babylon nor all other nations have so much power as can resist the infinite power of God, for he is always like himself, and perfect; he is the God of hosts. He at length adds, Their strife by litigating he will litigate, or, by pleading he will plead the cause of his people, even so as to cut off or destroy the land The verb, {רגע}, rego, means indeed sometimes to rest, and so almost all give this rendering, ``so as to make to rest the land:'' but as I take ``land'' and ``the inhabitants of Babylon'' to be the same, I doubt not but that this verb is to be taken here in its proper sense. Then it is, so as to cut off or destroy the land, [431] and to make to tremble the inhabitants of Babylon. He then speaks of the Chaldeans in mentioning the land, and afterwards explains himself by adding, the inhabitants of Babylon.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that, as thou hast deigned once to take us under thy protection, we may always raise up our eyes to thine infinite power, and that when we see all things not only confounded, but also trodden under foot by the world, we may not yet doubt but that thy power is sufficient to deliver us, so that we may perpetually call on thy name, and with firm constancy so fight against all temptations, that we may at length enjoy in thy celestial kingdom the fruit of our victory, through Jesus Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY FOURTH

Jeremiah 50:35

35. A sword is upon the Chaldeans, saith the LORD, and upon the inhabitants of Babylon, and upon her princes, and upon her wise men.

35. Gladius super Chaldaeos, et super habitatores Babylonis, et super principes ejus, et super sapientes ejus.

[431] The versions, except the Syr. and the Targ., give a similar meaning to this verb: but there is no instance of the verb in Hiphil having this meaning, though it would be the most suitable to this place. At the same time we may consider the land of Chaldea to be meant, if we regard the stillness or quietness as referring to the check produced by God's restraining power, — So as to render the land still, And to terrify the inhabitants of Babylon. The promise is to make the land quiet so as not to oppose the return of the Jews, and for the same purpose, to terrify Babylon. — Ed.

THE Prophet proceeds with the same subject, and employs the same manner of speaking. He denounces war on the Chaldeans as a celestial herald; and then that what he says might have more force and power, he sets the Persians and the Medes before us in the act of assailing and destroying Babylon. He therefore says now in general, A sword on the Chaldeans; and, secondly, he mentions the inhabitants of Babylon, for that city was the seat and head of the kingdom, as it is well known; but as the power of that monarchy was deemed by men unassailable, the Prophet adds, that though the chief men excelled in counsel and strength, and in the art of war, yet a sword would be upon them; and in the last place, that though Babylon had its diviners, their knowledge would yet be in vain. He, indeed, uses an honorable name, yet he no doubt refers to astrologers and soothsayers, and other kinds of prophets. For we know that the whole nation was given to many superstitions; but they boasted themselves to be the chief of all astrologers; and hence soothsayers, who practice their impostures, are called Chaldeans, and it was formerly a common designation.

Then the Prophet means, that neither power nor warlike skill, nor knowledge of any kind, would be a defense to the Chaldeans, nor the arts in which they gloried, even though they thought that they were familiarly acquainted with God; for by the stars they were wont to divine whatever was to be. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:36

36. A sword is upon the liars; and they shall dote: a sword is upon her mighty men; and they shall be dismayed.

36. Gladius super divinos ejus, et infatuabuntur; gladius super fortes ejus, et conterentur (vel, expavescent.)

He repeats the same thing, but in other words; and in the first clause he mentions diviners whom he before called wise men; and he calls them now by their true and proper name; for {בדים}, bedim, mean mendacious men as well as falsehoods. He then calls those now impostors to whom he conceded before the name of wise men. But when he called them wise men, he spoke according to the common opinion, and he was unwilling to contend with the Chaldeans as to the character of their wisdom: he, however, at the same time made known the impositions of those who boasted that they had a familiar intercourse with God and angels, whilst they pronounced by the stars what was to be. [432] That art itself is indeed worthy of praise, were men to preserve moderation. But as the curiosity of men is insatiable, so they wandered here and there, and overleaped all limits, and thus perverted the whole order of nature. The Chaldeans, then, were not genuine, but, on the contrary, spurious astrologers.

This is the reason why the Prophet calls them now liars; for we have before seen, that it was a mere imposition, when the Chaldeans held that the whole life of man is subject to the influence of the stars. Hence he exhorted the faithful to fear no dangers from the stars. It is then no wonder that the Prophet now charges all the diviners with falsehoods, who yet proudly arrogated to themselves the name of wise

[432] The word is rendered "diviners" by the Vulg., the Syr., and the Targ.; it is left out by the Sept. Some derive it from {בדא,} to feign, to devise, to invent, the {א} being left out in {בדים,} others say that it comes from {בד,} alone, solitary, separate, so that {בדים} were the recluse, retirement or seclusion being often the habit of impostors. It is connected, in Isaiah 44:25, with {קסמים,} diviners, prognosticators. --- Ed.

men, they shall be infatuated, he says. The verb {יאל}, ial, means indeed to begin, but in Niphal it means to become foolish, or to be infatuated. [433]

Then he says, The sword shall be on her valiant men; whom before he called chief men or princes, {שרים}, sherim, he now calls strong, {גברים}, geberim, or those who excelled in valor. The amount of the whole is, --- that whatever wisdom Babylon arrogated to itself would become folly, and that the valor in which it prided, would vanish away. For he says, that they would be broken in pieces The verb {חתת}, chetat, means to be broken, but as we have elsewhere seen, it is often applied to the mind, and then it means to dread, or to be terrified. He then says, that the valiant would not be able to stand when the sword was upon them, for they would become, as it were, lifeless, or, at least, they would become so effeminate as to think of nothing but flight.

Jeremiah 50:37

37. A sword is upon their horses, and upon their chariots, and upon all the mingled people that are in the midst of her; and they shall become as women: a sword is upon her treasures; and they shall be robbed.

37. Gladins super equos ejus, et super currus ejus, et super multitudinem ejus (aut, vulgus promiscuum; {ערב} significat examen animalium sicuti apum, et transfertur etiam ad homines, et tunc accipitur pro vulgo ignobili; super multitudinem ergo,) quae est in medio ejus; erunt in mulieres (hoc est, erunt similes mulieribus;) gladius super thesauros ejus, et spoliabuntur (expositi erunt in praedam.)

The Prophet, indeed, changes the gender of the pronouns, and seems to refer to the king; but there is no ambiguity in the meaning, he then declares that the horses as well as the chariots would perish; for the sword would consume all the things used in war. And at the beginning he generally declared that destruction was nigh all the Chaldeans, so he repeats the same now, on all the promiscuous multitude, which is in the midst of Babylon. He says that they would be without courage, for the Lord would dishearten them by terror, as it will be hereafter stated again. Then he joins, and on her treasures, and they shall be a prey to enemies. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:38

38. A drought is upon her waters; and they shall be dried up: for it is the land of graven images, and they are mad upon their idols.

38. Siccitas super aquas ejus et arescent; quia terra sculptilium est, et iis idolis (proprie, in terroribus, vel, terriculamentis) gloriantur (vel, insaniunt.)

Here the same word is used in a different sense: he had often before used the word {חרב}, chereb, ``sword;'' but now by changing only a point, he uses it in the sense of waste, or drought. [434] But as he mentions waters, the Prophet, no doubt, means drought; nor was it without reason that he mentioned this, because the Euphrates, as it is well known, flowed near the city, and it was also divided into many streams, so that there were many islands, as it were, made by the skill and hand of men.

[433] Events would prove, that they were foolish and ignorant, being not able to foretell the ruin of their own nation, notwithstanding their boast in the knowledge of futurity. — Ed.

[434] It is so rendered by the Vulg. and the Targ., omitted by the Sept., and rendered "sword" by the Syr., and also by Blayney and Henderson. The same incongruity exists as to the treasures; but the sword here, means those who wielded it, the soldiers of Cyrus: they spoiled the treasures, they turned the streams of the rivers. — Ed.

Thus the city was in no ordinary way fortified, for it was difficult of access, being on one side surrounded by so large a river: it had also trenches full of water, and it had many channels. But Cyrus, as Xenophon relates, when attempting to take the city, used the same contrivance, and imitated those who had fortified Babylon, but for a different purpose; for he diverted the streams, so that the river might be forded. Thus, then, he dried up that great river, which was like a sea; so that Babylon was taken with no great trouble. Cyrus, indeed, entered in by night, and unexpectedly invaded Babylon, while they were securely feasting, and celebrating a festival, as we find in the book of Daniel. However, the way by which Cyrus contrived to take the city was, by dividing the Euphrates into many streams. Hence it was, that the Prophet, in order that the Jews might see, as it were, with their own eyes, spoke nothing without reason, having not only predicted the slaughter and destruction of the city, but showed also the very way in which it was done, as though the event had been portrayed before them.

The reason is added, because it is the land of carvings, or gravings. God, indeed, took vengeance on Babylon for other things, as it has before appeared; but the Prophet here speaks of carvings, that the Israelites might know that there is no certain salvation anywhere else except in the one true God, who had revealed himself to them. Jeremiah, in short, means, that when any country is destitute of God's help, though it may excel in arms, in number, in wealth, and in wisdom, yet everything under heaven is of no avail without the blessing and favor of God. He has spoken of princes and of wise men, and he has named chariots, horses, and treasures, --- all these have been mentioned for the purpose I have just stated, even to show, that were we supplied with all that may seem necessary to defend us, except God protected us, whatever the world may offer would be all in vain; for we shall at length find, that without God neither arms, nor chariots, nor wisdom nor counsel, nor any other helps, can avail us anything.

It follows, that Chaldea gloried in images The word {אימים}, aimim, means terrors, and giants are called by this name in Deuteronomy 2:10, because they inspire terror by their aspect. But this name is no doubt applied to images, because they are only bugbears, des epovantailz, as we say in French. [435] As then they are mere scarecrows, which only frighten children, they are called {אימים}, aimim. And he says, that they gloried in, or doted on them --- for {הלל}, elal, means both, in Hithpael, as it is found here. It means to boast or to elate one's-self, and also to be mad or to dote. Either sense would not be unsuitable to this place; for the unbelieving gloried in their idols, and at the same time were mad: yet the first meaning seems to me the best, that they gloried in their idols, as it is said in Psalm 47:7,

``Let them perish who trust in images and glory in them.''

Though the verb there is indeed different, yet the meaning is the same.

It was not, indeed, without reason, that the Prophet reproaches the Chaldeans, that they gloried in their idols, because they thereby robbed God of his honor; for what is ascribed to idols is taken away from God. He intimates, in short, that the

[435] That the Babylonians had large idols or images, which were of terrific size, is evident from Daniel 3:1 — Ed.

Chaldeans would be justly punished as guilty of sacrilege, because they had impiously transferred the glory of God to their own idols. And this passage teaches us, that when God is purely worshipped among us, and when true religion flourishes, it will be our best protection. We shall then be more impregnable than if we had all the power and wealth of the world: nothing can hurt us, if we give to God his due honor, and strive to worship him in sincerity and truth. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:39

39, Therefore the wild beasts of the desert with the wild beasts of the islands shall dwell there, and the owls shall dwell therein: and it shall be no more inhabited for ever; neither shall it be dwelt in from generation to generation.

39. Propterea habitabunt aves sylvestres cum bestiis sylvestribus, et habitabunt filae struthionum; nec habitabitur amplius in seculum; non erit (inquam) in habitationem usque ad aetatem et aetatem.

The birds of the forest with the beasts of the forest, are rendered by some, ``the satyrs with the fairies;'' but {אִיִּים}, aiim, as well as {צִיִּים}, tsiim, are, on the contrary, birds or beasts of the forest. Some render {אִיִּים}, aiim, ``cats'' I hold no controversy as to these words --- let there be a free judgment to every one; but, as we have elsewhere seen, the Prophet means birds and beasts of the forest, rather than satyrs and fairies. Then he adds, the daughters of the ostriches, rendered by some ``of the owls;'' but about this name also I will not contend. Some then render {יַעֲנָה}, ione, ``owl,'' and refinedly explain that ``daughters'' are mentioned, because these birds forsake their young, when they howl through want or famine; but this is fictitious. I then take the daughters of the ostriches or of the owls, according to the usual manner of the language, to mean the very birds themselves. [436]

The Prophets usually speak thus, when they give no hope. We have said before, that Babylon was not then so laid waste, but that men dwelt there, who afterwards lived in great luxury; for the city, under Cyrus and his son, was always populous; and then, after its revolt, it was again inhabited; and when Alexander subdued Asia, Babylon was full of people, and flourished in luxury and wealth; and when he died there, he left the city very opulent. We hence, then, conclude, that what Jeremiah declares here, was not immediately fulfilled. But as the light or moderate punishments which the unbelieving suffer now are certain preludes of final and eternal destruction; so the Prophets, when speaking of God's vengeance, ever extend what they say to the last overthrow; and this also appears more clearly from the next verse, where it is said, ---

Jeremiah 50:40

40. As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighbour cities thereof, saith the LORD; so shall no man abide there, neither shall any son of man dwell therein.

40. Secundum subversionem Dei in Sodomam et Gomorram et vicinos ejus, dicit Jehova, non habitabit illie vir, et non morabitur in ea filius hominis.

This verse confirms and explains the previous verse. But that the design of the

[436] As to the two first words, the versions and the Targ. widely differ. According to Bochart, the first word, {צִיִּים,} means ``wild cats,'' and the second, {אִיִּים,} jackals. The Vulg., the Syr., and the Targ. render the other word, {יַעֲנָה,} the same, ``the ostrich;'' and this is the general opinion. --- Ed.

Prophet may be more evident, we must remember what Jude in his epistle (Jude 7) says, that the destruction of Sodom is as it were a mirror in which we behold God's vengeance on all the ungodly. God overthrew Sodom; but he does not proceed in the same way with other lands and nations; yet the same is the lot of all the unbelieving, of the despisers of God, and reprobates; for they are exposed to his vengeance, which they cannot escape, though it may be for a time suspended. When, therefore, the Prophet says now that Babylon would be overthrown, as Sodom was overthrown, he does not mean that this would be after seventy years, when taken by Cyrus and Darius, nor when retaken after its revolt, nor when taken by Alexander; for it remained a long time after this, even to the reign of Augustus Caesar. As, then, it has been so, it follows that our Prophet does not speak of its first, second, or third assault, but that he had in view what I have already stated, --- that when God summons the wicked to judgment, it is a certain prelude of eternal and final destruction. His way with the godly is another; for though God may sink them down to the grave, nay, to the center of the earth, yet hope is still left them; hence their death is never like the destruction of Sodom. And to the same purpose is what we have already quoted from Isaiah,

``Except a seed had been left us, we should have been as Sodom, and like to Gomorrah.'' (Isaiah 1:9)

That exception shows the difference between God's children and the reprobate, even because he often delivers them from ruin.

We now then understand the Prophet's meaning when he says that Babylon would become desolate and solitary, so that no one would dwell there, nor remain; [437] and that from age to age, or from generation to generation.

Moreover, we learn from what is here said, that the unbelieving are overwhelmed with despair even under the least punishment, because they see nothing but the vengeance of God; for though God does not immediately slay them, yet the least puncture denotes what impends over them; nay, he inflicts a deadly wound when he seems only to touch them lightly. There is then only one consolation, which can sustain us in our miseries, even to know that we are separated from the Sodomites through the mercy of God alone; because we have deserved the same destruction, and the Lord has spared us according to his infinite goodness. This, then, is the meaning, It follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:41

41. Behold, a people shall come from the north, and a great nation, and many kings shall be raised up from the coasts of the earth.

41. Ecce populus veniet ab aquilone, et gens magna, et reges multi (aut, validi) excitabuntur a lateribus terrae.

The Prophet again shows whence destruction was to come on the Babylonians. He does not indeed mention Cyrus, as Isaiah does (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1), nor does he mention the Persians; but he evidently points out the Medes, when he says that a people would come from the north He adds, a great nation and many or powerful kings; and lastly, from the sides of the earth. It is indeed certain that the war was

[437] Rather "sojourn," according to the Sept. — Ed.

carried on under the banner and command of Cyrus and Darius. Cyrus was the chief, but Darius, on account of his age, was deemed the king. To whom then does Jeremiah refer, when he says many kings, if we so render the words? even to the satraps or princes, of whom a great number Darius brought with him; for Cyrus came from remote mountains, and from a barbarous nation; but the kingdom of Darius was very wide. There is then no doubt but that he brought with him many kings, who yet obeyed his authority. But we may take {רבים}, rebim, in the sense of being strong. However this may be, the Prophet means that the Chaldeans would have to carry on war, not with one nation or one king, but with many nations and with many kings, or certainly with mighty kings. Hence he mentions the sides of the earth, by which phrase he reminds us that the army would come, not from one country but from remote parts; and though the distance might be great, yet the Prophet says, that they would all come together to attack the Chaldeans.

We now see that what afterwards happened is represented as in a picture, in order that the event itself might confirm the Jews, not only in the truth announced by Jeremiah, but also in the whole law and worship of God; for this prophecy was ratified to the faithful when they found that Jeremiah, a faithful interpreter of the law, had thus spoken. And then his doctrine availed also for another purpose, even that the people might know that they rebelled against God when they obstinately resisted the holy Prophet; for we know that they were extremely disobedient. They were then proved, by what happened, to have been guilty of having contended with God in their pertinacious wickedness and contempt. There was afterwards given them a sure ground of hope; for as Jeremiah had spoken of the destruction of Babylon, so, on the other hand, he had promised a return to the Jews. They had then reason to look for restoration, when they saw fulfilled what Jeremiah had spoken.

By the word raised, he expresses something more than by the word come: he says that people would come, and adds, that they would be raised up or roused; he intimates that they would not come of themselves, but by the hidden influence of God, because this war was not carried on merely by men. Cyrus indeed, led by insatiable avarice and ambition, was guided by his own inclination to undertake this war; and he made no end of his cruelty, until he at length miserably died, for he never ceased to shed innocent blood everywhere. But yet the Lord made use of these kings and nations to destroy Babylon: they were in reality the scourges of God, and accordingly he says, that they were roused from the sides of the earth, that is, from the most distant places.

Jeremiah 50:42

42. They shall hold the bow and the lance: they are cruel, and will not shew mercy: their voice shall roar like the sea, and they shall ride upon horses, every one put in array, like a man to the battle, against thee, O daughter of Babylon.

42. Arcum et scutum apprehendent, crudelis ipse (hoc est, omnes erunt crudeles,) et non tangentur misericordia; vox eorum tanquam mare sonabit (vel, tumultuabitur,) et super equos ascendent; paratus est quisque tanquam vir (hoc est, parati erunt) ad proelium contra to, filia Babylonis.

Jeremiah again speaks especially of armor, to intimate that the Babylonians would

not be able to sustain the assault of their enemies. He then says that they would be armed with the bow and the shield; [438] and adds, that they would be cruel. It is certain that the Persians were very bloody; for it was a barbarous nation; and where barbarity rules, there is no feeling of mercy. Cyrus indeed wished to appear a magnanimous prince, and not a savage; but it is sufficiently evident that he was very cruel, though Xenophon in his Life speaks of him otherwise; but he is not a true historian, for he tells many false things in favor of Cyrus. But when any one reads all that has been recorded, he will readily find out that Cyrus was a barbarian, who delighted in slaughter and carnage.

As to the Medes, they were given to luxuries, and were not a warlike nation. Darius, however, brought with him many princes, those whom he had overcome in uncultivated countries, and such as also possessed some valor. Though, then, the king of the Medes was effeminate as well as his people, yet he had with him many warlike men. And the same thing is expressed also by Isaiah; and you ought to compare this prophecy with that of Isaiah (Isaiah 13:17) for the two Prophets wholly agree, though Isaiah was dead when Jeremiah uttered this prophecy and wrote it.

He says that their voice would be tumultuous as the sea, or would sound or roar as the sea, when moved by some violent storm. And all these things were said, that the Babylonians might know that all their defenses would Be of no avail, when God should arm the Persians and the Medes for their destruction. For had that war been carried on only by men, the Chaldeans would have never thought that their enemies would be victorious; and doubtless they would have never been so, had not the Lord roused them and determined by their means to execute vengeance on the Chaldeans. He says that they would be prepared as a man for war Interpreters do not seem to me to understand the meaning of the Prophet; for though Jeremiah uses the word ``prepared'' in the singular number, yet he speaks of the whole people. But how does he say they would be prepared? even like a man Here he sets forth the union of the whole army, for they would all come to battle, like one man attacking his own enemy. It is indeed difficult for the minds of all to be so directed in battle, that they should unitedly attack an enemy and fight as it were with one hand, and that they should not look on one another, and yet make an united assault. This, then, is what the Prophet means when he says, that they would be prepared against the Chaldeans as one man.

He then adds, against thee, daughter of Babylon He intimates that they would be not only sufficiently strong against ordinary enemies, but also against the city itself. For had not this been added, Babylon would have ever been considered as an exception; for it was deemed impregnable on account of the multitude of men, the height and breadth of its walls, its towers, and all other defenses. Now, then, God shows that though Babylon proudly exulted in its forces, and thought itself exempt from every danger, yet the Persians and the Medes would possess sufficient power by which they would easily overcome it. What follows I cannot finish today; it is therefore better to stop here.

[438] Rather “spear” or lance; so the Sept. and Syr., though the Vulg. and Targ. have “shield.” — Ed.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou teachest us by the example of the ungodly to fear thy name, we may learn to submit our necks to thy word, and willingly, and as it becomes us, submissively to receive thy yoke, that while we strive to glorify thy name, being safe under thy protection, we may disregard all the attacks of our enemies, and all the assaults and onsets of Satan, who is the captain of all our enemies, until we shall at length enjoy our victory in the celestial kingdom, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY FIFTH

Jeremiah 50:43

43. The king of Babylon hath heard the report of them, and his hands waxed feeble: anguish took hold of him, and pangs as of a woman in travail.

43. Audivit rex Babylonis famam ipsorum, et dissolutae sunt manus ejus; anxietas apprehendit (vel, corripuit) eum, dolor tanquam parturientem.

The Prophet means by these words, that as soon as the report of war reached the Chaldeans, they would be so disheartened through fear as to become like a conquered people. As they had subjected to themselves many nations, they had acquired the name of being a warlike people; but the Prophet declares here that they would have no courage, and that therefore there would be no need of much valor to attack them, as they would of themselves give way and flee. The sum of what is said is, that the Persians and the Medes would gain the victory before they fought, for there would be no need of an attack, as their enemies would flee as being without any courage.

The Prophet at the same time intimates that in God's hand are the hearts of men, as I have often said, so that they who seem to excel in great boldness, melt as wax in a moment. For no doubt the Chaldeans were not wanting in courage to fight until God had rendered them effeminate, so that they took to flight through fear as soon as they heard the report respecting their enemies. It is, indeed, true that this was not immediately the case, for we know that they had long sustained a siege, and that Belshazzar was slain in the night, while they were securely and joyfully feasting as in the greatest quietness and peace; but they were at length taken, so that they had neither wisdom nor confidence; for the king and his princes were slain, and the city was in a moment taken, as though all the men were turned into logs of wood or into statues of stone. It follows,---

Jeremiah 50:44

44. Behold, he shall come up like a lion from the swelling of Jordan unto the habitation of the strong: but I will make them suddenly run away from her: and who is a chosen man, that I may appoint over her? for who is like me? and who will appoint me the time? and who is that shepherd that will stand before me?

44. Ecce tanquam leo ascendet (ascondens) a tumore Jordanis (ab altitudine, vel, elevatione, proprie, {גאון} etiam significat metaphorice superbiam) ad habitaculum forte, quum quiescere fecero, (vel, postquam irruptionem fecero,) currere faciam eos ab ipsa; et quis electus quem super eam praeficiam? Quis enim similis mei? et quis contestabitur mecum? et quis ille pastor qui consistat coram me (vel, ad faciem

meam)?

We have explained nearly the same words in the last chapter; for the Prophet not only used the same similitude respecting the Humans, but also added all the words which are found here; nay, the Prophet brings forward nothing new to the end of the chapter, but only repeats what we have seen before.

He first compares either Darius or Cyrus to a lion, who, at, the overflowing of Jordan, removes to another place. This passage, like the former, is indeed variously explained. Some read, ``for the pride of Jordan.'' But as it appears from other places that lions had their dens near the banks of Jordan, I have no doubt but that the Prophet here compares Cyrus to, a lion, forced to leave his own lair because of the inundation of that river. We know how savage a beast is the lion; but, when he is forced to change his dwelling and to move to another place, his fury rages the more. It is the same, then, as though he had said, that not any sort of lion would attack the Babylonians, but a lion furious through rage. He then adds, to the strong habitation When he spoke of the Idumeans, the allusion might have been to their country, which was elevated, and they had also mountains as their fortresses. But as Babylon was also strongly fortified, and nearly impregnable on account of fire various streams of the Euphrates, what the Prophet says is also suitable, that a lion would come, though there were hindrances which might impede his course; for when a lion rambles, being not hungry nor forced by any necessity, he can turn here and there as he pleases; but when rage drives and constrains him, he will then surmount all obstacles. So also the Prophet says, that how confident soever Babylon might be in its fortresses, yet Cyrus would break through them, for he would be like a lion, who, at the overflowing of Jordan, removes elsewhere, as he can no longer find his wonted dwelling.

We now perceive the meaning of the words, --- that the Babylonians would have to do, not with an idle but a terrible enemy, and with one who would surmount all obstacles, as when fury excites a lion when necessity drives him as it were headlong.

What follows is obscure. Some render the words thus, ``When I shall make Israel to rest, then I will make them to flee from her.'' In the former place (Jeremiah 49:19), we read ``him,'' in the singular, {אריצנו}, aritsnu; but here the Prophet uses the plural number, ``them,'' {אריצם}, aritsem; it is yet certain that the meaning is the same. Some, at the same time, apply this to the Jews, that God would remove them from Babylon, purposing to give them rest, that is, by dwelling securely in their own country; but as there is no mention made here of his people, this view is forced and far-fetched. I omit other explanations, for the meaning of the Prophet seems to me to be simply this, When I shall make an irruption, or, after I shall have made them rest, I will make them to flee He speaks, as I think, of the Chaldeans; and the particle {כי}, ki, is to be taken as an adverb of time, when, or after. It is, indeed, often a causative, but it has sometimes this meaning.

Now, these two clauses may be thus explained: When I shall make an irruption, or, when I shall have made them rest; for {רגע}, rego, means both to break and to rest. It is here in the active or causative conjugation, in Hiphil. If, then, we read, ``After I shall have made them to rest,'' the sense will be that the: Babylonians

had been long tranquil, as there was no one who infested them or disturbed their peace; and we know that men having long rested in their idleness and sloth, become almost stupefied, so that they are touched with no fear. God then shows that the Babylonians were greatly mistaken, if they thought that the rest which they had previously enjoyed would be perpetual; for he would make them to flee from the city, though they had been long there in a tranquil state. The other sense is by no means unsuitable, ``When I shall break,'' or make an irruption, then all will flee away, that is, leave the city, which was before like a paradise. There is still no doubt but that the Prophet here denounces on the Babylonians a sudden overthrow, which would drive the people here and there in all directions. [439]

It now follows, Who is the chosen one whom I shall set over her? God here in a manner deliberates as to the person whom he should make the leader of the war against the Chaldeans; and by these words he intimates that there would be ready for him the best general, and one especially active and also excelling in the art of war. And we know that even the unwilling are made to serve God, when he employs the ungodly as his scourges. In short, God shows that though the Babylonians might have brave leaders and most skillful in war, there yet would be prepared leaders, to whom he would commit the office of taking that city. And thus he teaches us at the same time that men are ruled by his hand, so that he chooses them according to his will and directs them to any work he pleases, Who is the chosen one, he says, whom I shall set over her?

And he adds, and who is like me? Here the Prophet shows that the Babylonians in vain trusted in their own defenses; for after having tried all things, they would find that whatever was set up against God and his invincible power, would be mere smoke. This sentence often occurs; and however common it may appear, yet, if we examine ourselves, we shall find that the Holy Spirit does not so often enforce it without reason; for after we have confessed that none is equal to God or can add to his power, --- as soon as any trial assails us, this confession vanishes, and we tremble as though God was nothing, and had no power to bring us help. Diffidence, then, which often creeps in when we are in difficulties or dangers, sufficiently shows that we do not attribute to God the praise due to his power. He does not then exclaim here, as in other places, without reason, Who is like me? as though he had said, that the Babylonians would foolishly seek auxiliaries here and there; for when they had made the utmost exertions, whatever they might think the most useful would all vanish away, so that they would be destitute of all remedies.

He adds, And who will protest against me? Some give this frigid version, Who will prescribe to me the time? but they wholly pervert the meaning of the Prophet; for God in this place declares, that men would in vain contend or litigate with him. It is the same as if he had said, ``Though all men were to rise up against, me, yet I will not allow them to litigate with me; and this they would also do in vain.'' In short, God intimates that men would in vain clamor against his judgments, for he would nevertheless perform what he has decreed. He does not yet claim for himself that absolute power about which the sophists prattle, while they separate it from

[439] See note on Jeremiah 49:19. — Ed.

justice; but he intimates that the causes are not always manifest to men when he executes his judgments; for it is not without reason that the Scripture testifies that God's judgments are a deep abyss; but by such an expression it is not meant that anything in God's judgments is confused or in disorder, what then? even that God works in an extraordinary manner, and that hence his judgments are sometimes hidden from men.

Then God briefly shows, that though the Babylonians were to dispute, and start many objections, all this would be useless, because he would execute what he had decreed, and that without debating.

Let us then learn from these words, that when God's works have the appearance of being unreasonable, we ought humbly to admire them, and never to judge them according to our computation; for God is not to be judged by us. Therefore, as I have already said, we are then only wise, when we humbly adore him in all his works, without disputing with him; for when we adduce all possible things, he will close our mouth with one word, and check all our presumption; nay, he will ever overcome us by being silent, for his justice will always overthrow whatever may come to our minds. But we must bear in mind what I have stated, that God never so acts by his absolute power as to separate it from his justice; for this would be as it were to wound himself; for these things are undivided, his power and justice, though justice often does not appeal however this may be, his sole and simple will is to us the rule of all justice.

It follows, And who is that shepherd who will stand before me? He alludes to the similitude he had used, for he compared himself before to a lion. he says now, ``Since I shall go against Babylon like a lion, what shepherd will dare to oppose me?'' We see that there is to be understood a contrast, between a lion and a shepherd; for God would be like a lion to destroy Babylon; hence, by pastor, he denotes any adversary who might come forth to defend the Chaldean flock. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:45

45. Therefore hear ye the counsel of the LORD, that he hath taken against Babylon; and his purposes, that he hath purposed against the land of the Chaldeans: Surely the least of the flock shall draw them out: surely he shall make their habitation desolate with them.

45. Propterea audite consilium Jehovae quod consultavit contra Babylonem, et cogitationes quas cogitavit contra terram Chaldaeorum; Si non traxerint eos parvuli gregis; si non perdiderint super eos habitaculum.

The Prophet confirms his previous doctrine, and uses an oath, for he had already spoken sufficiently at large of the destruction of Babylon, and his words might seem otherwise superfluous, because the subject had been explained with abundant clearness. But he introduces God here as making an oath, for the particles, ``if not,'' {לא} {אם}, am la, show the sentence to be elliptical; and we know that this form of swearing is common in Scripture. Then God swears, that the Babylonians were already given up to destruction, so that even the least of the flock would be superior to them.

But it is not without reason that the Prophet speaks here of the counsel of God and

of his thoughts; for we know that men through their own vanity are held suspended or in doubt, so that they do not firmly acquiesce in God's word, at least they vacillate so as to have no stability of faith. As, then, men think in themselves that possibly a thing may happen otherwise than according to the words of the prophets, Jeremiah does here meet such thoughts, and bids men to hear the counsel of God and his thoughts. It is, indeed, a mode of speaking transferred from men, when he speaks of the thoughts of God; for we know that God does not deliberate on what he is about to do, as the case is with men. But this manner of speaking so frequently occurs, that it ought to be familiar to us. However this may be, he intimates that God did not in vain announce terror when speaking of Babylon, but that the irrevocable decree was declared which God had formed. Hence he says, that he had already taken counsel, so that men need not deliberate any more, nor call into question his fixed decree, nor dispute concerning his thoughts. There is, then, no reason for men to revolve things in themselves, and to adopt different views; because events must be, he says, as I have predicted; God then has commanded me to announce this prophecy as brought forth from his counsel, which can by no means be changed. This is the reason why he mentions God's counsel and thoughts.

He adds, If they shall not draw them forth; some read, ``cast them out.'' But {סחב}, sacheb, means to draw; and there is no doubt but that the Prophet denotes by this verb contempt and reproach; as carcasses are drawn through the mud, or a dead dog is drawn and cast into a river; so now, he says, Draw forth the Babylonians shall the least of the flock But how can these things agree together, that there was to be the choicest leader, and that yet the least of the flock would be the conquerors? God intimates, that though he would endow Cyrus with warlike valor, yet if it pleased him, there would be means by which he could destroy the Babylonians, were he to send sheep or lambs as their enemies. He means, in a word, that the Babylonians would be unwarlike, when God deprived them of their courage.

If they will not upset over them their tabernacle Some read as though the verb were {שום}, shum, ``If they will not set,'' etc.; others derive the word from {ישם}, ishem; but it comes rather from {שמם}, shemem; If, then, they will not upset over them their tabernacle, that is, when the Babylonians shall be laid prostrate, even their houses shall fall and overwhelm them. In short, God sets forth here a final ruin, from which the Babylonians could never be restored; for it is an evidence of hopeless despair, when houses are upset, so that their masters are buried in their ruins. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 50:46

46. At the noise of the taking of Babylon the earth is moved, and the cry is heard among the nations.

46. A voce captae Babylonis contremuit terra, et clamor in gentibus, (vel, per gentes,) auditus est.

This is to anticipate an objection; for many might have said, ``How can it be, that Babylon should thus fall, on whose monarchy so many and so wide countries are dependent?'' As, then, such an event appearing so unreasonable, might occur to them, the Prophet meets the objection, and answers by way of anticipation, that

though the earth shook, yet this would surely take place. He shows, at the same time, how great the calamity would be, for it would, by its noise, make the whole world to tremble: it would be thus better known how grievous was to be God's vengeance on the Babylonians; for it was not to be without the shaking of the whole earth. Now follows, ---

Jeremiah 51

CHAPTER 51

Jeremiah 51:1

1. Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will raise up against Babylon, and against them that dwell in the midst of them that rise up against me, a destroying wind;

1. Sic dicit Jehova, Ecce, ego excitans contra Babylonem, et contra habitatores cordis qui insurgunt contra me, venturn corrumpentem (vel, dissipantem.)

He proceeds with the same subject. Jeremiah seems, indeed, to have used more words than necessary; but we have stated the reason why he dwelt at large on a matter so clear: His object was not only to teach, for this he might have done in a few words, and have thus included all that we have hitherto seen and shall find in the whole of this chapter; but as it was an event hardly credible, it was necessary to illustrate the prophecy respecting it with many figures, and to inculcate with many repetitions what had been already said, and also to confirm by many reasons what no one hardly admitted.

He then says, Behold, I will, etc. God is made the speaker, that the word might have more force and power. Behold, he says, I will raise up a destroying wind against the Chaldeans. The similitude of wind is very appropriate, for God thus briefly reminded them how easy it was for him to destroy the whole world even by a single blast. The wind is, indeed, indirectly set in opposition to instruments of war; for when any one seeks to overcome an enemy, he collects many and strong forces, and procures auxiliaries on every side; in short, he will not dare to attempt anything without making every possible preparation. As, then, men dare not attack their enemies without making strenuous efforts, God here extols his own power, because it is enough for him to raise up a wind. We now, then, perceive the design of the similitude, when he says, that he would raise up a wind that would destroy or scatter the Chaldeans.

In the following words there is an obscurity; literally, they are, the inhabitants of

the heart; for as the word {ישבי}, ishebi, is in construction, another word necessarily follows it, as for instance, the country of the Chaldeans. But the relative, {ה}, He, referring to Babylon, ought to have been put down. Yet as the words occur, we are compelled to read, and against the inhabitants of the heart Some will have the relative, {אשר}, asher, to be understood, but that is harsh, for it is an unnatural mode of speaking. They, however, give this rendering of {לב} {אשר}, asher leb, ``those who in heart rose up against me.'' But what if we read the words inhabitants of the heart metaphorically, as meaning those who gloried in their own wisdom? for the Babylonians, as it is well known, thought other men dull and foolish, and were so pleased with their own astuteness, as though they were fortified by inclosures on every side. They dwelt then in their own heart, that is, they thought themselves well fortified around through their own wisdom. In this sense the Prophet seems to call the Babylonians the inhabitants of the heart [440]

He adds, at the same time, that they rose, up against God, even because they had cruelly treated his people, and nearly destroyed them. And we know that God undertook the cause of his Church, and therefore complained that war was made on him by the ungodly, whenever they molested the faithful. It is also at the same time generally true, that all who arrogate to themselves wisdom rise up against God, because they rob God of the honor due to him. But it ought properly to be referred to the union which exists between God and his Church, when he charges the Chaldeans, that they rose up against him. It follows,---

Jeremiah 51:2

2. And will send unto Babylon fanners, that shall fan her, and shall empty her land: for in the day of trouble they shall be against her round about.

2. Et mittam contra Babylonem ventilatores, qui ventilent ipsam (ad verbum, et ventilabunt ipsam,) et exinanient terram ejus (vel, spoliabunt; {בקק} enim significat proprie exinanire, evacuare, ut vulgo dicunt; et significat etiam spoliare et proedari; qui ergo exinanient terram;) quia erunt contra eam in circuitu in die mali (hoc est, in die adversa.)

Here he explains himself more clearly, without the metaphor he had used. He no longer uses the similitude of wind when he declares that he would send fanners At the same time some take {זארים}, zarim, in the sense of aliens, who would banish her; but this would be harsh. I then doubt not but that the Prophet alludes to the wind before mentioned. He does not indeed continue that metaphor; but yet what he says corresponds with it. Instead of wind he now mentions fanners, or winnowers; but this cannot be understood except of enemies. A clearer explanation is still found in the word empty, after having said that the Persians and the Medes would fan or winnow Babylon. He compares her, no doubt, to chaff. As then the chaff, when ventilated, falls on the ground, so he says a similar thing would happen to the Babylonians.

[440] The Targ. and the versions widely differ from one another. The cabbalistic solution is very frivolous, by which the two words {{לב and {קמי} are made one, and made to signify ``Chaldeans,'' according to what was called ``Athbash,'' by which aleph, the first letter, was taken for tau, the last letter, and beth, the second, for shin, the last but one; and so on through the whole alphabet. But Blayney and others, such as Gataker and Venema, give a satisfactory explanation of the words. The word ,{לב} the heart, often means the middle of anything, as ``the heart of heaven,'' in Deuteronomy 4:11 means the midst of heaven; and ``the heart of the seas,'' in Psalm 46:2, means the midst of the seas. So here, ``the heart of my adversaries,'' means the centre of the country of his adversaries. i.e., Babylon, --- Against the inhabitants of the metropolis of my adversaries. --- Ed.

But he adds, And shall make empty her land, that is, the land of Babylon. He says that the whole country would be so plundered, that nothing would be left remaining. And he confirms this declaration, because they shall be, he says, around her. By this expression he intimates that there would be no escape for the Chaldeans.

It often happens that men stealthily escape, when pressed by their enemies; for though enemies may watch all passages, yet they often do not find out all hiding-places. But the Prophet says, that their enemies would so surround them, that the Chaldeans would not be able to take with them anything which they might save from their enemies' hands. He adds, in the day of evil. By this phrase he intimates again, that the Chaldeans were already devoted by God to destruction. It is, then, the same thing as though he had said, that as soon as her enemies came, it would be all over with Babylon and the whole nation, --- how so? for it would be the day of her utter ruin. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:3

3. Against him that bendeth let the archer bend his bow, and against him that lifteth himself up in his brigandine: and spare ye not her young men; destroy ye utterly all her host.

3. Ad tendentem qui tendit arcum suum {ידרך} est hic vox supervacua, qui tendit igitur arcum suum,) et (copula hic abundat;) ne parcatis electis ejus, interficite omnem exercitum ejus.

Interpreters give various expositions of this verse. Some understand a soldier of light armor by him who bends the bow; and by him who elevates himself in his coat of mail, they understand a heavy-armed, soldier, There is also another difference; some take {אל}, al, for {לא}, la, when it is said {יתעל} {ואל}, veal itol, because a copulative follows; and the words seem not to be well connected, if we read thus, ``As to him who raises himself up in his coat of mail, and spare ye not,'' etc.; and hence they take negatively the particle {אל}, al, instead of {לא} la, ``and he may not raise up himself in his coat of mail.'' But it is probable that the copulative in the second place is redundant The simple meaning would therefore be, As to him who bends the bow, and who raises himself up in his coat of mall [441]

I do not, indeed, give such a refined interpretation as some do, respecting the light and heavy armed soldiers. I doubt not, then, but that he points out the archers, and those clad in mail. If, however, any one prefers the other explanation, let him enjoy his own opinion. As to the main point, it is evident that the Prophet exhorts the Persians and the Medes not to spare the young men among the Chaldeans, but to destroy their whole army, so that no part of it should be left remaining.

PRAYER

Grant Almighty God, that since thou wert formerly so solicitous respecting the salvation of thy people as to undertake war, for their sake, against a most powerful nation, --- O grant, that we also, at this day, may know, that we shall be safe and

[441] It is singular that {{אל is omitted in the Sept. and the Syr., and retained in its negative sense in the Vulg. and the Targ., which makes no sense consistently with the context. There is evidently {אשר} understood before the first verb, as is often the case when the verb is in the future tense. Then the literal rendering would be this, --- At him who bends let the bender bend his bow, And at him who glories in his coat of mail; And spare ye not her chosen men, Utterly destroy all her host. There is here perfect consistency. They who take {אל} as a negative say, that the first part is addressed to the Chaldeans, and the second to their enemies; but this would be strangely abrupt. --- Ed.

secure under the protection of thy hand, and that we may so experience thy power, that there may be to us a just reason for glorying in thee, and that our enemies may be confounded, in order that thy glory may shine forth more and more, and that the kingdom of thine only-begotten Son may also be thus promoted. --- Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY SIXTH

Jeremiah 51:4

4. Thus the slain shall fall in the land of the Chaldeans, and they that are thrust through in her streets.

4. Et cadent vulnerati in terra ejus (in terra Casdin) et transfixi (vel, confossi) in compitis ejus.

HE proceeds with what we began yesterday to explain, --- that the time was nigh when God would take vengeance on the Babylonians. As, then, this could not be without great destruction in a city so very populous, and as it could not be overthrown except calamity extended itself through the whole country, hence, he says, that though Babylon should prepare great and powerful armies, it would yet be in vain, because they shall fall, he says, wounded everywhere in the land; and then he adds, and pierced through in her streets By these words he means, that the Chaldeans would be slain not only in the open fields, but also in the midst of the city. he afterwards adds, ---

Jeremiah 51:5

5. For Israel hath not been forsaken, nor Judah of his God, of the LORD of hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel.

5. Quoniam non viduatus est Israel, et Jehudah a Deo suo, a Jehova exercituum; quin potius (eadem est particula {כי} causalis, quae tamen hic phes aliquid exprimit, ergo quin potius) terra ipsorum plena est peccato propter sanctum Israel.

The Prophet shows here the cause why God had resolved to treat the Babylonians with so much severity, even because he would be the avenger of his own people. He also obviates a doubt which might have disturbed weak minds, for he seemed to have forsaken his people when he suffered them to be driven into exile. As this was a kind of repudiation, as we have seen elsewhere, the Prophet says now, that Israel had not been wholly widowed, nor Judah, by his God; as though he had said, that the Jews and the Israelites were indeed, for a time, like widows, but this was not to be perpetual. For, as we have said, the divorce was temporary, when God so forsook his Temple and the city, that the miserable people was exposed to plunder. As long, then, as the will of their enemies prevailed, God seemed to have forsaken his people. It is of this widowhood that the Prophet now speaks; but he yet testifies that Israel would not be wholly widowed by Jehovah his God.

He indeed alludes to that spiritual marriage, of which frequent mention is made; for God had, from the beginning, united the Church to himself, as it were, by a marriage-bond; and the people, as it is well known, had been so received into covenant, that there was contracted, as it were, a spiritual marriage. Then the Prophet now says, that they were not widowed; in which he refers to the hope of deliverance; for it could not have been denied but that God had repudiated his people. But he shows that their chastisement would not be perpetual, because God

would at length reconcile to himself the people from whom he had been alienated, and would restore them to the ancient condition and honor of a wife. He speaks of both kingdoms.

Then he adds, by Jehovah of hosts By this title he sets forth the power of God, as though he had said, that as God is faithful in his promises, and constantly keeps his covenant, so he is not destitute of power, so as not to be able to save his people and to rescue them, when it pleases him, from death itself. He confirms this truth, when he says, for the land of the Chaldeans is filled with sin on account of the Holy One of Israel, as though he had said, that the land was abominable, because it carried on war against God.: For when he speaks of the Holy One of Israel, he shows that God had such a care for his people that he was prepared, when the suitable time came, to show himself as their avenger. We now perceive what the Prophet means when he says, that Chaldea was filled with sin, even because it provoked God when it thought that the wrong was done only to men. [442] It follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:6

6. Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his soul: be not cut off in her iniquity; for this is the time of the LORD'S vengeance; he will render unto her a recompence.

6. Fugite e medio Babylonis, et servate quisque animam suam, (vel, eripite,) ne excidamini (vel, pereatis) in iniquitate ejus; quia tempus hoc ultionis Jehova, mercedem ipse rependet ei.

He goes on with the same subject, but illustrates it by various figures; for otherwise he would not have penetrated into the hearts of the godly. Were any at this day to predict the destruction of Rome, it could hardly be believed; and yet we know that it has in our life been stormed, and now it hangs as it were by a thread, though hitherto it has been supported and fortified by the greatest forces. But the dignity of the city so confounded the minds of men, that it was hardly credible that it could have been so soon subverted. How, then, was it possible for such a thing to have happened at that time? for Babylon was the mistress of the East. The Assyrians had previously possessed the empire; but they had been subdued, and had, as it were, been brought under the yoke. As, then, Babylon now flourished in power so great and invincible, Jeremiah seemed to be labeling when he spoke of its approaching destruction. It was hence necessary that what he said should be confirmed, as it is now done. And so he now turns to foreigners and guests, and exhorts them to flee lest they should perish in the accursed city.

Flee, he says, from the midst of Babylon But there was then no safer place in the land; for had all the regions of the world been shaken, yet Babylon would have been deemed beyond any danger. But he says that all guests were to flee from the midst of it, if they wished to save their lives. Then he adds, lest ye perish in her iniquity He assigns a reason why those who then dwelt in Babylon could not be safe except

[442] The explanation of the last clasue is, according to the Jewish commentators, not generally taken. The "land," by most is deemed to be the land of Israel and Judah. The word {,{אשם means not only guilt, but also guilt's penalty --- judgement; and this seems to be its meaning here, --- For not widowed is Israel, By his God, by Jehovah of hosts; Though their land has been filled With judgement by the Holy One of Israel. But if we render {מ} before or against, then the last line would be, --- With guilt (or sin) before the Holy One of Israel. --- Ed

they fled, even because God was about to punish the city for its iniquities. He then sets the iniquity of Babylon in opposition to the multitude of its men, as well as to its wealth and defenses, and other means of strength. Babylon was populous; it might also be aided by many auxiliaries; and there were ready at hand those who might hire their services. As, then, there was nothing wanting to that city, the Prophet here shows that wealth and abundance of people, and all other helps would be of no moment, because it was God's will to punish her iniquity. This is the reason why Jeremiah now says, lest ye perish in her iniquity; that is, ``do not mingle with those ungodly men whom God has given up to destruction.''

And for the same purpose he adds, For it is the time of the vengeance of Jehovah Here, again, he obviates an objection; for as God had suspended his judgment, no one thought it possible that a fire could so soon, and, as it were, in a moment be kindled to destroy Babylon. Then the Prophet says, that it was the time; by which he intimates, that though God does not immediately execute his judgments, yet he does not he down as it were idly, so as to forget what he has to do, but that he has his own times. And this doctrine deserves to be noticed, because through our intemperate zeal we make much ado, except God brings us help as soon as we are injured; but if he delays even a short time, we complain and think that he has forgotten our welfare. And even saints, in depositing familiarly their cares and anxieties in his bosom, speak thus,

``Arise, O Lord, why sleepest thou'' (Psalm 44:23)

As, then, we are by nature inclined to impatience, we ought to observe what Scripture so often inculcates, even this --- that God has his certain and fixed times for punishing the wicked. Hence Jeremiah now teaches us, that the time of God's vengeance was come.

He then adds, A reward will he render to her; as though he had said, that though Babylon would not have to suffer punishment immediately, yet she would not escape from God's hand, for the reward which God would render her was already prepared. And this doctrine arises from a general principle, that God will ever render to every one his just reward. We now, then, perceive the design of the Prophet.

We have said that the words were addressed to the strangers and the guests who were in Chaldea, or in the city Babylon. They then pervert this passage, who think that the faithful are here exhorted immediately to depart from Babylon, That is, to withdraw themselves from superstitions and the defilements of the world; for the Prophet means no such thing. A passage might, however, be made from one truth to another. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:7

7. Babylon hath been a golden cup in the LORD'S hand, that made all the earth drunken: the nations have drunken of her wine; therefore the nations are mad.

7. Calix aureus Babylon in manu Jehovae, inebrians totam terram; e vino ejus biberunt gentes, propterea insanierunt gentes.

Here again he anticipates an objection which might have been made; for we know that the kingdoms of the world neither rise nor stand, except through the will of God; as, then, the Prophet threatens destruction to Babylon, this objection was ready at

hand. ``How comes it, then, that this city, which thou sayest is accursed, has hitherto so greatly flourished? for who hath honored Babylon with so great dignity, with so much wealth, and with so many victories? for it has not by chance happened that this monarchy has been elevated so high; for not only all Assyria has been brought, under its yoke, but also the kingdom of Israel, and the kingdom of Judah is not far from its final ruin.'' To this the Prophet answers, and says, that Babylon was a cup in God's hand to inebriate the earth; as though he had said, that God was by no means inconsistent with himself when he employed the Babylonians as his scourges, and when he now chastises them in their turn. And he shows also, that when things thus revolve in the world, they do not happen through the blind force of chance, but through the secret judgments of God, who so governs the world, that he often exalts even the ungodly to the highest power, when his purpose is to execute through them his judgments.

We now, then, understand the design of this passage; for otherwise what the Prophet says might seem abrupt. Having said that the time of God's vengeance had already come, he now adds, A golden cup is in God's hand; --- to what purpose was this added? By what has been stated, it appears evident how aptly the words run, how sentences which seem to be wide asunder fitly unite together; for a doubt might have crept in as to this, how could it be that God should thus bestow his benefits on this city, and then in a short time destroy it. As, then, it seems unreasonable that God should vary in his doings, as though he was not consistent with himself, the Prophet on the other hand reminds us, that when such changes happen, God does in no degree change his purposes; for he so regulates the government of the world, that those whom he favors with remarkable benefits, he afterwards destroys, they being worthy of punishment on account of their ingratitude, and that he does not without reason or cause use them for a time as scourges to chastise the wickedness of others. And it is for this reason, as I think, that he calls it a golden cup; for God seemed to pour forth his benefits on the Babylonians as with a full hand. When, therefore, the splendor of that city and of the monarchy was so great, all things were there as it were golden.

Then he says, that it was a golden cup, but in the hand of God By saying that it was in God's hand, he intimates that the Babylonians were not under the government of chance, but were ruled by God as he pleased, and also that their power, though very great, was yet under the restraint of God, so that they did nothing but by his permission, and even by his command.

He afterwards adds how God purposed to carry this cup in his hand, a cup so splendid as it were of gold; his will was that it should inebriate the whole earth These are metaphorical words; for the Prophet speaks here, no doubt, of punishments which produce a kind of fury or madness. When God then designed to take vengeance on all these nations, he inebriated them with evils, and this he did by the Babylonians. For this reason, therefore, Babylon is said to have been the golden cup which God extended with his own hand, and gave it to be drunk by all nations. This similitude has also been used elsewhere, when Jeremiah spoke of the Idumeans,

``All drank of the cup, yea, drank of it to the dregs, so that they were inebriated,''

(Jeremiah 49:12)

He there also called the terrible punishment that was coming on the Idumeans the cup of fury. Thus, then, were many nations inebriated by the Babylonians, because they were so oppressed, that their minds were infatuated, as it were, with troubles; for we know that men are stupefied with adversities, as though they were not in a right mind. In this way Babylon inebriated many nations, because it so oppressed them that they were reduced to a state of rage or madness; for they were not in a composed state of mind when they were miserably distressed. [443]

To the same purpose is what is added: The nations who drank of her cup became mad. Here he shows that the punishments were not ordinary, by which divers nations were chastised by the Babylonians, but such as deprived them of mind and judgment, as it is usually the case, as I have just said, in extreme evils.

Moreover, this passage teaches us, that when the wicked exercise their power with great display, yet God overrules all their violence, though not apparently; nay, that all the wicked, while they seem to assume to themselves the greatest license, are yet guided, as it were, by the hand of God, and that when they oppress their neighbors, it is done through the secret providence of God, who thus inebriates all who deserve to be punished. At the same time, the Prophet implies, that the Babylonians oppressed so many nations neither by their own contrivance, nor by their own strength; but because it was the Lord's will that they should be inebriated: otherwise it would have greatly perplexed the faithful to think that no one could be found stronger than the Babylonians. Hence the Prophet in effect gives this answer, that all the nations could not have been overcome, had not the Lord given them to drink the wine of fury and madness. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:8

8. Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her; take balm for her pain, if so be she may be healed.

8. Subito cecidit Babylon et confracta est; ululate super eam; tollite resinam (alii, balsamum) ad dolorem ejus, si forte sanetur.

The Prophet now declares that the fall of Babylon would be sudden, that the faithful might understand that God could accomplish in one moment what he had decreed. For when the prophets spoke of God's judgments, the people questioned among themselves, how could that be which surpassed the common ideas of men. That men, therefore, might not estimate God's power according to their own thoughts, he introduces this word, suddenly; as though he had said, that God had no need of warlike forces; for though he makes no preparations, yet he can subvert every power that exists in the world.

He then adds, Howl for her; and this is said, because it could not be but that many nations would either bewail the ruin of so great a monarch, or be astonished at her, and thus many things would be said. He then says, that though the whole world were

[443] Some render the last word "reel," or stagger, and perhaps more consistently with the comparison of drunkenness. The verb in Hithpael, as here, means to be moved violently, either through rage or joy. Moved or agitated is the rendering of the versions and the Targum. To be moved with joy is to exult or glory; and so Blayney renders it, and connects the end of this verse with the following, i.e., that the nations gloried because of the fall of Babylon, — Therefore shall nations glory, [saying,] Babylon is suddenly fallen, etc. — Ed

to howl for Babylon, it would yet fall and be suddenly broken, whenever it pleased God. And he says, by way of irony, Take balm, if peradventure it can be healed The word {צרי}, tsari, is, by some, rendered balsam, but it means rosin, for we know that it was deemed precious in Judea; and the Prophet no doubt accommodated what he said to what was commonly known. As then that medicament was in common use among the Jews, he now says, Take rosin As there is hardly any country which has not its peculiar remedies; so we see that Jeremiah refers not to what was usually done at Babylon, or to medicaments used by the Chaldeans, but to what was commonly used in his own country, as it appears from other places. Now rosin was a juice which flowed from trees, and it was a thick juice. The best rosin which we now use is from the terebinth; but in these parts they have what proceeds from the fir, for here the terebinth is not found. But Judea had a most valuable rosin, as we learn from many parts of Scripture. And under this one thing is included everything, Take rosin; as though he had said, ``Let physicians come together (otherwise she will perish) from every place, if peradventure she can be healed.'' This is said ironically, that the faithful might know that the diseases of Babylon would be incurable.

We have said elsewhere, that Babylon was not wholly demolished when taken by Cyrus, and that the people were not then driven away. They dwelt there as usual, though made tributary, as they were afterwards, under the dominion of the Persians. Babylon was also grievously oppressed, when punished for its revolt, until what Jeremiah and others prophesied was fulfilled. Then the time of which he speaks ought not to be confined to one calamity only, which was only a prelude to others still greater. He afterwards adds, ---

Jeremiah 51:9

9. We would have healed Babylon, but she is not healed: forsake her, and let us go every one into his own country: for her judgment reacheth unto heaven, and is lifted up even to the skies.

9. Curavimus Babylonem (idem est quidera verbum, ,{אפר} quod significat sanare et mederi, quia non semper est in medico relevetur ut oeger, nec semper foeliciter succedit, ideo dicit Propheta, medicati sumus, vel, remedia attulimus ad curandum Babylonem,) et non sanata fuit; derelinquite eam, et proficiseamur quisque in terram suam; quia pertigit ad coelos judicium ejus, et elevatum est usque ad nubes.

The Prophet assumes different characters; he speaks here in the person of those who of themselves brought help to the Babylonians. And many, no doubt, would have been ready to assist them, had King Belshazzar wished to accept aid; and we know also, that the city had a large army. He compares, then, the nations subject to the Babylonians, and also the hired and foreign soldiers, to physicians, as though he had said, ``Babylon has been, with great care, healed.'' As when a great prince is taken ill, he sends here and there for the best and most skillful physicians; but when the disease is incurable, they all strive in vain to save his life: so now the Prophet speaks, using a metaphor; but he speaks in the person of those who either had set to hire their services, or had come from a sense of duty to heal Babylon. ``See,'' they said, ``the fault is not with us, for we have faithfully and carefully done our best to

heal her, but she has not been healed.''

He then adds, Leave her, and let us depart, every one to his own land. This was the language of foreign soldiers and mercenaries. When they saw that the safety of the city was hopeless, they began to counsel one another, ``What do we? Ought we not rather to consult our own safety? for our efforts are wholly useless. It is then time for every one to return to his own country, for the end of Babylon is come.'' But the change of person has much more force than if the Prophet had spoken thus, ``The time shall come when the auxiliaries shall flee away, for they will see that it would be all in vain to defend her.'' But when he compares them to physicians, this similitude more fully illustrates the case; and then when he speaks in their person, this renders what is said still more emphatieal.

He at length adds, For her judgment has reached to the heavens, and has been elevated to the clouds. Jeremiah could not have properly addressed what he said to the unbelieving, if you explain this of God being adverse and hostile to the Babylonians; for it never occurred to the hired soldiers,

that Babylon perished through the just judgment of God. But the Prophet, according to a usual mode of speaking, says, Her judgment (that is, her destruction) reached to the heavens, and has been elevated to the clouds; that is, no aid shall be found under heaven, which can deliver Babylon, --- how so? because it will be the same as though destruction came from heaven itself, and from the clouds. For when danger is nigh either from behind or from before us, we can turn aside either to the right hand or to the left, so that we may escape the evils which men may bring on us: but when heaven itself seems to threaten our heads, then an escape is attempted in vain. This then is the reason why the Prophet says that the judgment of Babylon had reached to the heavens and had been elevated to the clouds. [444] It follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:10

10. The LORD hath brought forth our righteousness: come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the LORD our God.

10. Eduxit (vel, protulit; egredi fecit, ad verbum) Jehova justitias nostras: venite et narremus in Sion opus Jehovae, Dei nostri.

The Prophet here addresses the faithful, and especially shows, that the ruin of Babylon would be a sure evidence of God's paternal favor towards his Church. And it was no common consolation to the faithful, in their extreme miseries, to know, that so dear and precious to God was their salvation, that he would by no means spare the Babylonians, whom the whole world regarded as half gods; for, as I have said, the power of that monarchy filled the minds of men with astonishment. When the faithful, then, knew that the Babylonians were to perish, because they had oppressed and cruelly treated them, an invaluable consolation, as I have said, must hence have been conveyed to them. The Prophet then reminds us here, that it would be a singular testimony as to God's favor to his Church, when he subverted Babylon, and

[444] Another view has been given of this clause: It is a mode of speaking to express the greatness of a thing; see Psalm 36:5; Ezra 9:6. The judgement or punishment of Babylon would be so great, that it might be compared to what may reach to the heavens, and to the ethereal regions; for such is the meaning of the last word, and is rendered “stars,” by the Sept., — For to the heavens has reached her judgement, And it has risen up to the ethereal regions. By “heavens,” are often meant the skies. — Ed.

he also exhorts the faithful to gratitude: for it is the design of all God's benefits, that his name may be celebrated by us, according to what David says:

``What shall I render to the Lord for all the benefits which he has bestowed on me? The cup of salvation will I take and call on the name of the Lord.'' (Psalm 116:12, 13.)

He then says, first, Brought forth hath Jehovah our righteousness Here, some anxiously toil to untie a knot, where there is none; for fearing lest the word, righteousness, should be laid hold on for the purpose of setting up merits, they say that righteousness is the remission of sins. Then they thus explain the words of the Prophet,'' God has at length unfolded his mercy towards us, and it is our righteousness when all our iniquities are buried.'' But this is forced. When the Prophet speaks here of righteousnesses, he does not mean the merits by which the Jews were to obtain what had been promised to them; but righteousnesses he calls their good cause with regard to the Babylonians. For righteousness has various meanings; and when a comparison is made between men, God is said to bring forth our righteousness, when he vindicates our integrity from the calumnies of the wicked. So Jacob said,

``The Lord will bring forth my righteousness as the dawn.''
(Genesis 30:33)

But in this sense our righteousness has a reference to our adversaries. So whenever David asked of God to regard his righteousness, he no doubt compared himself with his enemies. And righteousness here is to be taken simply with reference to the Babylonians. For though God had punished the Jews as they deserved, yet as to the Babylonians they were cruel tyrants and wicked robbers. The cause, then, of the chosen people was just, with regard to them. This is the reason why he says, that God brought forth their righteousnesses The rest to-morrow.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou didst formerly put forth thy wonderful power, to help thy miserably afflicted people, --- O grant, that at this day the same power may be put forth in our behalf, and that the same evidence of thy grace and paternal favor may be shown to us, by raising up thy terrible hand to destroy all the ungodly who cruelly oppress thine innocent people, that being delivered by thine hand, we may learn ever to give thanks to thee, in the name of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY SEVENTH

WE began yesterday to explain the words of the Prophet, when he says, that the righteousnesses of the people had been brought to light; and we said, that the word righteousnesses does not refer to God, as though the Jews had deserved a reward, but is, on the contrary, to be understood of a just cause as to the Chaldeans, who, being impelled by avarice and pride alone, had made war against the Church, and without any right, had tyrannically oppressed the people. As far, then, as it was God's will to defend his people, it was a just cause. Nor is there any need of having here, a long dispute respecting this, --- how could the people be just, who had, by so many iniquities, provoked the wrath of God; for, as we have already said, he does not treat now of their merits, but. of a right which depended on the faithfulness and

protection of God.

The Prophet now exhorts the faithful to gratitude; he would have them at the same time to rise up to the hope of deliverance, and to cherish the promises which he had given them, when he says, Come, as though he would set before their eyes the gift of redemption. He also shows the end, even that the people were to celebrate the grace of God, as though he had said, that the people, after having obtained mercy, ought to have this in view, to worship God again in his Temple; as though he had said, that when God restored his Church, his pure and true worship should, at the same time, be restored; for the design of his grace is religion, and not the honor or dignity of the people. This is the reason why he says, Come and let us declare in Sion the work of Jehovah our God. Now, when Peter treats of a better redemption, he says, that those who are delivered from the kingdom of darkness ought to set forth the unspeakable praises of God. (1 Peter 2:9.) We must then understand, that God has appeared to us as a Redeemer, in the person of his only-begotten Son, in order that we may celebrate his mercy, which we have experienced, according also to what is said in the song of Zacharias,

``He delivered us from the hand of our enemies, that we may all our life worship him in holiness.'' (Luke 1:74, 75)

It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:11

11. Make bright the arrows; gather together the shields: the LORD hath raised up the spirit of the kings of the Medes: for his device is against Babylon, to destroy it; because it is the vengeance of the LORD, the vengeance of his temple.

11. Polite sagittas (parate, ad verbum,) implete (vel, perficite) clypeos; suscitat Jehova spiritum regum Mediae, quia super Babylonem cogitatio ejus ad perdendum eam, quia ultio Jehovae haec, ultio Templi ejus.

These words might have been addressed to the Medes as well as to the Babylonians. If the latter meaning be approved, that is, that the Prophet addresses the Babylonians, the words are a taunt, as though he had said, that they were to no purpose spending their labors in preparing their armies, because God would be stronger than they, and that the Medes would carry on war under his banner and authority. Nor would what I have also stated, be unsuitable, that is, that the Prophet bids the Medes to prepare themselves and to put on their arms, that they might fight courageously against the Babylonians. [445]

He now adds the main thing, --- that the kings of the Medes would come against Babylon, because they had been called from above; and he mentions the word spirit, that he might more fully express that men's minds are ruled and turned by the secret power of God, and also that whatever power or boldness is found in them, proceeds altogether from God; as though he had said, that God would so prepare the Medes and the Persians, that he would not only strengthen their arms, hands, and feet, for the war, but would also lead them, and overrule their passions --- that he would, in

[445] The second clause in the versions and the Targ. is, “Fill the quivers,” i.e., with arrows. But the word means “shields:” hence some render the verb in the sense of filling up or completing. “Complete the shields,” i.e., their number, or rather, more consistently with sharpening or polishing the arrows, “Fill up,” or mend, “the shields.” So Venema and Parkhurst. — Ed.

short, turn their spirit here and there, according to his will. He does not now speak of the wind, as before; nor does he point out the enemies generally, but expressly names the Medes. For though Cyaxares, or Darius, as he is called by Daniel, was not a very prudent man, nor skillful in war, yet, as he was higher in dignity, the Prophet here mentions the Medes rather than the Persians. Cyrus excelled in celerity, and was also a man of singular wariness, activity, and boldness: but as he was by no means wealthy, and ruled over a rustic nation, and the limits of his kingdom were confined, the Prophet rightly speaks here of the Medes only, whose power far exceeded that of the Persians.

But we hence learn, that Jeremiah did not speak as a man, but was the instrument of the Spirit; for it was an indubitable seal to his prophecy, that he predicted an event a long time before the war took place. Cyrus was not yet born, who was the leader in this war: nor was Darius as yet born; for seventy years elapsed from the time the Prophet spoke to the taking of Babylon. We then see that this passage is a sure proof of his faithfulness and authority.

He afterwards adds, that God's thought respecting Babylon was to destroy her He still speaks after the manner of men, and at the same time obviates an objection which might have disturbed weak minds, because Babylon not only remained safe and secure for a long time, but also received an increase of power and dignity. The minds then of the godly might have desponded, when there seemed to be no accomplishment of this prophecy. Hence the Prophet calls attention to the thought of God, as though he had said, that though God did not immediately put forth his hand, if, was yet enough for the faithful to know what he had decreed. in short, the Prophet reminded, them, that they ought to acquiesce in God's decree, though his work was yet hid.

And he again confirms the Jews, by adding, that it would be his vengeance, even that of God, because he disregarded not his Temple. By these words he intimates that the worship, according to the law, was pleasing to God, because the Jews became a distinct people from heathen nations, when the rule as to religion was prescribed to them. Then the Prophet intimates, that though any sort of religion pleased men, there is yet but one which is approved by God, even that which he himself has commanded. The case being so, we may conclude, that God cannot long endure his worship to be scoffed at. For we know how scornfully and proudly the Chaldeans spoke of the Temple, so that they not only uttered blasphemies, but also heaped every reproach they could think of on the Temple. Since that religion was founded on God's word, it follows that it could not be but that he must have at length risen and vindicated the wrongs done to him by the Chaldeans. We now perceive the meaning of the Prophet, when he says, that it would be the vengeance of God; and he adds, because God will avenge his temple. He confirms the Jews, when he declares that God would be the vindicator of his own worship; and he, at the same time, shows, that the worship according to the law, which had been taught by Moses, was the only worship in the world which God approved. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:12

12. Set up the standard upon the walls of Babylon, make the watch strong, set

up the watchmen, prepare the ambushes: for the LORD hath both devised and done that which he spake against the inhabitants of Babylon.

12. Super muros Babylonis tollite vexilium, roborate custodiam (vel, augete,) parate (vel, statuite, potius) custodes, disponite insidias; quia etiam cogitavit Jehova, etiam fecit quod loquutus est super habitatores Babylonis.

These words seem to have been addressed to the Chaldeans rather than to the Medes or the Persians, as some expound them; for this is favored by the context; for as he bids them first to raise a standard on the walls, so he adds, Increase the watch, which refers to the citizens of Babylon, and then he says, set the watchmen All this cannot apply to the Persians and the Medes, but must be referred to the besieged, as being most suitable to them. I do not then doubt but that the Prophet here treats, with a taunt, all the efforts the Chaldeans would make for the defense of their city. For not only they who attack a city raise a standard, but also they who are besieged, and this as a sign of confidence, in order to show that they possess sufficient courage to check their enemies, and to sustain all their attacks. It was then the design of the Prophet to show, that however strenuously the Chaldeans might defend themselves, yet all their exertions would be in vain, because God would, without labor, destroy the city.

Raise, he says, the banner on the walls of Babylon, and strengthen, or increase the watch; and afterwards, set watchmen, so that every one might watch with more care than usual. He says at last, set in order the ambushes ``When all things have been tried by you, your labor will be without any advantage, for the Lord hath spoken'' When the particle {גם}, gam, is repeated, it ought to be rendered as and so --- for as the Lord hath thought, so will he do what he hath said, etc. He says again that God had thought, lest the faithful should imagine that he heedlessly casts forth threatenings; for this thought often occurs to the mind, that God terrifies without effecting anything, Hence the Prophet, that he might more fully confirm his prophecy, says, that the thing had been meditated upon by God; and we said yesterday that God does not deliberate with himself like men; but as we cannot otherwise understand the certainty and unchangeableness of his secret counsel, nor form an idea of the validity of his decrees, the word thought is mentioned. The Prophet, in short, means, that he brought forth nothing but what God had decreed. For words are often heedlessly uttered, and the reality and the words are not always connected; but Jeremiah testifies that he had taken what he announced from the hidden and immutable counsel of God. Then he adds, what he hath spoken or said; and this refers to his doctrine or his prediction. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:13

13. O thou that dwellest upon many waters, abundant in treasures, thine end is come, and the measure of thy covetousness.

13. Quae habitas super aquas multas (vel, magnas,) quae multa es in thesauris, (id est, dives, vel, locuples) venit finis tuus, mensura cupiditatis tuae.

The word {שכנתי}, shekenti, is to be taken here for {שכנת}, shekenet, a dweller; and the passage is more clear when we take it as the title of Babylon. And he says that she was a dweller among waters, because the Euphrates not only flowed by the

city, (and we know that it was a very large river,) but it surrounded it; and it, was indeed divided above Babylon into many streams, so that it made as it were many islands, and thus access to the city was more difficult. This circumstance served not only for a defense to it, but also for other advantages.: For these streams or channels were navigable; and the land also was made more fertile by the irrigation they supplied. Thus these streams contributed to its wealth as well as to its defense in time of war. And though Babylon was deemed on this account impregnable, and was also a very fertile land, yet the Prophet says here that its end was come

Now, except he had made this preface, that Babylon was situated among the rivers or many waters, and that it was also a city full of wealth, all this might have seemed a hindrance to prevent God from executing on it his vengeance; for this objection was ready at hand, ``How can Babylon be taken, which is seated between many waters? for without great force and number of soldiers it cannot but remain in safety, since it is protected by so many rivers.'' Then another objection might have been brought forward, that Babylon was an opulent city, so that it could hire auxiliaries on every side, and that having such abundance of money, it would never be unprotected. Hence the Prophet here mentions these two things; but what he says ought to be taken adversatively, as if he said, ``Though thou dwellest among many waters, and art great in treasures, that is, hast large treasures, yet thine end is come.''

He adds, the measure of thy cupidity. Some render {אמת}, amet, ``end,'' but improperly; and the Prophet has not without reason introduced the word {אמת}, amet, which properly means a cubit, but is to be taken here for measure. Jerome renders it ``a foot,'' a word in use in his age. But the meaning is sufficiently clear, that though Babylon had exhausted all the wealth of the world as an insatiable gulf, yet the measure of her cupidity would come. For the cupidity of that nation was unlimited, but God at length brought it to an end --- not that they were amended, but that God checked their coveting. And according to this sense the Prophet says, that though they had been hitherto devouring the wealth of many countries, yet the measure of her cupidity was come, even because the Lord would take away, together with the monarchy, the power and opportunity of doing wrong. For the Chaldeans were able to act licentiously, when they had so many nations subject to them; but the measure of their cupidity was come, when God in a manner cut off their strength, not that they then desisted, or that their rapacious disposition was amended --- for they changed not their nature; but cupidity is to be referred here to its exercise, even because their power was then taken from them, so that they could not carry on their plunders as they had used to do. He afterwards adds, ---

Jeremiah 51:14

14. The LORD of hosts hath sworn by himself, saying, Surely I will fill thee with men, as with caterpillers; and they shall lift up a shout against thee.

14. Juravit Jehova exercituum per animam suam, Nisi implevero to homine sicut locusta (hoc est, hominibus sicut locustis, aut bruchis,) qui canunt super to ,{דדיה} (id est, canticum vindemiale, cujus ante facta fuit mentio.)

The Prophet more fully confirms what he had said by introducing God as making

an oath; and it is the most solemn manner of confirmation when God swears by his own name. But he speaks of God in the language of men when he says that he swears by his own soul; for it is a kind of protestation when men swear by their own souls, as though they laid down or pledged their own life. Whoever then swears by his own soul, means that as his own life is dear to him, he thus lays it down as a pledge, that were he to deceive by perjury, God would be an avenger and take it away. This is suitable to men, not to God; but what does not properly belong to God is transferred to him; nor is this uncommon, as we have seen it in other places. And the more familiar is the manner of speaking adopted by God, the more it ought to touch men when he makes himself like them, and in a manner assumes their person as though he lived in the midst of them.

But we must still remember why the Prophet introduces God as making an oath, even that all doubtfulness might be removed, and that more credit might be given to his prophecy; for it not only proceeded from God, but was also sealed by an oath. If I shall not fill Babylon, he says, with men as with locusts

The multitude of enemies is here opposed to the multitude of the citizens, which was very large. For we have said elsewhere that Babylon surpassed all other cities, nor was it less populous than if it were all extensive country. As then it was full of so many defenders, it might have been objected and said, ``Whence can come such a number of enemies as can be sufficient to put to flight the inhabitants? for were a large army to enter, it would yet be in great danger in contending with so vast a multitude.'' But the Prophet compares here the Persians and the Medes to locusts; and we know that Cyrus collected from various nations a very large army, nay, many armies. Fulfilled then was what had been predicted by the Prophet, for Cyrus made up his forces not only from one people, but he brought with him almost all the Medes, and also led many troops from other barbarous nations. Hence then it happened, that what had been said by Jeremiah was proved by the event.

He also adds, that they would be victorious; for by the vintage song, or shout, he no doubt means a song or shout of triumph. But this song, {הידד}, eidad, was then in use among the Jews. Then as they did after vintage sing in token of joy, so also conquerors, exulting after victory over their enemies, had a triumphant song. And the Greek translators have rendered it {κέλευσμα}, or {κελευμα}, which is properly the song of sailors; when they see the harbor they exult with joy and sing, because they have been delivered from the dangers of the Sea, and also have completed their sailing, which is always perilous, and have come to the harbor where they more fully enjoy life, where they have pleasant air, wholesome water, and other advantages. But the simple meaning of the Prophet is, that when the Persians and the Medes entered Babylon, they would become immediately victorious, so that they would exult without a contest and without any toil, and sing a song of triumph. The Prophet now confirms his prophecy in another way, even by extolling the power of God, ---

Jeremiah 51:15-16

15. He hath made the earth by his power, he hath established the world by his wisdom, and hath stretched out the heaven by his understanding.

15. Qui fecit terram in virtute sua, qui statuit (alii vertunt, paravit) orbem in sapientia sua, et in sua intelligentia; extendit coelos;

16. When he uttereth his voice, there is a multitude of waters in the heavens; and he causeth the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth: he maketh lightnings with rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of his treasures.

16. Ad vocem dando copiam aquarum in coelis, qui attollit (et attollit, ad verbum) elevationes a fine (vel, extremitate) terrae; fulgura in pluviam facit, educit ventum de thesauris suis.

The Prophet commends here, as I have already said, in high terms, the power of God; but we must bear in mind his purpose, for abrupt sentences would be otherwise uninteresting. His object was to encourage the Jews to entertain hope; for they were not to judge of Babylon according to its splendor, which dazzled the eyes of all; nor were they to measure by their own notions what God had testified, he bids the faithful to raise all their thoughts above the world, and to behold with admiration the incomprehensible power of God, that they might not doubt but that Babylon would at length be trodden under foot; for had they fixed their eyes on that monarchy, they could have hardly believed the words of prophecy; for the Prophet spoke of things which could not be comprehended by the human mind.

We now then understand why the Prophet set forth the power of God, even that. the faithful might learn to think of something sublimer than the whole world, while contemplating the destruction of Babylon, for that would not be effected in a way usual or natural, but through the incredible power of God. The same words are also found in the tenth chapter; and the five verses we meet with here were there explained. But Jeremiah had then a different object in view, for he addressed the Jewish exiles, and bade them firmly to persevere in the worship of God: though religion was oppressed, and though the victorious Chaldeans proudly derided God, he yet bade them to stand firm in their religion, and then said,

``When ye come to Babylon, say, Cursed are all the gods who made not the heaven and the earth.'' (Jeremiah 10:11)

And there, indeed, he used a foreign language, and taught them to speak in the Chaldee, that they might more plainly profess that they would persevere in the worship of the only true God. He afterwards added what he now repeats, even that the power of God was not diminished, though he had chastised for a time his own people. But now, as we have said, he speaks in sublime terms of the power of God, in order that the faithful might know that what the judgment of the flesh held as impossible, could easily be done by that God who can do all things.

He says first, He who made the earth He does not mention God's name; but the expression is more emphatical, when he says, the Maker of the earth; as though he had said, ``Who can be found to be the creator of the heaven and the earth except the only true God?'' We hence see more force in the sentence than if God's name had been expressed; for he thus excluded all the fictitious gods, who had been devised by the heathens; as though he had said, ``The only true God is He who made the earth.'' Then he says, by his power He speaks of God's power in connection with the earth, as it is probable, on account of its stability.

He afterwards adds, Who hath constituted the world by his wisdom, and by his knowledge extended the heavens The wisdom of God is visible through the whole world, but especially in the heavens. The Prophet indeed speaks briefly, but he leads us to contemplate God's wonderful work in its manifold variety, which appears above and below. For though it may seem a light matter, when he says, that the world was constituted by the wisdom of God, yet were any one to apply his mind to the meditation of God's wisdom in the abundance of all fruits, in the wealth of the whole world, in the sea, (which is included in the world,) it could not, doubtless, be, but that he must be a thousand times filled with wonder and admiration: for the more carefully we attend to the consideration of God's works, we ourselves in a manner vanish into nothing; the miracles which present themselves on every side, before our eyes, overwhelm us. As to the heavens, what do we see there? an innumerable multitude of stars so arranged, as though an army were so in order throughout, all its ranks; and then the wandering planets, not fixed, having each its own course, and yet appearing among the stars. Then the course of the sun, how much admiration ought it to produce in us! --- I say, not in those only who understand the whole system of astronomy, but also in those who see it only with their own eyes; for when the sun, in its daily course, completes so great and so immense a distance, they who are not amazed at such a miracle must be more than stupid; and then the sun, as it is well known, has its own course, which is performed every year, and never passes in the least beyond its own boundaries; and the bulk of that body is immense (for, as it is well known, it far exceeds the earth,) and yet it rolls with great celerity and at the same time in such order as though it advanced by degrees quietly. Surely it is a wonderful specimen of God's wisdom. The Prophet, then, though he speaks in an ordinary way, yet suppress the godly with materials of thought, so that they might apply their minds to the consideration of God's works. Some explain the words, that God expands the heavens whenever they are covered with clouds; but this is wholly foreign to the meaning of the Prophet; for there is no doubt but that he points out in this verse the perpetual order of nature, as in the next verse he speaks of those changes which sometimes happen.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast deigned once to receive us under thy protection, we may learn to recumb on the power of thy hand, and that as so many terrors on every side meet us through the assaults and cruelty of our enemies, we may yet continue firm, and persevere in calling on thy name, until thou appearest as our Redeemer, not only once, but whenever we may need thy help, until thou gatherest us at length into that blessed rest, which has been prepared for us in heaven, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY EIGHTH

IN our last Lecture, we stopped where the Prophet commends the power of God, as manifested in his ordinary works. Having previously spoken of creation, and briefly shown, that both in heaven and on earth there are many clear evidences of God's wonderful wisdom as well as of his power, he now comes to the rains and winds. We have further said, that there is a difference between a fixed order of nature and those

changes which are daily observed; for were the appearance of the heavens and the earth always the same, God's power and wisdom could not appear so wonderful; but when the heavens are covered with clouds, when the air is now tranquil, and then disturbed by winds, when storms suddenly arise, and then rains follow, God thus vividly sets forth his manifold wisdom and power.

This, then, is the reason why the Prophet, after having briefly touched on what we have seen, adds, as evidences of God's power and wisdom, those things which appear to us in their various changes. He then says, that by his voice alone he gives abundance of waters in the heavens, and then that he raises vapors from the extremity of the earth, that he creates lightnings and the rain, which yet seem to be contrary things. At last he says, that he brings the winds out of his treasures Philosophers indeed mention the causes of these things, but we ought to come to the fountain itself, and the original cause, even this, that things are so arranged in the world, that though there are intermediate and subordinate causes, yet the primary cause ever appears eminently, even the wisdom and power of God. Winds arise from the earth, even because exhalations proceed from it; but exhalations, by whom are they created? not by themselves: it hence follows, that God is their sole author. And he calls hidden places treasures: as when one draws out this or that from his storehouse, so he says that winds come forth from hidden places, not of themselves, but through God, who holds them as though they were shut up. I pass by these things by only touching on them, because I have already reminded you that we have before explained, in the tenth chapter (Jeremiah 10), what is here literally repeated. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:17

17. Every man is brutish by his knowledge; every founder is confounded by the graven image: for his molten image is falsehood, and there is no breath in them.

17. Infatuatus est omnis homo a scientia, pudefactus omnis conflator a sculptili; quia mendacium est fusile, et non est spiritus in ipsis.

This verse is usually explained, as though the Prophet pointed out how men glide into errors and fancies, even because they seek to be wise according to their own notions; and Paul, in the first chapter to the Romans, assigns it as the cause of idolatry, that men become vain in their own wisdom, because they follow whatever their own brains suggest to them. This doctrine is in itself true and useful; for men have devised idols for themselves, because they would not reverently receive the knowledge of God offered to them, but rather believed their own inventions: and as mere vanity is whatever man imagines according to his own thoughts, it is no wonder that those who presumptuously form their own ideas of God, become wholly foolish and infatuated. But it is evident from the context, that the Prophet means here another thing, even that the artificers who cast or forge idols, or form them in any other way, are wholly delirious in thinking that they can, by their own art and skill, make gods. A log of wood lies on the ground, is trodden under foot without any honor; now when the artificer adds form to it, the log begins to be worshipped as a god; what madness can be imagined greater than this? The same thing may be said of stones, of silver, and of gold; for though it may be a precious metal, yet no

divinity is ascribed to it, until it begins to put on a certain form. Now when a melter casts an idol, how can a lump of gold or silver become a god? The Prophet then upbraids this monstrous madness, when he says, that men are in their knowledge like brute beasts, that is, when they apply their skill to things so vain and foolish. But he mentions the same thing twice, according to the common usage of the Hebrew style; for we know that the same thing is often said twice for confirmation by the prophets.

After then having said that men are infatuated by knowledge, he adds, that they were made ashamed by the graven image There seems to be an impropriety in the words; for {פסל}, pesal, ``graven,'' does not well agree with {צרף}, tsareph, ``the caster,'' or founder; but the Prophet, stating a part for the whole, simply means, that all artificers are foolish and delirious in thinking that they can by their own hand and skill cast or forge, or in any way form gods. And to prove this he says, that there is no spirit or breath in them; and this was a sufficient proof; for we know that God is the fountain of life, and hence he is called by Moses

``the God of the spirits of all flesh.'' (Numbers 16:22)

Whatever life, then, is diffused through all creatures, flows from God alone as the only true fountain. What, then, is less like divinity, or has less affinity to it, than a lump of gold or of silver, or a log of wood, or a stone? for they have no life nor rigor. Nothing is more fading than man, yet while he has life in him, he possesses something divine; but a dead body, what has it that is like God? But yet the form of a human body comes nearer to God's glory than a log of wood or a stone formed in the shape of man. It is not, then, without reason that the Prophet condemns this madness of all the heathens, that they worshipped fictitious gods, in whom yet there was no spirit. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:18

18. They are vanity, the work of errors: in the time of their visitation they shall perish.

18. Vanitas ipsi, opus illusionum, tempore visitationis ipsorum peribunt.

As he had called idols a lie, so now in the same sense he declares that they were vanity, even because they were nothing real, but vain pomps, or phantoms, or masks; and he afterwards expresses himself more clearly by saying that they were the work of illusions But he does not seem to take the word {תעתעים}, toroim, in a passive but in an active sense. He then means that it was a deceptive work, which was a snare to men; as though he had said, that they were the work of imposture, or impostures.

This passage, and such as are like it, ought to be carefully noticed; because the Papists seem to themselves to find a way to escape when they confess their images are not to be worshipped, but that they are books for the unlearned. They who are moderate in their views have recourse to this evasion. This was once suggested by Gregory, but very foolishly; and they who wish to appear more enlightened than others under the papacy repeat the same saying, that images ought to be tolerated, because they are the books of the ignorant. But what does the Holy Spirit, on the other hand, declare here, and also by the Prophet Habakkuk? that they are the

work of impostures, even mere snares or traps. (Habakkuk 2:18.) All, then, who seek instruction from statues or pictures gain nothing, but become entangled in the snares of Satan, and find nothing but impostures. And doubtless, whatever draws us away from the contemplation of the only true God, ought justly to be deemed an imposture or a deception; for who by the sight of a picture or a statue can form a right idea of the true God? Is not the truth respecting him thus turned into falsehood? and is not his glory thus debased? For we have then only the true knowledge of God, when we regard him to be God alone, when we ascribe to him an infinite essence which fills heaven and earth, when we acknowledge him to be a spirit, when, in short, we know that he alone, properly speaking, exists, and that heaven and earth, and everything they contain, exist through his power. Can a stone or wood teach us these things? No; but on the contrary, I am led by the stone to imagine that God is fixed and confined to a certain place. And then the life of God, does it appear in the stone or in the wood? Besides, what likeness has a body, and that lifeless, to an infinite spirit? It. is, then, not without reason that he complains, as it is recorded by Isaiah, that he is thus wholly degraded:

``To whom have ye made me like? for I contain the earth in my fist, and ye confine me to wood or stone.'' (Isaiah 40:12, 18)

If, in a word, the minds of men received no other error from idols than the thought that God is corporeal, what can be more preposterous?

We hence see that the Prophet does not here say without cause, that all idols are vanity, and the work of imposture or deception.

He lastly adds, that all fictitious gods would perish at the time of visitation In this clause he exhorts the faithful to patience, and in a manner sustains their minds, that they might not despond; for it was not a small trial to see the monarchy of Babylon flourishing, when yet it had no other protection than that of idols. As, then, the Babylonians thought flint fictitious gods were the guardians and defenders of their safety, and that through them they had subdued all their neighbors, they became thus more and more addicted to their superstitions, the reward of which they regarded all their wealth and power. Inasmuch as the minds of the godly could not have been otherwise than shaken by such a trial, the Prophet here supports them, and reminds them to wait for the time of visitation when the idols were to perish. However, a reference may be intended to the Babylonians as well as to the idols, when he says, They shall perish at the time of their visitation, that is, when the Chaldeans shall be visited. But it is probable that the time of visitation refers here especially to idols, because the Prophet had spoken before of all the wicked and reprobate. However this may be, we understand that his object was to show that however prosperous idolaters might be for a time, yet the hand of God was to be patiently borne until the suitable time came, which is here called the time of visitation. And the metaphor refers to the notions of men, for we think that God dwells idly in heaven and turns away his eyes from us, while he spares the ungodly. Hence the Prophet calls the judgment of God a visitation, because he then shows really, by evident proofs, that he does not disregard the affairs of men. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:19

19. The portion of Jacob is not like them; for he is the former of all things: and Israel is the rod of his inheritance: the LORD of hosts is his name.

19. Non sicut ipsi (vel, sicut ipsa, si ad idola referimus) portio Jacob; quia fictor omnium ipse, et virga haereditatis ejus, Jehova exercituum nomen ejus.

Had the Prophet only said that idols were mere impostures and mockeries, it would have been indeed something; but this part of his teaching would have been cold and uninteresting, had he not, on the other hand, proclaimed the glory of the one and only true God. We ought, indeed, to know that idols are nothing, that men are most foolishly deceived, and are wholly infatuated, when they imagine that there is in them some divinity. But the main thing is, that the true God himself is brought before us, and that we are taught to direct all our thoughts to him. This, then, is what is now done by the Prophet; for after having exposed the folly of the heathens in worshipping idols, and having shown that the whole is nothing but deception and falsehood, he now says, Not as they, the fictitious gods, is the portion of Jacob; that is, the God who had revealed himself to the chosen people is very far different from all idols.

And, doubtless, the vanity which the Prophet before mentioned cannot be adequately understood, except the true God be known. For though some of the ancient philosophers ridiculed the grossest errors of the common people, yet they had nothing fixed or certain on which they could rest, like him, who, when asked, ``What was God?'' requested time to consider, and who after several delays confessed that the more he inquired into the nature of God, the more absorbed were all his thoughts. And this must necessarily be the case with men until they are taught what God is, which can never be done until he himself represents himself and his glory as it were in a mirror.

This is then the reason why the Prophet, while setting the only true God in opposition to idols and all the inventions of mortals, calls him the portion of Jacob, because the law was as it were the representation of the glory of God. As then he had plainly shown himself there, as far as it was needful for the salvation of the chosen people, the Prophet, in order to invite men to the true knowledge of the true God, calls him the portion of Jacob, as though he had set the law as a mirror before their eyes. The portion of Jacob then is God, who is not like fictitious gods; how so? because he is the framer of all things. It is indeed by a few words that he makes the distinction between the only true God and the fictitious gods; but in this brief sentence he includes what I have before explained, even that God is the fountain of life, and the life of all, and then that his essence is spiritual and also infinite; for as he has created the heaven and the earth, so of necessity he sustains both by his power.

We then see that the Prophet speaks briefly but not frigidly; and from this passage we learn a useful doctrine, even that God cannot be comprehended by us except in his works. As then vain men weary themselves with speculations, which have not in them, so to speak, any practical knowledge, it is no wonder that they run headlong into many delirious things. Let us then be sober in this respect, so that we may not inquire into the essence of God more than it becomes us. When therefore we seek to comprehend what God is, or how to attain the knowledge of him, let us direct all

our thoughts, and eyes, and minds to his works.

So also by this passage, when the Prophet calls God the worker or framer of all things, is exposed the vanity of all superstitions; and how? because we hence learn that the power which made not the heaven and the earth, is vain and worthless; but the only maker of heaven and earth is God, then he is God alone. Since he is the only true God, it follows that the inventions or figments of men are altogether delirious, and are therefore the artifices and impostures of the devil to deceive mankind. We hence see that the doctrine of the Prophet is exclusive, when he says that God is the maker of all things; for where the maker of all things is not found, there certainly no divinity can be.

He adds, the rod of his inheritance This seems to refer to God, but in the tenth chapter the word Israel is introduced; otherwise these five verses literally agree, but in that passage the Prophet says that Israel was the rod of God's inheritance Here the rod means a measuring pole; for the similitude is taken from lands being measured; for the ancients used poles of certain length for measuring. Hence the Hebrews called an inheritance the rod of inheritance, because it was what had been measured and had certain limits: as when one possesses a field, he knows how many acres it contains, it having been measured. But both things may be fitly and truly said, even that Israel is the rod of God's inheritance, and also that God himself is a rod of inheritance; for there is a mutual union. For as God favors us with this honor, to make us his inheritance, and is pleased to have us as his own, so also he offers himself to us as an inheritance. David says often, ``The Lord is my portion,'' and ``The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance,'' that is, my hereditary portion. So in this place the meaning would not be unsuitable were we to apply the words to God. As, however, the word Israel is found in the former place, it may be deemed as understood here. [446]

He says at last, Jehovah of hosts is his name There is implied a contrast here; for he does not honor God with this character, as though it was a common or ordinary name; but he claims for him his own right, and thus distinguishes him from all idols. By saying, then, that this name belongs only to the true God, even the God of Israel, he intimates that by this distinction he differs from all idols, and that men are sacrilegious when they transfer any power to idols, and expect safety from them, and flee to them. As then this name belongs only to God, it follows that in Him dwells a fullness of all power and might. Since it is so, then wholly worthless is everything that the world has ever imagined respecting the number and multitude of gods. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:20-23

20. Thou art my battle axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms;

20. Malleus tu mihi, vasa (vel, instrumenta) proelii, (aut, bellica,) et conteram (vel, contrivi) per to gentes, et perdam (vel, perdidi, malo in proeterito tempore accipere utrunque verbum, rationem postea dicam) per to regna;

[446] Though the Hebrew here is exactly the same as in Jeremiah 10, except that “Israel” is omitted here, yet the Vulg., the Syr., and the Targ. give a different version; but in the Sept. it is the same. But many copies have “Israel” here, which is no doubt the correct reading. — Ed.

21. And with thee will I break in pieces the horse and his rider; and with thee will I break in pieces the chariot and his rider;

21. Et contrivi per to equum et ascensorem ejus, et contrivi per to currum et ascensorem ejus;

22. With thee also will I break in pieces man and woman; and with thee will I break in pieces old and young; and with thee will I break in pieces the young man and the maid;

22. Et contrivi per to virum et mulierem, et contrivi per to senem et puerum, et contrivi per to adolescentem et virginem;

23. I will also break in pieces with thee the shepherd and his flock; and with thee will I break in pieces the husbandman and his yoke of oxen; and with thee will I break in pieces captains and rulers.

23. Et contrivi per to pastorem et gregem ejus, et contrivi per to agricolam et jugum ejus, et contrivi per to duces et principes.

The Prophet here obviates the doubts of many; for as he had spoken of the destruction of Babylon, it might have been readily objected, that the monarchy which was fortified by so many defenses, and which had subjugated all the neighboring nations, was impregnable. Hence the Prophet here shows that the power and wealth of Babylon were no hindrances that God should not destroy it whenever he pleased; for it is an argument derived from what is contrary. We have before seen that God roots up what he has planted, (Jeremiah 45:4;) and then we have seen the metaphor of the potter and his vessels. When the Prophet went down to the potter, he saw a vessel formed and then broken at the will and pleasure of the potter (Jeremiah 18:2-4.) So also now God shows that the destruction was as it were in his hand, because the Chaldeans had not raised themselves to eminence through their own power, but he had raised them, and employed them for his own purpose. In short, he compares the Babylonians in this passage to a formed vessel, and he makes himself the potter:

``I am he who has raised Babylon to so great a height; it therefore belongs to me to pull it down whensoever it pleases me.''

We now understand the design of this passage, though the Prophet employs different words.

He says that Babylon was a hammer and weapons of war to break in pieces the nations. The verb {נפץ}, nuphets, means to break in pieces, and carelessly to scatter here and there, and also violently to scatter. He says then, ``I have by thee scattered the nations, and by thee have destroyed kingdoms.'' But as the Chaldeans had enjoyed so many victories and had subjugated so many nations, he adds, I have by thee broken in pieces the horse and his ride,; the chariot and its rider; and then, I have broken in pieces men and women, old men and children, the young men and the maidens, the shepherds and also their flocks He enumerates here almost all kinds of men. He then mentions husbandmen and yokes of oxen, or of horses; and lastly, he mentions captains and rulers [447] All these things are said by way of conces-

[447] Many render this passage in the future tense, according to all the Versions and the Targ., and consider Cyrus to be intended by the "hammer;" but they render {,בך by, or with thee, contrary to the Targ. and the Versions, which is rendered in thee, i.e., Babylon; and for thee in the Syr. And this seems to be the view most consistent with the whole passage, especially Jeremiah 51:24. Babylon was the ``hammer'' which God had employed, ``Jeremiah

sion; but yet the Prophet reminds us that no difficulty would prevent God to destroy Babylon, because Babylon in itself was nothing. According to this sense, then, it is called a hammer. In short, the Prophet takes away the false opinion which might have otherwise disturbed weak minds, as though Babylon was wholly invincible. He shows at the same time that God executed his judgments on all nations by means of Babylon. Thus the faithful might have been confirmed; for otherwise they must have necessarily been cast down when they regarded the formidable power of Babylon; but when they heard that it was only a hammer, and that they would not have been broken in pieces by the Babylonians had they not been armed from above, or rather had they not been driven on by a celestial power, it then appeared that the calamity which the Jews had suffered was nothing more than a punishment inflicted by God's hand. When, therefore, they heard this, it was no small consolation; it kept them from succumbing under their miseries, and from being swallowed up with sorrow and despair. But it now follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:24

24. And I will render unto Babylon and to all the inhabitants of Chaldea all their evil that they have done in Zion in your sight, saith the LORD.

24 Et rependam Babyloni et omnibus habitatoribus Chaldaeae to omnia mala ipsorum quae intulerunt in Sion (contra Sion, quae fecerunt in Sion, ad verbum,) in oculis vestris, (vel, eoram oculis vestris,) dicit Jehova.

The Prophet, after having reminded the Jews that all that they had suffered from the Babylonians had been justly inflicted on account of their sins, and that God had been the author of all their calamities, now subjoins, I will render to Babylon and to the Chaldeans what they have deserved. It may, however, appear strange at the first view, that God should here threaten the Babylonians; for if their services depended on his command, they seemed doubtless to have deserved praise rather than punishment; nay, we know what the Holy Spirit declares elsewhere,

``I gave Egypt as a reward to my servant Nebuchadnezzar, because he has faithfully performed my work,'' (Ezekiel 29:20)

for Nebuchadnezzar had afflicted the Jews, therefore he obtained this, says Ezekiel, as his reward. It seems then an inconsistent thing when God declares that the Chaldeans deserved punishment because they had afflicted the Jews. But both declarations agree well together; for when God declared by Ezekiel that he gave Egypt as a reward to his servant Nebuchadnezzar, he had a regard to the Jews and to their perverseness, because they had not as yet been sufficiently humbled; nay, they thought that it was by chance that they had been subdued by the Babylonians. God then declares that he had executed his judgment on them by the hand of Nebuchadnezzar. It was afterwards necessary that the faithful should be raised up in their extreme distress; and this was regarded by our Prophet when he said

50:23) but he would hereafter employ, as it were, a hammer, or a scatterer, in Babylon itself, --- 20. A scatterer (or a hammer) art thou to me, A weapon of war; But I will scatter in thee nations, And destroy in thee kingdoms; 21. And I will scatter in thee the horse and its rider, And I will scatter in thee the chariot and its rider; 22. And I will scatter in thee the husband and the wife, And I will scatter in thee the old and the child, And I will scatter in thee the young man and the maid; 23. And I will scatter in thee the shepard and his flock, And I will scatter in thee the plougman and his team, And I will scatter in thee the governors and princes. The comes, naturally, a summary of the whole, --- 24. And I will render to Babylon And to all the inhabitants of Chaldea, All the evil which they have done in Sion, Before your eyes, saith Jehova. The in the two following verse Babylon is still addressed. ``Scatter'' is according to the Sept., the Syr., and the Targ.; ``dash against one another'' is the Vulg. --- Ed.

--- Behold, I will render to Babylon and to the Chaldeans all their evils They then obtained Egypt for a short time, but afterwards all the evils they had brought on other nations recoiled on their own heads.

But this promise was in a peculiar manner given to the Church; for though the vengeance executed on the Chaldeans was just, because they exercised extreme cruelty towards all nations; yet God, having a care for his own Church, thus undertook its cause; therefore he speaks not here generally of the punishment inflicted on the Chaldeans for their cruelty; but God, as I have said, had a regard to his own Church. Hence, he says, I will render to the Babylonians and to all the Chaldeans, all the evil which they had done in Sion We now see that this punishment had a special reference to the chosen people, in order that the faithful might know that they had been so chastised by God, that yet the memory of his covenant had never failed, and that thus in the midst of death they might have some hope of salvation, and that they might feel assured that God would at length be merciful; not that God would ever restore the whole body of the people; but this promise, as it has been elsewhere stated, is addressed only to the remnant. Yet fixed remains the truth, that God, after having broken in pieces the Jews and other nations by means of one nation, would yet be the avenger of his Church, because he could never forget his covenant. He adds, before your eyes, that the faithful might with calmer minds wait for the vengeance of which they themselves would be eye-witnesses.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast favored us with the light of thy Gospel, in which we see thy glory, and into which we may be also transformed, except prevented by our unbelief, --- O grant, that with fixed eyes we may ever study that knowledge which once for all has been made known to us, until at length, having followed the way there set before us, we shall come to the fullness of that celestial glory which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED EIGHTY NINTH

Jeremiah 51:25

25. Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith the LORD, which destroyest all the earth: and I will stretch out mine hand upon thee, and roll thee down from the rocks, and will make thee a burnt mountain.

25. Ecce ego ad to, mons perditionis, dicit Jehova, perdens omnem terram; et extendam manum meam super to, et devolvam to e rupibus, et ponam to in montem combustionis.

There is no doubt but that the Prophet speaks of Babylon. But it may seem strange to call it a mountain, when that city was situated in a plain, as it is well known; nay, it has no mountains near it. It was a plain, so that streams might be drawn here and there in any direction. Hence they think that the city was called a mountain on account of the height of its walls and also its great buildings. And this is probable, as though the Prophet called it a great mass; for historians tell us that its walls were very high, about two hundred feet, and a foot commonly exceeded three fingers. Then the towers were very high. In short, Babylon was a prodigy for the quantity

of its bricks, for the walls were not built with squared stones, but formed of bricks. Their breadth also was incredible; for chariots drawn by four horses could go along without touching one another. Their breadth, according to Strabo and also Pliny, was fifty feet. Then this metaphor was not used without reason, when the Prophet, regarding in one respect the state of the city, called Babylon a mountain, as though Ninus, or Semiramis, or others, had contended with nature itself. The beginning of Babylon was that memorable tower mentioned by Moses, but then the work was left off. (Genesis 11) Afterwards, either because such a beginning inflamed the desire of men, or because the place was very pleasant and fertile, it happened that a city of great size was built there. In short, it was more like a country than a city; for, as Aristotle says, it was not so much a city as a country or a province. This much as to the word mountain.

Now God himself declares war against Babylon, in order that more credit might be given to this prophecy; for the Prophet had no regard to the Chaldeans, but to his own nation, and especially to the remnant of the godly. The greater part derided his prophecy, but a few remained who received the Prophet's doctrine with becoming reverence. It was then his object to consult their good and benefit; and, as we shall see at the end of this chapter, he wished to lay up this treasure with them, that they might cherish the hope of restoration while they were as it were lost in exile. God then does here encourage them, and declares that he would be an enemy to the Babylonians.

Behold, he says, I am against thee, O mountain of perdition The mountain of perdition is to be taken in an active sense, for destroying mountain, as also a clearer explanation follows, when he says that it had destroyed all the earth For the Babylonians, as it is well known, had afflicted all their neighbors, and had transferred the imperial power of the Medes to their own city. When they subdued the Assyrians they extended their power far and wide, and at length advanced to Syria, Judea, and Egypt. Thus it happened that the Babylonians enjoyed the empire of the east till the time of Cyrus; and then the monarchy was possessed by the Persians. But our Prophet had respect to the former state of things; for he said that the Chaldeans had been like a hammer, which God had employed to break in pieces all the nations; and, according to the same meaning, he now says that all the earth had been destroyed by the Babylonians.

But God here declares that he would be their judge, because he would extend his hand over Babylon, and roll it down from the rocks, he proceeds still with the same metaphor; for as he called Babylon a mountain on account of its great buildings, and especially on account of its high walls and lofty towers, so now he adopts the same kind of language, I will cast thee down, or rather roll thee, from the rocks, and make thee a mountain of burning. He thus intimates that Babylon would become a heap of ashes, though this was not immediately fulfilled; for as we have said, it was so taken as not to be entirely laid waste. For in the time of Alexander the Great, many years after, Babylon was standing, and there Alexander died. It then follows that it was not reduced to solitude and ashes by Darius and Cyrus. But we have already untied this knot, that is, that the Prophet does not only speak of one vengeance of God,

but includes others which followed. For Babylon soon after revolted and suffered a grievous punishment for its perfidy, and was then treated with great contempt. Afterwards, Seleucus tried in various ways to destroy it, and for this end Seleucia was built, and then Ctesiphon was set up in opposition to Babylon. Babylon then was by degrees reduced to that solitude of which the Prophet here speaks. Pliny says that in his time the temple of Bel was there, whom they thought to have been the founder of the city; but he afterwards adds that the other parts of the city were deserted. If Jerome, as he says, visited it, we ought; to believe what he had seen; and he says that Babylon was a small ignoble town, and ruins only were seen there. There is, then, nothing unreasonable in this prophecy, for it ought not to be restricted to one calamity only; for God ceased not in various ways to afflict Babylon until it was wholly laid waste, according to what our Prophet testifies. According to this view, then, he says that Babylon would become a mountain of burning, or a burnt mountain, [448] for ruins only would remain; and in the same sense he immediately adds, ---

Jeremiah 51:26

26. And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, nor a stone for foundations; but thou shalt be desolate for ever, saith the LORD.

26. Et non tollent ex to lapidem ad angulum, et lapidem ad fundamenta; quia solitudines perpetuae eris, dicit Jehova.

He confirms the former verse, that when Babylon was destroyed, there would be no hope of restoration. It often happens, that those cities which have been wholly destroyed are afterwards built up again; but God says that this would not be the case with Babylon, for it was given over to perpetual destruction. By corner and foundations he understands the strength of the buildings, he then says, that there was no hope that the stones would be again fitted together, for the building of the city, for Babylon would become a perpetual waste or desolation.

We have, indeed, said, that the walls of Babylon were not made of stones but of bricks: but the Prophet simply speaks according to the common manner, in order to show that its ruin would be for ever. [449] We have also said elsewhere that a difference is commonly made by the prophets between the people of God and the reprobate, that God promises to his Church a new state as a resurrection from death, but that he denounces on the unbelieving perpetual desolation. This course is now followed by our Prophet when he says, that the desolations there would be for ever, because there is no hope of pardon or of mercy to the unbelieving. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:27

27. Set ye up a standard in the land, blow the trumpet among the nations, prepare the nations against her, call together against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Minni, and Ashchenaz; appoint a captain against her; cause the horses to come up as the rough

[448] Blayney views "the mountain" differently, as a metaphor for a nation, or a prince, rising above others in power: and "the rocks" he considers to be the strongholds of this mountain. — Ed.

[449] Though the reatest part of the walls and towers was built of bricks, yet there were stones no doubt used. Some understand, by "stone," a king or prince, and consider that an intimation is given that Babylon would not hereafter have a king or its own, but be tributary. — Ed.

caterpillers.

27. Tollite signum in terra, clangite tuba in gentibus, sanctificate (vel, praeparate) super eam gentes, congregate contra eam regna Ararath, Minni, et Aschenaz, praeficite super eam ducem (alii putant esse nomen proprium, et relinquunt {טפסר} sed accipitur haud dubie pro duce,) educite equum tanquam locustam (vel, bruchum) horribilem (vertit Hieronymus, aculeatum; alii vertunt, horripilantem; sed vox illa asperior est, et tamen proprie signatur horror ille, dum pili exurgunt ob metum, vel, ob iracundiam.)

The Prophet here confirms what he had before taught, even that Babylon, however proud on account of its strongholds, would not yet escape God's hand. Had he used a simple mode of speaking, hardly any one would have ventured to look for what the Prophet said. It was then necessary to introduce figurative expressions, of which we have before spoken. Here, then, with the highest authority, he commands the nations to raise up war against Babylon.

We must observe, as I have before reminded you, that by such modes of speaking, the effect of prophetic doctrine is set forth. For the unbelieving deride whatever they hear, because the voice of God is the same to them as though it were a sound flowing through the air. Hence the Prophet shows that he was endued with the power of God, and that the hand of God was connected with his mouth, so that he fulfills whatever he predicts. Raise, he says, a standard. This might have appeared ludicrous, for we know that the Prophet was despised, not only at Jerusalem, but also in his own town where he had been born: by what right, then, or on what ground does he now boldly command all nations, and bid the banners to be raised? But as I have said, he shows that a false judgment would be formed of what he said, except the people thought that God himself spoke.

Sound with the trumpet, he says, among all nations, and then, sanctify against her the nations; and further, assemble, literally, ``make to hear,'' but it means, in Piel, to collect, to assemble. As to the word Ararat, it may be taken for Armenia. I know not why some have taken Minni to be the lower Armenia, for there is no creditable author for such an opinion. Nor is it certain what country the Prophet designates by Ashchenaz. But it is evident from histories, that the great army which Darius, or Cyrus under the authority of Darius, led with him, had been collected from various and even remote nations. For he brought with him the Hyrcanians and the Armenians, and some from many unknown places. As, then, heathen authors declare that this army was collected indiscriminately from many nations and almost unknown, it is nothing strange that the Hebrew names are at this day unknown. And there is no doubt but that the Prophet here indirectly intimates some great shaking of the world, as though he had said, that even barbarous nations, The name of whom hath not hitherto been heard of, would come like all overwhelming flood to destroy Babylon. He will hereafter speak of the Medes; but here he treats the subject in a different way, as though he had said, that so great would be the multitude of enemies, that Babylon, notwithstanding its largeness, would be easily overthrown. We now perceive the Prophet's design as to these obscure words.

He says afterwards, Set up a leader against her This is to be understood of Cyrus,

whose vigor was especially apparent in that war. Nor is there a doubt but that he led his uncle and father-in-law to undertake the war. For those historians fable, who say that Cyrus was cast away by his grandfather, and that he was brought up privately by Astyages, and that he afterwards made war with his grandfather. All these things have been invented. For it is quite evident that Darius, the king of the Medes, was the chief in that war, and Daniel is our best witness on this point. Heathen writers imagine that there was no king of the Medes except under the authority of Cyrus. But Cyrus did not rule until after the death of his father-in-law, or his uncle, whose daughter he had married. It then follows, that he was the general, so that he carried on the war under the authority of Darius. Cyrus then was, as it were, the hired soldier of his uncle and father-in-law, but at length he obtained the kingdom of the Medes and the whole empire of the East. Of this leader, then, I understand this passage, when the Prophet says, Set up or appoint a leader against Babylon: [450] he adds, Bring forth, or make to ascend, the horse as the locust This refers to their number; as though he had said, Bring forth against Babylon horses without number, who shall be as locusts. He compares them to locusts, not for strength or skill in war, but only with regard to their number. But as the locusts are frightful, he applies to them the word {סמר}, samer, ``dreadful,'' as though he had said, They are, indeed, locusts as to their abundance, but they are at the same time dreadful, as though they had on them frightful hairs. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:28

28. Prepare against her the nations with the kings of the Medes, the captains thereof, and all the rulers thereof, and all the land of his dominion.

28. Praeparate contra eam gentes, regna Medorum, duces ejus, et principes ejus, et totam terram ditionis ejus.

He now repeats what he had said of preparing the nations; but he mentions them first generally, and then he comes to specify them particularly. He then bids the nations to be sent for, and then he shows who they were, even the kingdoms of the Medes [451] There was, indeed, but one kingdom, but many kings were subject to it. Then, on account of the many provinces over which satraps ruled, and also on account of many tributary countries, the Prophet was not satisfied to use the singular number, but calls them in the plural number, the kingdoms of the Medes; for that monarchy had extended itself far and wide, so that many kings were subject to Darius.

And it tended, in no small degree, to show the certainty of this prophecy, that Jeremiah declared, before Cyrus or even Darius was born, that the Medes would come. But we have stated, that though Cyrus, being singularly active and a good warrior, carried on the war, yet Darius was the first in authority. Then Babylon obeyed the Medes for a time; but as Darius was now old, Cyrus succeeded him; and then the monarchy was transferred to Persia; and laws issued thence until the time of

[450] The Version and the Targ. all differ as to the word {,טפסר rendered by Calvin, ``leader.'' It is translated ``commander'' by Blayney. Parkhurst says that it is a Chaldee word, from ,{טפס} to reduce to order, and ,{סר} a ruler. Then it means a commanding officer, a caption, or a general. It occurs only here and in Nahum 3:17. --- Ed

[451] The Hebrew is, “the kings of Media;” but the Sept. and Syr. have “the king of Media;” which is required by “his dominion” at the end of the verse: the pronoun affixed to “captains” and “rulers” is “her,” referring to Media. — Ed.

Alexander the Great, who, together with his catamite, burnt the tower. Nor is there a doubt but that many memorable transactions were deposited there. But Alexander being drunk, seized a torch and burnt the tower; for he thought that the memory of the Oriental monarchy could thus be abolished.

We now then perceive why the Prophet expressly mentions here the Medes; and he adds, the captains and princes He includes, no doubt, under these names, all the satraps and kings. At length he adds, the whole land of its dominion, or jurisdiction; and by this word he designates the kingdoms already mentioned. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:29

29. And the land shall tremble and sorrow: for every purpose of the LORD shall be performed against Babylon, to make the land of Babylon a desolation without an inhabitant.

29. Et contremuit terra, et doluit (similitudo sumpta est a parturientibus,) quia stabilita fuit super Babylon cogitationes (in plurali numero ponit cum tamen verbum sit singulare, hoc est, stabilitae sunt cogitationes) Jehovae ad ponendum terram Babylonis in solitudinem, ita ut non sit habitator (vel, qui illic habitet.)

The Prophet no doubt endeavored to remove all doubts from the minds of the godly, which would have otherwise weakened confidence in his doctrine. It might have occurred to the minds of all, that the whole world would sooner come to nothing than that Babylon should fall. Though it were so, says the Prophet, that the whole earth trembled, yet Babylon will be destroyed. Hence, he says, Tremble shall the land and be in pain, even because confirmed, etc. There is here a striking contrast between the moving of the earth and the stability of God's purpose. The verb means properly to rise, but it is taken in many places in the sense of confirming or establishing, and necessarily so in this passage. he then says, Tremble shall the land, [452] even because confirmed shall be the thoughts of God respecting Babylon

But he mentions thoughts in the plural number, as though he had said, that whatever God had appointed and decreed would be unchangeable, and that the whole earth would sooner be shaken than that the truth of God should lose its effect. Then this verse contains nothing else but a confirmation of the whole prophecy. But the Prophet shows, that if even all the hindrances of the world were in favor of the perpetuity of Babylon, yet what God had decreed respecting its destruction, would be fixed and unchangeable. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:30

30. The mighty men of Babylon have forborn to fight, they have remained in their holds: their might hath failed; they became as women: they have burned her dwellingplaces; her bars are broken.

30. Cessarunt fortes Babylonis ad pugnandum (hoc est, destiterunt pugnare fortes Babylonis,) sederunt in munitionibus, deficit (vel, elanguit) virtus ipsorum, fuerunt in mulieres, accenderunt habitacula ejus, confracti sunt vectes ejus.

The Prophet shows here, as by the finger, the manner of the destruction of Babylon, such as it is described by heathen authors. He then says, that the valiant men of

[452] The "earth" here is evidently the land of Chaldea or Babylon, — And tremble shall the land and be in pain; For confirmed respecting Babylon shall be the purposes of Jehovah, To set the land of Babylon a waste, Without an inhabitant. — Ed

Babylon, even those who had been chosen to defend the city, ceased to fight For the city was taken rather by craft than by open force; for after a long siege, Cyrus was laughed to scorn by the Babylonians; then they securely held a feast. In the meantime two eunuchs of Belshazzar passed over to Cyrus; for; as Xenophon relates, the tyrant had slain the son of one, and by way of disgrace castrated the other. Hence, then, it was that they revolted from him; and Cyrus was instructed by them how he could take the city. The fords were dried-up, when Belshazzar suspected no such thing, and in the night he heard that the city was taken. Daniel gives a clearer description; for he says that there was held a stated feast, and that the hand of a writer appeared on the wall, and that the king, being frightened, had heard from Daniel that the end of his kingdom was near at hand, and that the city was taken that very night. (Daniel 5:25-30.) hence the Prophet says now that the valiant men desisted, so that they did not fight. He indeed speaks of what was future, but, we know what was the manner of the prophets, for they related what was to come as though it had already taken place.

He afterwards adds, that they sat down in their fortresses, for the city was not taken by storm --- there was no fighting; but the forces passed silently through the fords, and the soldiers entered into the middle of the city; the king was slain together with all his satraps, and then all parts of the city were taken possession of. We now, then, see that the Spirit of God spoke by the mouth of Jeremiah, as of a thing that had already taken place.

He then adds, that their valor had failed or languished, even because terror stupefied them when they heard that the city was taken. So also true became what is added, that they became women, that they were like women as to courage, for no one dared to oppose the conquerors. Fighting might have still been carried on by so large a multitude, yea, they might have engaged with their enemies in hundred or in thousand of the streets of the city, for it would have been easy in the night to distress them: but the Prophet says, that they all became women as to courage. At last, he adds, that that burnt by enemies were the palaces, and that the bars of the gates were broken; for no one dared to summon to arms after it was heard that the city was taken. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:31

31. One post shall run to meet another, and one messenger to meet another, to shew the king of Babylon that his city is taken at one end,

31. Cursor in occursum cursoris cucurrit (vel, curret, ad verbum) et nuntius in occmsum nuntii ad nuntiandum regi Babylonis, quod capta sit urbs ejus ab extremitate.

This also was fulfilled according to the testimony of heathen authors, as well as of Daniel. They do not indeed repeat these words, but according to the whole tenor of history we may easily conclude that messengers ran here and there, for the Babylonians never thought that the enemy could so suddenly penetrate into the city, for there was no entrance. We have seen how high the walls were, for there were no muskets then, and the walls could not have been beaten down. There were indeed battering-rams; but what was the breadth of the walls? even fifty feet, as already

stated, so that four horses abreast could pass without coming into contact. There was then no battering-ram that could throw down walls so thick. As to the fords, the thing seemed incredible; so that they kept a feast in perfect security. In such an irruption, what our Prophet testifies here must have necessarily happened. But it is quite evident that he was the instrument of the Holy Spirit; for Cyrus was not as yet born when this prophecy was announced. We hence then know, that the holy man was guided from above, and that what he said was not produced in his own head, but was really celestial; for he could not have divined any such thing, nor was it through probable conjecture that he was able thus to speak and lead the Jews, as it were, into the very scene itself.

Nor is there a doubt but that this authority was afterwards confirmed when the fathers told their children, ``So have we heard from the mouth of the Prophet what we now see with our eyes; and yet no man could have conjectured any such thing, nor have discovered it by reason or clearsightedness: hence Jeremiah must have necessarily been taught by the Spirit of God.'' This, then, is the reason why God designed that the destruction of Babylon should be, as we see, so graphically described.

He then says, A runner ran to meet a runner, and then, a messenger to meet a messenger, to tell the king of Babylon that his city was taken at its extremity? [453] Had this been said of a small city, it might have appeared ridiculous: why are these runners? one might say. But it has been sufficiently shown, that so extensive was that city, that runners, passing through many fields, might have come to the king, and convey the news that the city was taken at one of its extremities. And heathen writers cannot sufficiently eulogize the contrivance and skill of Cyrus, that, he thus took possession of so great a city; for he might have only secured one half of it, and Belshazzar might have retained the other half, and might have bravely contested with Cyrus and all his forces; and he would have no doubt overcome him, had it not been for the wonderful and unusual expedition of Cyrus. This haste, then, or expedition of Cyrus, is what the Prophet now sets forth, when he says that messengers ran to the king to tell him that the city was taken He now adds, respecting other things, what no one could have divined, ---

Jeremiah 51:32

32. And that the passages are stopped, and the reeds they have burned with fire, and the men of war are affrighted.

32. Et vada capta sunt, e stagna exusta sunt igni, et viri proelii (hoc est, bellicosi) conterriti sunt.

This verse most clearly proves that Jeremiah was God's herald, and that his language was under the guidance of the celestial Spirit; for he sets forth the manner in which Babylon was taken, as though he had witnessed it with his own eyes.

He says that the fords were taken, and that the pools were burnt with fire. We do not read that Cyrus had made use of fire; and some render pools, reeds, but there is no reason to constrain us so to render the word; for the Prophet speaks metaphorically. Their object was to give a literal rendering, by saying that reeds

[453] It seems to have been taken at its two extremities: hence the runners met each other at the king's palace, from both ends of the city, and each said, that it was taken at its end. — Ed.

were burnt; but the Prophet shows, speaking hyperbolically, that the fords of the Euphrates were dried up, as though one burned wood by applying fire to it. This, indeed, is not suitable to water; but he, by a hyperbole, expresses more fully the miracle which might have otherwise exceeded human comprehension. He then says, that the fords were dried up, and then adds, that the pools were burnt. The same thing is expressed twice, but in a different way; and as I have already said, he states hyperbolically, that such was the skill of Cyrus and his army, that he made dry the fords and the pools, as though one collected a large heap of wood and consumed it with fire. [454] We now perceive the design of the Prophet.

He afterwards adds, that the men of war were broken in pieces For though the fords were made dry, that is, the streams which were drawn from the Euphrates, vet. the guards of the city might have still kept possession of a part of it, and have manfully resisted, so as to prevent the soldiers of Cyrus from advancing farther; but the city was so craftily taken, that the Babylonians were so terrified as not to dare to raise up a finger, when yet they might have defended a part of the city, though one part of it was taken.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou didst formerly testify thy favor towards thy Church by not sparing the greatest of monarchies, --- O grant that we may know thee at this day to be the same towards all thy faithful people who call upon thee; and as the power and cruelty of our enemies are so great, raise thou up thine hand against them, and show that thou art the perpetual defender of thy Church, so that we may have reason to magnify thy goodness in Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND NINETIETH

Jeremiah 51:33

33. For thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; The daughter of Babylon is like a threshingfloor, it is time to thresh her: yet a little while, and the time of her harvest shall come.

33. Quoniam sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Deus Israel, filia Babylonis tanquam area, tempus calcandae ejus; adhuc paulisper, et veniet messis ei.

BY this similitude the Prophet confirms what he had before said, even that God would be the avenger of his Church, and would justly punish the Babylonians, but at the suitable time, which is usually called in Scripture the time of visitation, He then compares Babylon to a threshing-floor, not indeed in the sense which interpreters have imagined, but because the threshing-floor only serves for the time of harvest, and is afterwards closed up and not used. Babylon, then, had been for a long time like a threshing-floor, because there had been no treading there, that is, no noise or shouting. But God declares that the time of harvest would come, when the threshing-floor would be used. Oxen did then tread the corn; for the corn was not beaten out with flails, as with us and in most places in France, though the inhabitants of

[454] The word {,{אגמים properly pools, is probably a metonomy for what they grow, even reeds or bulrushes, especially as the same word, in somewhat another form, ,{אגמון} clearly means a reed. See Isaiah 9:14; Isaiah 19:15. But what these reeds were, authors are at a loss to know. It is said in the thirtieth verse, that they ``burnt her habitations;'' may it not have been, that they were such as were made of reeds? Then the whole verse appears intelligible; the passages (that is, the entrances from the river, whose streams were diverted) were seized on, and such houses as were in part built of reeds were set on fire; hence the men were frightened. --- Ed

Provence still use the treading. In Judea they tread out the corn on floors, and oxen were used for the purpose. Now, the reason for the similitude seems evident; for the time would come when God would smite Babylon, as oxen after harvest tread out with their feet the corn on the threshing-floor, which for the rest of the year is not wanted, but remains closed up and quiet. Hence I have said that what we have before seen as to the time of visitation is confirmed; for it was strange at the first view to promise deliverance to the Jews, while yet Babylon was increasing more and more and extending the limits of its monarchy. (Isaiah 28:24-26.) God shows in that passage that it was no matter of wonder if he did not daily exercise his judgments in an equal degree; and he bids us to consider how husbandmen act, for they do not sow at the same time wheat and barley and other kinds of grain; nor do they always plough, or always reap, but wait for seasonable times. ``Since, then, husbandmen are endowed with so much care and foresight as I have taught them, why may not I also have my times rightly distributed, so that there may be now the harvest, and then the treading or threshing? and should I not at one time sow wheat, and at another cumin?'' for the Prophet adds these several sorts. The same is the mode of reasoning in this place, though the Prophet speaks more briefly.

He then says that Babylon would be like a threshing-foor, and how? because it had been as a place closed up and wholly quiet; for God had spared the Chaldeans, and, as we shall hereafter see, they had been so inebriated with pleasures that they feared no danger.

And then immediately he explains himself, --- it is time to tread or thresh her. Then Babylon became like a threshing-fioor, for she had not been trodden or threshed for a long time, as the threshing-floor is not used for nine or ten months through the whole year. But he adds, yet a little while, and come will her harvest

We learn from this and other passages that treading or threshing was in use among the Jews and other eastern nations only during harvest. In other places, corn is often kept in the ears for five and six years. Some thresh the corn after six, or eight, or nine months, as it suits their convenience. But there are many countries where the corn is immediately threshed; it is not stored up, but is immediately conveyed to the threshing-floor, and there it is trodden by oxen or threshed with flails. As then it was usual immediately to tread the corn, hence God declares that the time of harvest would come when Babylon would be trodden, as the threshing-floor is trodden after harvest. [455]

We must observe that a little while is not to be understood according to the notions of men; for though God suspends his judgments, he yet never delays beyond the time; on the contrary, he performs his work with all due celerity The Prophet Haggai says,

[455] By identifying the time of threshing and the time of harvest, it is that we can see the meaning of this verse. Mention is first made of threshing or treading — the punishment prepared for Babylon; then it is said that what led to that — the harvest, would shortly come. The verb "come" is to be understood in the third line, it being given only in the last, — 33. For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, — Babylon shall be like a threshing-floor; Come shall the time of threshing her; Yet a little while, and come to her shall the time of harvest. The order as to the threshing and harvest is similar to what is often found in the prophets, — the last thing, being the main thing, is mentioned first, and then what precedes or leads to it. — Ed.

``Yet a little while, and I will shake the heaven and the earth.''
(Haggai 2:7)

But this was not fulfilled till many years after. But we must remember what is in Habakkuk, ---

``If the vision delays, wait for it, for it will come *
*and will not be slow.'' (Habakkuk 2:5)

He says that prophecies delay, that is, according to the judgment of men, who make too much haste, and are even carried away headlong by their own desires. But God performs his work with sufficient celerity, provided we allow him to arrange the times according to his own will, as it is just and right for us to do. Whenever, then, the ungodly enjoy ease and securely indulge themselves, let this fact come to our own minds, that the threshing-floor is not always trodden, but that the time of harvest will come whenever it pleases God. This is the use we ought to make of what is here said. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:34

34. Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon hath devoured me, he hath crushed me, he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon, he hath filled his belly with my delicates, he hath cast me out.

34. Comedit me, contrivit me Nabuchadnezer rex Babylonis; posuit me (locavit, ad verbum) vas inane; diglutivit me tanquam draco, implevit ventrem suum deliciis meis, ejecit me.

Here is mentioned the complaint of the chosen people, and this was done designedly by Jeremiah, in order that the Jews might feel assured that their miseries were not overlooked by God; for nothing can distress us so much as to think that God forgets us and disregards the wrongs done to us by the ungodly, hence the Prophet here sets the Israelites in God's presence, that they might be convinced in their own minds that they were not disregarded by God, and that he was not indifferent to the unjust and cruel treatment they received from their enemies. For this complaint is made, as though they expostulated with God in his presence.

He then says, Devoured me and broken me in pieces has Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon [456] The word, to eat, or devour, was enough; but Jeremiah wished to express something more atrocious by adding the word, to break in pieces; [457] for he intimates that Babylon had not been like a man who devours meat set before him, but that she had been a cruel wild beast, who breaks in pieces the very bones. We now, then, understand the design of the Prophet; he amplifies the savageness of the king of Babylon, by saying that God's people had not only been devoured by him as men swallow down their food, but that they had also been torn in pieces by his teeth, as though he had been a lion, or a bear, or some other wild animal; for these not only devour their prey, but also with their teeth break in pieces whatever

[456] The pronoun after the verbs in this verse is in the plural number, us, according to the present Hebrew text, but according to the Keri and several copies, it is in the singular number, me. The authority as to MSS. is nearly equal; only the latter reading is favored by the versions and the Targ, and also by the verse which follows. — Ed.

[457] The common meaning of the verb is, violently to disturb, but it is evidently used in the sense of breaking, crushing, or breaking in pieces, in Isaiah 28:28; and this is the most suitable sense here, as it follows “devouring.” — Ed.

is harder than flesh, such as bones.

For the same purpose he adds, He has set me an empty vessel, that is, he has wholly exhausted me, as when one empties a flagon or a cask. Then he says, he has swallowed me like a dragon [458] It is a comparison different from the former, but yet very suitable; for dragons are those who devour a whole animal; and this is what the Prophet means. Though these comparisons do not in everything agree, yet as to the main thing they are most appropriate, even to show that God suffered his people to be devoured, as though they had been exposed to the teeth of a lion or a bear, or as though they had been a prey to a dragon.

He adds, Filled has he his belly with my delicacies, that is, whatever delicate thing I had, he has consumed it. He then says, he has cast off the remnants, like wolves and lions and other wild beasts, who, when they have more prey than what suffices them, choose what is most savory; for they choose the head of man that they may eat the brain; they suck the blood, but leave the intestines and whatever they do not like. So also the Prophet says here of the miserable Jews, that they had been so devoured that the enemy, having been satiated, had cast. off the remainder. [459]

We hence learn that God's people had been so exposed to plunder, that the conqueror was not only satisfied, but cast away here and there what remained; for satiety, as it is well known, produces loathsomeness. But the Prophet refers to the condition of the miserable people; for their wealth had been swallowed up by the Chaldeans, but their household furniture was plundered by the neighboring nations; and the men themselves had been driven into exile, so that there came a disgraceful scattering. They were then scattered into various countries, and some were left through contempt in the land; thus was fulfilled what is said here, ``He has cast me out,'' even because these wild beasts, the Chaldeans, became satiated; meat was rejected by them, because they could not consume all that was presented to them.

By these figurative terms, as it has been stated, is set forth the extreme calamity of the people; and the Prophet no doubt intended to meet such thoughts as might otherwise have proved very harassing to the Jews. For as they found no end to their evils, they might have thought that they had been so cast away by God as to become the most miserable of men. This is the reason why our Prophet anticipates what might have imbittered the minds of the godly, and even driven them to despair, he then says, that notwithstanding all the things which had happened, yet God had not forgotten his people; for all these things were done as in his sight.

With regard to us, were God not only to double the calamities of his Church, but also to afflict it in an extreme degree, yet what the Prophet says here ought to afford us aid, even that God's chosen people were formerly so consumed, that the remainder was cast away in contempt; for the conqueror, though insatiable, could not yet consume all that he got as a prey, because his cupidity could not contain it. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:35-36

[458] Or a sea-monster, or a whale, who devours smaller fish whole and entire. — Ed.

[459] The last verb is left out by the Sept., rendered “cast out,” by the Vulg., “destroyed,” by the Syr.; “made to emigrate,” by the Targ. The verb properly means to drive out or away; and their ejection from the land is what is meant. — Ed.

35. The violence done to me and to my flesh be upon Babylon, shall the inhabitant of Zion say; and, my blood upon the inhabitants of Chaldea, shall Jerusalem say.

35. Violentia mea (sed passive accipitur, alii vertunt, rapinam, quod idem est) et caro mea contra Babylonem, dicet (vel, dicat) habitatrix Sion, sanguis mens contra habitatores Chaldaeae, dicat Jerusalem.

36. Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee; and I will dry up her sea, and make her springs dry.

36. Propterea sic dicit Jehova, Ecce ego litigans litem tuam (hoc est, disceptans causam tuam, vel, cognitor causae tuae,) et vindleans vindictam tuam; et arefaciam mare ejus, et exsiccabo fontem ejus.

Jeremiah goes on with the same subject; for, after having shown that the calamities of the people were not unknown to God, he now, in an indirect way, exhorts the faithful to deposit their complaints in the bosom of God, and to apply, or appeal to him, as their defender. The design, then, of the Prophet is, (after having explained how grievously the Jews had been afflicted,) to show them that their only remedy was, to flee to God, and to plead their cause before him.

And this passage is entitled to particular notice, so that we may also learn in extreme evils, when all things seem hopeless, to discover our evils to God, and thus to unburden our anxieties in his bosom. For how is it, that sorrow often overwhelms us, except that we do not follow what God's Spirit prescribes to us? For it is said in the Psalms,

``Roll thy cares into God's bosom, and he will sustain thee, and will not give the righteous to a perpetual change.''
(Psalm 55:23)

We may, then, by prayer, unburden ourselves, and this is the best remedy: but we murmur, and sometimes clamor, or at least we bite and champ the bridle, according to a common proverb; and, in the meantime, we neglect the chief thing, and what the Prophet teaches us here.

We ought, then, carefully to mark the design of what is here taught, when it is said, my violence and my flesh be upon Babylon When he adds, Say will (or let) the daughter of Sion, he no doubt shows that the faithful have always this consolation in their extreme calamities, that they can expostulate with God as to their enemies and their cruelty. Then he says, my plunder or violence; some render it ``the plunder of me,'' which is harsh. But the meaning of the Prophet is not ambiguous, for it follows afterwards, my flesh Then violence was that which was done by enemies. But the people is here spoken of under the name of a woman, according to what is commonly done, Let the inhabitress of Sion say, My plunder and my flesh. By the second word the Prophet shows sufficiently plain what he understood by plunder. My flesh, he says, (even that which the Chaldeans had devoured and consumed,) be on Babylon This is of the greatest weight, for by these words he intimates, that though the Chaldeans thought that they had exercised with impunity their cruelty towards the Jews, yet their innocent blood cried, and was opposed to them as an enemy.

To the same purpose he afterwards adds, Let Jerusalem say, My blood is upon the Chaldeans.

Then follows a clearer explanation, when God promises that he would be the avenger of his chosen people, and that whatever the Jews had suffered would be rendered to Babylon: Therefore thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will litigate thy quarrel. By this passage we are taught to present our complaints to God, if we wish him to undertake our cause; for when we are silent, he will in his turn rest, as he considers us unworthy of being helped. But if we cry to him, he will doubtless hear us. Then we must remember the order of things, for the Prophet says on the one hand, Let Jerusalem cry, let the daughter of Sion say; and on the other hand he says, Therefore God will come and hear the cry of his people.

He says, first, Behold, I will plead thy cause, and then, I will vindicate or avenge thy vengeance. These are hard words to Latin ears; but yet they contain more force and power than if we were to follow the elegance of the Latin tongue. It is then better to retain the genuine terms than to study neatness too much.

In short, God promises to be the defender of his people, and by using the demonstrative particle, he doubtless removes every doubt, as though the thing was now present. We know that more than seventy years had elapsed since God had spoken thus; for as it has been already stated, it was not after the taking of the city that Jeremiah prophesied against the Chaldeans: but though God suspended his judgment and vengeance for seventy years after the destruction of the city, yet this was said, Behold, I, as though he brought the faithful to witness the event; and this was done for the sake of certainty.

Now, we hence learn, that though God humbles his people, and suffers them even to be overwhelmed with extreme miseries, he will at length become the avenger of all the wrongs which they may have endured; for what has been said of the destruction of the people has a reference to us; nay, what is here said, has not been left on record except for our benefit. And further, let us learn, as I have before reminded you, to prepare our minds for patience whenever God seems to forsake us. Let us, at the same time exercise ourselves constantly in prayer, and God will hear our groans and complaints, and regard our tears.

It is afterwards added, I will make dry her sea; for Babylon, as it has been already stated, was surrounded by the streams of the Euphrates; and there was no easy access to it. The Prophet then compares the fortifications of Babylon to a sea and a fountain. For who would have thought that the Euphrates could be dried up, which is so large a river, and has none equal to it in all Europe? Even the Danube does not come up to the largeness of that river. Who then would have thought it possible that such a river could be made dry, which was like a sea, and its fountain inexhaustible? God then intimates by these words, that such was his power, that all obstacles would vanish away, and that he was resolved at the same time to execute his judgment on the Babylonians. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:37

37. And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwellingplace for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant.

37. Et erit Babylon in acervos, habitaculum draconum, stupor et sibilum, absque habitatore.

He confirms what he had said, that when God raised his hand against Babylon, such would be its destruction, that the splendor, which before astonished all nations, would be reduced to nothing. Perish, he says, shall all the wealth of Babylon --- its towers and its walls shall fall, and its people shall disappear; in short, it shall become heaps of stones, as he said before, that it would become a mountain of burning. It is then for the same purpose that he now says that it would become heaps. But we must bear in mind what we observed yesterday, that it would become such heaps that they would not be fit for corners, that they could not be set in foundations; for the ruins would be wholly useless as to any new building.

He says that it would become an astonishment and a hissing Moses also used these words, when he threatened the people with punishment, in case they transgressed the law of God. (Deuteronomy 28:37.) But these threatenings extend to all the ungodly, and the despisers of God. Then God fulfilled as to the Babylonians what he had denounced by Moses on all the despisers of his law. It then follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:38

38. They shall roar together like lions: they shall yell as lions' whelps.

38. Rugient tanquam leones, rugient (est quidem alium verbum sed ejusdem sensus) tanquam catuli leonum.

Here, by another figure, Jeremiah expresses what he had said of the destruction of Babylon, even that in the middle of the slaughter, they would have no strength to resist: they would, at the same time, perish amidst great confusion; and thus he anticipates what might have been advanced against his prophecy. For the Babylonians had been superior to all other nations; how then could it be, that a power so invincible should perish? Though they were as lions, says the Prophet, yet that would avail nothing; they will indeed roar, but roaring will be of no service to them; they will roar as the whelps of lions, but still they will perish.

We now, then, understand the object of this comparison, even that the superior power by which the Babylonians had terrified all men would avail them nothing, for nothing would remain for them in their calamity except roaring. [460] It follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:39

39. In their heat I will make their feasts, and I will make them drunken, that they may rejoice, and sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the LORD.

39. In calore ipsorum ponam convivia ipsorum, et inebriabo eos, ut exultent, et dormiant somnum perpetuum, et non expergiscantur, dicit Jehova.

Here, also, he describes the manner in which Babylon was taken. And hence we learn, that the Prophet did not speak darkly or ambiguously, but so showed, as it were by the finger, the judgment of God, that the prophecy might be known by posterity, in order that they might understand that God's Spirit had revealed these things by the mouth of the Prophet: for no mortal, had he been a hundred times

[460] Taking this verse is connection with the following, Gataker and Lowth give somewhat another view, — that the Babylonians roared like lions and shouted with exultation before the city was taken. It is said by Herodotus, that "they ascended the walls, and capered, and loaded Darius and his army with reproaches." They roared with rage at their enemies, and excited themselves as whelps when beginning to hunt for themselves, full of life and animation, — Together as young lions shall they roar. And rouse themselves as whelps of lionesses. There is a {{ı wanting before the last verb, which is supplied by the Vulg., Syr., and the Targ.; and it is rendered necessary by the tense of the verb. --- Ed

endowed with the spirit of divination, could ever have thus clearly expressed a thing unknown. But as nothing is past or future with God, he thus plainly spoke of the destruction of Babylon by his Prophet, that posterity, confirmed by the event, might acknowledge him to have been, of a certainty, the instrument of the Holy Spirit. And Daniel afterwards sealed the prophecy of Jeremiah, when he historically related what had taken place; nay, God extorted from heathen writers a confession, so that they became witnesses to the truth of prophecy. Though Xenophon was not, indeed, by design a witness to Jeremiah, yet that unprincipled writer, whose object was flattery, did, notwithstanding, render service for God, and sealed, by a public testimony, what had been divinely predicted by Jeremiah.

In their heat, he says, I will make their feasts, that is, I will make them hot in their feasts; for when the king of Babylon was drunk, he was slain, together with his princes and counselors. I will inebriate them that they may exult, that is, that they may become wanton. This refers to their sottishness, for they thought that they should be always safe, and ridiculed Cyrus for suffering so many hardships. For he lived in tents, and the siege had been now long, and there was no want in the city. Thus, then, their wantonness destroyed them. And hence the Prophet says that God would make them hot, that they might become wanton in their pleasures; and then, that they might sleep a perpetual sleep, that is, that they might perish in their luxury: [461] though they had despised their enemy, yet they should never awake; for Babylon, as we observed yesterday, might have resisted for a long time, but it was at once taken. The Babylonians were not afterwards allowed to have arms. Cyrus, indeed, suffered them to indulge in pleasures, but took away from them the use of arms, deprived them of all authority, so that they lived in a servile state, in the greatest degradation: and then, in course of time, they became more and more contemptible, until at length the city was so overthrown, that nothing remained but a few cottages, and it became a mean village. We hence see that whatever God had predicted by his servant Jeremiah was at length fulfilled, but at the appropriate time, --- at the time of treading or threshing, as it has been stated. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:40

40. I will bring them down like lambs to the slaughter, like rams with he goats.

40. Educam (ad verbum est, descendere faciam) eos tanquam agnos ad mactationem, tanquam arietes cure hircis.

This is a comparison different from the former, when the Prophet said that they would be like lions, but as to roaring only. But he now shows how easy would that ruin be when it should please God to destroy the Babylonians. Then as to their cry, they were like lions; but as to the facility of their destruction, they were like lambs led to the slaughter. God does not mean here that they would be endued with so much gentleness as to give themselves up to a voluntary death; but he means, that however strong the Babylonians might have previously been, and however they

[461] "In their heat," that is, as it appears, of rage, while they were roaring like lions. The word rendered "feasts" by Calvin and in our version, properly means drinking, and it is so rendered in the early versions, and more suitably here, — In their heat I will set for them their drink, And will make them drunk, that they may leap for joy; And they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, And shall not awake, saith Jehovah. It is a clear allusion to the feast celebrated in Babylon the very night it was taken. — Ed.

might have threatened all other nations, they would then be women in courage, and be led to the slaughter as though they were lambs or rams.

This is a comparison which occurs often in the prophets, for sacrifices were then daily made; and then the prophets considered the destruction of the ungodly as a kind of sacrifice; for as sacrifices were offered under the Law as evidences of piety and worship, so when God appears as a judge and takes vengeance on the reprobate, it is the same as though he erected an altar, and thus exhibited an evidence of the worship that is due to him; for his glory and worship is honored, yea, and celebrated by such sacrifices. Then the destruction of all the ungodly, as we have said, may be justly compared to sacrifices; for in such instances the glory of God shines forth, and this is what especially belongs to his worship. It at length follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:41

41. How is Sheshach taken! and how is the praise of the whole earth surprised! how is Babylon become an astonishment among the nations!

41. Quomodo capta est Sesak, et comprehensa laus totius terrae? quomodo facta est Babylon in vastitatem (vel, in stuporem) inter curtetas gentes?

Here the wonder expressed by the Prophet tended to confirm what he had said, for he thus dissipated those things which usually disturbed the minds of the godly, so as not to give full credit to his predictions. There is indeed no doubt but that the godly thought of many things when they heard Jeremiah thus speaking of the destruction of Babylon. It ever occurred to them, ``How can this be?'' Hence Jeremiah anticipated such thoughts, and assumed himself the character of one filled with wonder --- How is Shesbach taken? as though he had said, ``Though the whole world should be astonished at the destruction of Babylon, yet what I predict is certain; and thus shall they find who now admit not the truth of what I say, as well as posterity.''

But he calls Babylon here Sheshach, as in Jeremiah 25. Some think it to be there the proper name of a man, and others regard it as the name of a celebrated city in Chaldea. But we see that what they assert is groundless; for this passage puts an end to all controversy, for in the first clause he mentions Sheshach, and in the second, Babylon. That passage also in Jeremiah 25 cannot refer to anything else except to Babylon; for the Prophet said,

``Drink shall all nations of God's cup of fury,
and after them the king of Sheshach,''

that is, when God has chastised all nations, at length the king of Babylon shall have his turn. But in this place the Prophet clearly shows that Sheshach can be nothing else than Babylon. The name is indeed formed by inverting the alphabet. Nor is this a new notion; for they had this retrograding alphabet in the time of Jerome. They put {ת}, tau, the last letter, in the place of {א}, aleph, the first; then {ש}, shin, for {ב}, beth, thus we see how they formed Shesbach. The {ש}, shin, is found twice in the word, the last letter but one being put for {ב}, beth, the first, letter but one; and then {כ}, caph, is put in the place of {ל}, lamed, according to the order of the retrograde alphabet. There is no good reason for what some say, that the Prophet spoke thus obscurely for the sake of the Jews, because the prophecy was disliked, and might have created dangers to them; for why did he mention Sheshach and then

Babylon in the same verse?

Many understand this passage enigmatically; but there is no doubt but that that alphabet was then, as we have stated, in common use, as we have Ziphras, as they call it, at this day. In the meantime, though the Prophet was not timid, and encouraged his own people to confidence, it yet pleased God that this prophecy should in a manner be hidden, but not that it should be without evidence of its certainty, for we shall see in the last verse but one of this chapter that he commanded the volume to be thrown into the Euphrates, until the event itself manifested the power of God, which for a long time remained as it were buried, until the time of visitation which of which he had spoken.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou art pleased at this day to receive us for thy people, we may enjoy the same favor to the end, and be sheltered under thy wings; and though we deserve to be wholly cast away, yet, if thou chastise us for a time, deal with us with moderate severity, and chastise us in judgment, and not with extreme rigor; and then, after darkness, let thy serene face appear, until we shall at length enjoy that full light to which thou invitest us daily through Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND NINETY FIRST

Jeremiah 51:42

42. The sea is come up upon Babylon: she is covered with the multitude of the waves thereof.

42. Ascendit contra Babylonem mare, multitudine fluctuum ejus cooperta est (vel, obruta.)

THE Prophet here employs a comparison, in order more fully to confirm his prophecy respecting the destruction of Babylon; for, as it was incredible that it could be subdued by the power or forces of men, he compares the calamity by which God would overwhelm it to a deluge. He then says that the army of the Persians and of the Medes would be like the sea, for it would irresistibly overflow; as when a storm rises, the sea swells, so he says the Medes and the Persians would come with such force, that Babylon would be overwhelmed with a deluge rather than with the forces of men. We now then understand the Prophet's meaning, when he says that Babylon would be covered with waves when the Medes and the Persians came It then follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:43

43. Her cities are a desolation, a dry land, and a wilderness, a land wherein no man dwelleth, neither doth any son of man pass thereby.

43. Erunt urbes ejus in vastitatem, terra deserti et siccitatis (aut, vastitatis) terra; non transibit per eam quisquam (onmis homo,) et non habitabit in illa quisquam (et non transibit in illa, hoc est, per illam) filius hominis.

He repeats what he had previously said, but we have before reminded you why he speaks so largely on a subject in itself not obscure. For he might have comprehended in a few words all that he had said in the last chapter and also in this; but it was difficult to convince men of what he taught --- it was therefore necessary to dwell at

large on the subject.

He says now that the cities of Babylon, that is, of that monarchy, would become a desolation. He seems to have hitherto directed his threatenings against the city itself; but now he declares that God's vengeance would extend to all the cities under the power of the Chaldean nation; and he speaks at large of their desolation, for he says that it would be a land of desert, a land of drought, or of filthiness, so that no one would dwell in it. And though he uses the singular number and repeats it, yet he refers to cities, Pass through it shall no man, dwell in it shall no man [462] He indeed speaks of the whole land, but so that he properly refers to the cities, as though he had said, that so great would be the destruction, that however far and wide the monarchy of Babylon extended, all its cities would be cut off. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:44

44. And I will punish Bel in Babylon, and I will bring forth out of his mouth that which he hath swallowed up: and the nations shall not flow together any more unto him: yea, the wall of Babylon shall fall.

44. Et visitabo super Bel in Babylone, et extraham quod voravit ab ore ejus; et non confluent ad ipsum amplius gentes; etiam murus Babylonis cecidit.

God again declares that he would take vengeance on the idols of Babylon; not that God is properly incensed against idols, for they are nothing but things made by men; but that he might show how much he detests all superstitious and idolatrous worship. But he speaks of Bel as though it was an enemy to himself; yet God had no quarrel with a dead figure, void of reason and feeling; and such a contest would have been ridiculous. God, however, thus rises up against Bel for the sake of men, and declares that it was an enemy to himself, not because the idol, as we have said, of itself deserved any punishment.

But we hence learn how detestable was that corruption and that false religion. It appears evident from beathen writers that Bel was the supreme god of the Chaldean nation; nay, that idol was worshipped throughout all Assyria, as all testify with one consent. They thought that there had been a king skillful in the knowledge of the stars, and hence he was placed by erring men among the gods. But we learn from the prophets that this was a very ancient superstition; and it is hardly probable that there had been any king of this name --- for otherwise Isaiah and Jeremiah, when predicting the ruin of this idol, would not have been silent on the subject. That common opinion, then, does not appear to me probable; but I think that on the contrary this name was given to the idol according to the fancies of men; for no reason can be found why heathen nations so named their false gods. It is indeed certain that divine honor was given to mortals by the Greeks and the Romans, and by barbarous nations. But the worship of Bel was more ancient than the time when such a thing was done. And in such veneration was that idol held, that from it they called some of their precious stones. They consecrated the eye-stone to the god of the Assyrians, because it was

[462] The Sept. and the Syr. remove the incongruity that is in this verse; they supply {ↄ before the ``land'' that occurs first, and omit the second ``land.'' Then the verse would read thus, --- 43. Become have her cities a desolation, Like a land of drought and a wilderness; Dwell in them shall no man, And pass through them shall no son of man. The second ``land'' is omitted in two MSS.; and one has ``in her,'' instead of ``in them.'' --- Ed.

a gem of great price. (See Plin. lib. 37, chap. 10.)

Jeremiah, then, now declares that Bel would be exposed to God's vengeance, not that God, as we have said, was angry with that statue, but he intended in this way to testify how much he abominated the ungodly worship in which the Chaldeans delighted. Nor did he so much regard the Chaldeans as the Jews; for I have often reminded you that it was a hard trial, which might have easily endangered the faith of the people, to think that the Chaldeans had not obtained so many and so remarkable victories, except God had favored them. The Jews might on this account have had some doubts respecting the temple and the law itself. As then the Babylonians triumphed when success accompanied them, it was necessary to fortify the minds, of the godly, that they might remain firm, though the Babylonians boasted of their victories. Lest the faithful should succumb under their trials, the prophets supplied a suitable remedy, which is done here by Jeremiah. God then declares that he would visit Bel; for what reason and to what purpose? that the Jews might be convinced that that idol could do nothing, but that they had been afflicted by the Babylonians on account of their sins. That true religion, then, might not be discredited, God testified that he would some time not only take vengeance on the Chaldeans themselves, but also on their idol, which they had devised for themselves; I will then visit Bel in Babylon

And he adds, and I will bring or draw out of his mouth what he has swallowed The word {בעי}, belo, means indeed what is devoured; but the Prophet refers here to the sacred offerings by which Bel was honored until that time. And there is no doubt but that many nations presented gifts to that idol for the sake of the Chaldean nation, as we find that gifts were brought from all parts of the world to Jupiter Capitolinus when the Roman empire flourished; for when the Greeks, the Asiatics, or the Egyptians, wished to obtain some favor, they sent golden crowns, or chandeliers, or some precious vessels; and they sought it as the highest privilege to dedicate their gifts to Jupiter Capitolinus. So, then, there is no doubt but that many nations offered their gifts to Bel, when they wished to flatter the Chaldeans. And hence the Prophet declares that when God visited that idol, he would make it disgorge what it had before swallowed. This is indeed not said with strict propriety; but the Prophet had regard to the Jews, who might have doubted whether the God of Israel was the only true God, while he permitted that empty image to be honored with so many precious offerings; for this was to transfer the honor of the true God to a dead figure. Then he says, I will draw out, as though Bel had swallowed what had been offered to it, --- I will draw out from its mouth what it has swallowed Though the language is not strictly correct, yet we see that it was needful, so it might not disturb the minds of the Jews, that almost all nations regarded that idol with so much veneration.

He afterwards expresses his meaning more clearly by adding, the nations shall no more flow together [463] We hence then see what he meant by the voracity of Bel, even because there was a resort from all parts to this temple, for the nations, seeking to ingratiate themselves with the Babylonians, directed their attention to

[463] "The long processions of pilgrims," observes Henderson, "moving slowly along, are fitly expressed by {,{נהר which properly signifies, to flow as a river." --- Ed

their god. We, indeed, know that the temple of Bel remained even after the city was conquered; there is yet no doubt but that the predictions of Jeremiah and of Isaiah have been accomplished. For Isaiah says,

``Lie prostrate does Bel, Nebo is broken.'' (Isaiah 46:1)

He names some other god, who is not made known by heathen writers; but it is sufficiently evident from this testimony that Bel was in high repute. He afterwards says that it would ``be a burden to the beasts even to weariness.'' We hence learn that Bel was carried away, not that it was worshipped by the Medes and the Persians, but because all the wealth was removed, and probably that idol was made of gold.

It afterwards follows, Even the wall of Babylon has fallen We have said elsewhere that this prophecy ought not to be restricted to the first overthrow of Babylon, for its walls were not then pulled down except in part, where the army entered, after the streams of the Euphrates had been diverted. However, the ancient splendor of the city still continued. But when Babylon was recovered by Darius, the son of Hystaspes, then the walls were pulled down to their foundations, as Herodotus writes, with whom other heathen authors agree. For Babylon had revolted together with the Assyrians when the Magi obtained the government; but when Darius recovered the kingdom, he prepared an army against the Assyrians who had resorted to Babylon; and their barbarous cruelty is narrated, for they strangled all the women that they might not consume the provisions. Each one was allowed to keep one woman as a servant to prepare food and to serve as a cook; but they spared neither matrons nor wives, nor their own daughters. For a time the Persians were stoutly repulsed by them. At length, through the contrivance of Zopyrus, Darius entered the city; he then demolished the walls and the gates, and afterwards Babylon was no better than a village. Then also he hung the chief men of the city, to the number of three or four thousand, which would be incredible were we not to consider the extent of the city; for such a slaughter would be horrible in a city of moderate size, even were men of all orders put to death. But it hence appears what an atrocious cruelty it must have been, when all the chief men were hung or fixed to crosses; and then also the walls were demolished, though they were, as it has been elsewhere stated, of incredible height and width. Their width was fifty feet; Herodotus names fifty cubits, but I rather think they were feet; and yet their feet were longer than common.

As, then, Jeremiah now says, that the wall of Babylon had fallen, there is no doubt but his prophecy includes this second calamity, which happened under Darius; and this confirms what I have referred to elsewhere. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:45

45. My people, go ye out of the midst of her, and deliver ye every man his soul from the fierce anger of the LORD.

45. Exite e mediom ejus, populе mi, et serrate quisque animam suam ab exeandescentia irae Jehovae.

Here the Prophet exhorts the Israelites to flee from Chaldea and Assyria. Yet this exhortation was intended for another purpose, to encourage them in the hope of deliverance; for it was hardly credible that they should ever have a free exit, for Babylon was to them like a sepulcher. As then he exhorts them as to their deliver-

ance, he intimates that God would be their redeemer, as he had promised. But he shows that God's vengeance on Babylon would be dreadful, when he says, Flee from the indignation of God's wrath.

We must, however, observe, that the faithful were thus awakened, lest, being inebriated with the indulgences of the Chaldeans, they should obstinately remain there, when God stretched forth his hand to them; for we know what happened when liberty to return was given to the Israelites --- a small portion only returned; some despised the great favor of God; they were so accustomed to their habitations, and were so fixed there, that they made no account of the Temple, nor of the land promised them by God. The Prophet, then, that he might withdraw the faithful from such indulgences, says, that all who, in their torpor, remained there, would be miserable, because the indignation of God would kindle against that city. We now perceive the object of the Prophet.

It appears, indeed, but a simple exhortation to the Jews to remove, that they might not be polluted with the filth of Babylon, but another end is also to be regarded, proposed by the holy Prophet. This exhortation, then, contains in it a promise of return, as though he had said, that they were not to fear, because liberty would at length be given them, as God had promised. In the meantime, a stimulant is added to the promise, lest the Israelites should be delighted with the pleasures of Chaldea, and thus despise the inheritance promised them by God; for we know how great was the pleasantness of that land, and how great was the abundance it possessed of all blessings; for the fruitfulness of that land is more celebrated than that of all other countries. No wonder, then, that the Prophet so strongly urged the Jews to return, and that he set before them the vengeance of God to frighten them with terror, in case they slumbered in Chaldea. And he afterwards adds, ---

Jeremiah 51:46

46. And lest your heart faint, and ye fear for the rumour that shall be heard in the land; a rumour shall both come one year, and after that in another year shall come a rumour, and violence in the land, ruler against ruler.

46. Et ne forte mollescat cor vestrum, et timeatis in rumore (hoc est, ob rumorem) qui audietar in terra; veniet in anno rumor, et postea in anno (altero, subaudiendum est anno posteriore) rumor, et violentia in terra, et dominator super dominatorem.

Here the Prophet in due time anticipates a danger, lest the Jews should be disturbed in their minds, when they saw those dreadful shakings which afterwards happened; for when their minds were raised to an expectation of a return, great commotions began to arise in Babylon. Babylon, as it is well known, was for a long time besieged, and, as is usual in wars, every day brings forth something new. As, then, God, in a manner, shook the whole land, it could not be, especially under increasing evils, but that the miserable exiles should become faint, being in constant fear; for they were exposed to the wantonness of their enemies. Then the Prophet seasonably meets them here, and shows that there was no cause for them to be disturbed, whatever might happen.

Come, he says, and rise shall various rumors; but stand firm in your minds. Interpreters confine these rumors to the first year of Belshazzar; but I know not whether

such a view is correct. I consider the words simply intended to strengthen weak minds, lest they should be overwhelmed, or at least vacillate, through trials, when they heard of grievous commotions.

But there is a doctrine here especially useful; for when God designs to aid his Church, he suffers the world to be, in a manner, thrown into confusion, that the favor of redemption may appear more remarkable. Unless, then, the faithful were to have some knowledge of God's mercy, they could never endure with courageous minds the trials by which God proves them, and while Satan, on the other hand, seeks to upset their faith. There is the prelude of this very thing to be seen in the ancient people: God had promised to be their redeemer; when the day drew nigh, war suddenly arose, and the Medes and the Persians, as locusts, covered the whole land. We know what various evils war brings with it. There is, then, no doubt but that the children of God sustained many and grievous troubles, especially as they were exiles there; they must have suffered want, they must have been harassed in various ways. Now, as the event of war was uncertain, they might have fainted a hundred times, had they not been supported by this prophecy. But, as I have said, so now also God deals with his Church; for when a deliverer appears, all things seem to threaten ruin rather than to promise a joyful and happy deliverance. It is then necessary, that these prophecies should come to our minds, and that we should apply, for our own benefit, what happened formerly to our fathers, for we are the same body. There is, therefore, no reason for us at this day to wonder, if all things seem to get worse and worse, when yet God has promised that the salvation of his Church will ever be precious to him, and that he will take care of her: how so? because it is said, Let not your heart be faint, fear ye not when rumors arise, one after another; when one year brings tumults, and then another year brings new tumults, yet let not all this disturb your minds. [464]

And Christ seems to allude to these words of the Prophet, when he says,

``Wars shall arise, and rumors of wars: be ye not troubled.'' (Matthew 24:6)

These words of Christ sufficiently warn us not to think it strange, if the Church at this day be exposed to violent waves, and be tossed as by continual storms: why so? because it is right and just that our condition should be like that of the fathers, or at least approach to it. We now, then, understand the design of the Prophet, and the perpetual use that ought to be made of what is here taught.

He afterwards adds, Violence in the land, and a ruler upon or after a ruler. This refers to Cyrus, who succeeded Darius, whom some call Cyaxares. They, indeed, as it is well known, both ruled; but Darius, who was older, had the honor of being the supreme king. Afterwards Cyrus, when Darius was dead, became the king of the whole monarchy. And Darius the Mede lived only one year after Babylon was taken. But I doubt not but that the Prophet here bids the Jews to be of good courage and of

[464] Some, as Blayney, following the Syr., connect this verse with the preceding: The Jews are bidden to leave Babylon, that they might escape the wrath of God, and lest their hearts should faint at the evil romors that would spread there, — And lest your heart faint, And ye be afraid of the rumor rumored in the land, — For it shall come in one year, the romor, etc. But if {,פן rendered lest, be taken, as it is sometimes, a dissuasive particle, then the rendering would be as follows, --- And let not your heart be faint, Nor be ye afraid of the rumor rumored in the land; When it shall come in one year, the rumor, And afterwards in a year, the rumor, And violence shall be in the land, ruler against ruler. The reference seems to be to the commotions in Babylon before the liberation of the Jews. --- Ed.

a cheerful mind, though the land should often change its masters; for that change, however often, could take away nothing from God's authority and government. It afterwards follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:47

47. Therefore, behold, the days come, that I will do judgment upon the graven images of Babylon: and her whole land shall be confounded, and all her slain shall fall in the midst of her.

47. Propterea ecce dies veniunt, et visitabo super simulachra Babylonis; et tota terra ejus pudefiet, et omnes occisi ejus (vel, interfecti) cadent in medio ejus.

He repeats a former sentence, that God would visit the idols of Babylon He does not speak now of Bel only, but includes all the false gods. We have already said why God raised his hand against idols, which were yet mere inventions of no account. This he did for the sake of men, that the Israelites might know that they had been deceived by the wiles of Satan, and that the faithful might understand that they ought not to ascribe it to false gods, when God for a time spared the ungodly. However wanton, then, they might be, in their prosperity, yet when they perished together with their idols, the faithful would then learn by experience, that idols obtained no victory for their worshippers.

When, therefore, the Prophet now says, Behold, the days are coming, and I will visit, etc., he no doubt intended to support the minds of the godly, who otherwise would have been cast down. And it was the best support, patiently to wait for the time of visitation, of which he now speaks;. I will visit, he says, all the images of Babylon; and then he adds, her whole land shall be ashamed. He speaks of the land, because the dominion of that monarchy extended far, so that it was difficult to travel through all its regions, and enemies could hardly have access to them. At length he adds, all her slain shall fall in the midst of her [465] He then speaks first of the country, and then he adds, that however fortified the city might be, yet. its walls and towers would be of no moment, for conquerors would march through her very streets, and everywhere kill those who thought themselves hid in a safe place, and set, as it were, above the clouds. He then adds, ---

Jeremiah 51:48

48. Then the heaven and the earth, and all that is therein, shall sing for Babylon: for the spoilers shall come unto her from the north, saith the LORD.

48. Et jubilabunt contra Babylonem coeli et terra, et omnia quae in eis sunt; quia ab aquilone veniet illi vastatores, (est mutatio numeri,) dicit Jehova.

That, he might more fully convince the Jews of the truth of all that he has hitherto said of the destruction of Babylon, he declares that God would effect it, and that it would be applauded by all the elements. Shout, he says, shall heaven and earth; which is a kind of personification --- for he ascribes knowledge to heaven and earth. It might, indeed, be more refinedly explained, that angels and men would shout for joy, but it would be a frigid explanation; and the Prophet removes every ambiguity, by adding, and all that is in them: he includes, no doubt, the stars, men, trees, fishes, birds, fields, stones, and rivers. And the expression is very emphatical when he says,

[465] Rather, And all her slain, they shall fall in the midst of her. — Ed

that all created things, though without reason and understanding, would yet be full of joy, so that they would, in a manner, rejoice and sing praise. If such would be the feeling in dead creatures, when God put forth his hand against Babylon, would it be possible for that city to remain safe, which was so hated by heaven and earth, and which was accursed by birds and wild beasts, by trees, and everything void of understanding!

We hence see that the Prophet heaps together all kinds of figures and modes of speaking, in order to confirm weak minds, so that they might confidently look forward to the destruction of Babylon. He at the same time intimates that Babylon was hated by all creatures, because it had reached to the highest pitch of wickedness. He then shows the cause by the effect, as though he had said that Babylon was hated by heaven and earth, so that heaven and earth seemed as though they deemed themselves in a manner polluted by the sight of that city. As long, then, as Babylon stood, heaven and earth sighed: but, on the contrary, when God appeared as an avenger, then heaven and earth, and all things in them, would shout with joy. Could it then be that God, the judge of the world, would always connive at its sins? If heaven and earth could not endure it, and Babylon was so loathsome to all, and joy would arise from its destruction, could God possibly allow that city, filled with so many sins, and detested by heaven and earth, to escape with impunity his judgment?

We now, then, more fully understand why the Prophet says that triumph and joy would be in heaven and earth, and among all created things.

He says, because; but the particle {כי}, ki, may be taken for an adverb of time: then he says, when from the north shall come wasters He alludes to the Medes, for the Persians were eastward. But as the Medes were nigher, and also their monarch hr wealthier, the Prophet refers especially to the Medes when he says that evil would come from the north. For the Medes were north of Chaldea, as the Persians were eastward.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou not only testifiest to us that thou wilt be the Redeemer of thy Church, into which thou hast been pleased to introduce us, but hast also really manifested thyself to us in thine only-begotten Son, --- O grant that we may patiently bear all the contests and afflictions by which thou now provest our faith, and that we may perseveringly fight under the cross, until, having gone through all our trials, we shall at length enjoy eternal glory, when we shall find thee to be our complete Redeemer, through the same Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND NINETY SECOND

Jeremiah 51:49

49. As Babylon hath caused the slain of Israel to fall, so at Babylon shall fall the slain of all the earth.

49. Sicuti Babylon ut caderent (hoc est, fecit ut caderent, subaudiendum est aliquid,) interfecti Israelis, sic Babyloni cadent interfecti totius terrae.

THE words literally read thus, ``As Babylon, that they might fall, the slain of Israel, so for Babylon they shall fall, the slain of all the lands.'' Some, omitting the {ל}, lamed, in the second clause, render the passage thus, ``As the slain of Israel have

fallen through Babylon, so by Babylon shall they fall: ``and others render the last like the first, ``through Babylon.'' But the simpler rendering is that which I have given, even that this would be the reward which God would render Babylon, that they would fall everywhere through its whole land, as it had slain the people of Israel. For the Prophet no doubt had this in view, to alleviate the sorrow of the godly by some consolation; and the ground of consolation was, that God would be the avenger of all the evils which the Babylonians had brought on them. For it is a heavy trial when we think that we are disregarded by God, and that our enemies with impunity oppress us according to their own will. The Prophet, then, testifies that God would by no means suffer that so many of the Israelites should perish unpunished, for he would at length render to the Babylonians what they deserved, even that they who destroyed others should in their turn be destroyed.

We may now easily gather what the Prophet means, ``As Babylon,'' he says, ``has made many in Israel to fall, so now the Babylonians themselves shall fall.'' To render {ל}, lamed, by ``through,'' or, on account of, is improper. Then he says the Babylonians themselves shall fall, the slain of the whole land. By the whole land, I do not understand the whole world, as other interpreters, but Chaldea only. Then everywhere in Chaldea, they who had been so cruel as to shed innocent blood everywhere would perish. [466] And though that saying is generally true, Whoso sheddeth man's blood shall be punished; yet the word is especially addressed to the Church. God, then, avenges all slaughters, because he cannot bear his own image to be violated, which he has impressed on men. But as he has a paternal care for his Church, he is in an especial manner the avenger of that cruelty which the ungodly exercise towards the faithful.

In short, the Prophet means, that though God may suffer for a time the ungodly to rage against his Church, yet he will be at the suitable season its avenger, so that they shall everywhere be slain who have been thus cruel.

But we hence learn that we ought by no means to despair when God allows so much liberty to the ungodly, so that they slay the miserable and the innocent, for the same thing happened formerly to the ancient people. It was the Church of God in which the Chaldeans committed that carnage of which the Prophet speaks: the children of God were then slain as sheep. If the same thing should happen to us at this day, there would be no reason for us to despond, but to wait for the time of vengeance of which the Prophet speaks here; for experience will then show how precious to God is the life of all the godly. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:50

50. Ye that have escaped the sword, go away, stand not still: remember the LORD afar off, and let Jerusalem come into your mind.

50. Qui evasistis e gladio, abite, ne stetis; recordamini e longinquo Jehovae, et

[466] This verse may be deemed as the shouting song at the fall of Babylon, — "As Babylon made to fall the slain of Israel, So for Babylon have fallen the slain of all the land." It is said before, in Jeremiah 51:47, that her slain should fall in the midst of her land. "For Babylon" means, on account of what she had done. But if it be "in Babylon," means, on account of what she had done. But of Babylon; and the intimation is, that there would be none led captive, but slain in the land, except "all" be taken, as is often the case, as signifying a large number. — Ed.

Jerusalem ascendat in cor vestrum.

The Prophet again bids the faithful quickly to flee from Chaldea; but he says, They who remain from the sword He then intimates that the slaughter would be such, that it would include many of God's people, and that they would be destroyed. And we know that many among them deserved such a sad end; but the Prophet now turns to address those who had been preserved through God's special favor. He then bids them to depart and not to stand still or stay.

Now, we said yesterday what was the object of this exhortation, even that the faithful might feel assured of their free return to their own country, from which, nevertheless, they thought they were perpetually excluded; for they had wholly despaired of deliverance, though it had been so often promised. This exhortation, then, contains a promise; and in the meantime the Prophet reminds us, that though God inflicted a temporary punishment on the chosen people, yet his vengeance on the Babylonians would be perpetual. For God not only tempers his rigor towards the faithful when he chastises them, but he also gives them a happy issue, so that all their afflictions become helps to their salvation, as Paul also teaches us. (Romans 8:28.) In short, the punishments inflicted by God on his children are so many medicines; for he always consults their safety even when he manifests tokens of his wrath. But the case with the ungodly is different; for all their punishments are perpetual, even those which seem to have an end. How so? because they lead to eternal ruin. This is what the Prophet means when he bids those who remained, to flee from Chaldea, according to what we observed yesterday, when he said, Flee ye from the indignation of God's wrath. There is, then, an implied comparison between the punishment which brings ultimate ruin on the reprobate, and the temporary punishment inflicted by God on his children.

He bids them to remember Jehovah from afar Some apply this to the seventy years, but, in my view, in a sense too restricted. I then doubt not but that the Prophet bids them to entertain hope and to look to God, however far they may have been driven from him, as though he were wholly alienated from them. The Israelites had then been driven into distant lands, as though God never meant to restore them. As, then, the distance was so great between Chaldea and Judea, what else could come into the minds of the miserable exiles but that God was far removed from them, so that it was in vain for them to seek or call upon him? The Prophet obviates this want of faith, and raises their confidence, so that they might not cease to flee to God, though they had been driven into distant lands: Be, then, mindful of Jehovah from afar

Then he adds, Let Jerusalem ascend on your heart; that is, though so many obstacles may intercept your faith, yet think of Jerusalem. The condition of the people required that they should be thus animated, for they might otherwise, as it has been said, have a hundred times despaired, and have thus become torpid in their calamities. Then the Prophet testifies that an access to God was open to them, and that though they were removed far, he yet had a care for them, and was ready to bring help whenever called upon And for the same reason he bids them to direct their minds to Jerusalem, so as to prefer the Temple of God to all the world, and never to

rest quiet until God restored them, and liberty were given them of worshipping him there.

Now this passage deserves special notice, as it applies to us at this day; for when the scattering of the Church takes place, we think that we are forsaken by God, and we also conclude that he is far away from us, so that he is sought in vain. As, then, we are wont, being inclined to distrust, to become soon torpid in our calamities, as though we were very remote from God, and as though he did not turn his eyes to look on our miseries, let us apply to ourselves what is here said, even to remember Jehovah from afar; that is, when we seem to be involved in extreme miseries, when God hides his face from us and seems to be afar off; in short, when we think ourselves forsaken, and circumstances appear as proving this, we ought still to contend with all such obstacles until our faith triumphs, and to employ our thoughts in remembering God, though he may be apparently alienated from us. Let us also learn to direct our minds to the Church; for however miserable our condition may be, it is yet better than the happiness which the ungodly seek for themselves in the world. When, therefore, we see the ungodly flattering themselves as to their possessions, when we see them pleased and delighted as though God were dealing indulgently with them, let then Jerusalem come to our minds, That is, let us prefer the state of the Church, which may be yet sad and deformed, and such as we would shun, were we to follow our own inclinations. Let then the condition of the Church come to our minds, that is, let us embrace the miseries common to the godly, and let it be more pleasant to us to be connected with the children of God in all their afflictions, than to be inebriated with the prosperity of those who only delight in the world, and are at the same time accursed by God. This is the improvement which we ought to make of what is here taught. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:51

51. We are confounded, because we have heard reproach: shame hath covered our faces: for strangers are come into the sanctuaries of the LORD'S house.

51. Pudefacti sumus, quia audivimus opprobrium; operuit igno minia facies nostras, quia venerunt extranei in sanctuaria domus Jehovae.

It is thought that these words were spoken by the Prophet to the faithful, to confirm them as to their return. But I rather think that they were spoken by way of anticipation. They who think that they were spoken as a formula to the Israelites, that they might with more alacrity prepare themselves for their return, suppose a verb understood, ``Say ye, we are confounded (or ashamed), because we have heard reproach;'' even that sorrow would wound the minds of the faithful, to the end that they might nevertheless go through all their difficulties. But as I have said, the Prophet here repeats what the faithful might have of themselves conceived in their own minds; and he thus speaks by way of concession, as though he said, ``I know that you have in readiness these words, `We are ashamed, we are overwhelmed with reproaches; strangers have entered into the sanctuary of God: since the temple is polluted and the city overthrown, what any more remains for us? and doubtless we see that all things supply reasons for despair.' ''

As, then, the thoughts of the flesh suggested to the faithful such things as might

have dejected their minds, the Prophet meets them and recites their words. He then says, as in their person, We are confounded, because we have heard reproach; that is, because we have been harassed by the reproaches of our enemies. For there is no doubt but that the Chaldeans heaped many reproaches on that miserable people; for their pride and their cruelty were such that they insulted the Jews, especially as their religion was wholly different. As, then, the ears of the people were often annoyed by reproaches, the Prophet declares here that they had some cause according to the flesh, why they could hardly dare to entertain the hope of a return.

To the same purpose is what he adds, Shame hath covered our faces, because strangers have come into the sanctuaries of Jehovah For it was the chief glory of the chosen people that they had a temple where they did not in vain call upon God; for this promise was like an invaluable treasure,

``I will dwell in the midst of you; this is my rest, here will I dwell.'' (Psalm 132:13, 14)

As, then, God was pleased to choose for himself that throne and habitation in the world, it was, as I have said, the principal dignity of the people. But when the temple was overthrown, what more remained for them? it was as though religion was wholly subverted, and as though God also had left them and moved elsewhere; in short, all their hope of divine aid and of salvation was taken away from there.

We now, then, understand why the Prophet speaks thus according to the common thoughts of the people, even that they were covered with shame, because strangers had come into God's sanctuaries; for that habitation, which God had chosen for himself, was polluted. And he says ``sanctuaries,'' in the plural number, because the temple had many departments, as the tabernacle had; for there was rite vestibule or the court where they killed the victims; and then there was the holy place, and there was the holy of holies, which was the inner sanctuary. It was then on this account that he said that the sanctuaries of the house of God were possessed by strangers; for it was a sad and shameful pollution when strangers took possession of God's temple, where even the common people were not admitted; for though the whole of the people were consecrated to God, yet none but the priests entered the temple. It was therefore a dreadful profanation of the temple, when enemies entered it by force and for the sake of degrading it. What then remained for the people, except despair?

``This is your glory,'' said Moses, ``before all nations; for what people so noble, what nation so illustrious, as to have gods so near to it!'' (Deuteronomy 4:6-8)

When, therefore, God ceased to dwell familiarly with the Jews, all their glory fell, and they were overwhelmed with shame. But after the Prophet recited these complaints, he immediately subjoins a consolation, ---

Jeremiah 51:52

52. Wherefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will do judgment upon her graven images: and through all her land the wounded shall groan.

52. Propterea ecce dies veniunt, dicit Jehova, et visitabo super sculptilia ejus; et in tota terra ejus clamabit vulneratus (vel, occisus, hoc nomen {חלל}, jam soepius vidimus.)

The design of the Prophet is, as I have reminded you, to raise up the minds of the godly that they might not succumb under their trials, on seeing that they were exposed to shame and were destitute of all honors. He then says that the time would come when God would take vengeance on the idols of Babylon. And thus God claims for himself that power which seemed then to have almost disappeared; for the temple being overthrown, the Babylonians seemed in a manner to triumph over him, as God's power in the temple was overcome. Then as the ruin of it, as we have said, seemed to have extinguished God's power, the Prophet applies a remedy, and says that though the temple was overthrown, yet God remained perfect and his power unchangeable. But among other things he bids the faithful patiently to wait, for he invites their attention to the hope of what was as yet hidden.

We now see how, these things, agree, and why the Prophet uses the particle ``therefore,'' {לכן}, laken: Therefore, behold, the days are coming, that is, though ye are confounded, yet God will give you a reason for glorying, so that ye shall again sing joyfully his praises. But he says, ``the days will come;'' by these words he reminds us that we are to cherish the hope of the promises until God completes his work; and thus he corrected that ardor by which we are seized in the midst of our afflictions, for we wish immediately to fly away to God. The Prophet, then, here exhorts the faithful to sustain courage until the time fixed by God; and so he refers them to God's providence, lest they assumed too much in wishing him to act as their own minds led them. Come then shall the days when I shall visit the graven images of Babylon; and groan or cry, etc.; for the word {אנק}, anak, means to cry. Some render thus, ``groan shall the wounded;'' and they render the last word ``wounded,'' because they think it improper to say that the slain cry or groan. But the Prophet means that the cry in that slaughter would be great, that is, that while the Babylonians were slain, a great howling would be everywhere. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:53

53. Though Babylon should mount up to heaven, and though she should fortify the height of her strength, yet from me shall spoilers come unto her, saith the LORD.

53. Si ascenderit Babylon in coelos, et si munierit excelsum fortitudinis sum (vel, munierit fortitudinem suam in excelso, quod mihi magis placet,) a me venient vastatores ei, dicit Jehova.

The Prophet again teaches us, that however impregnable Babylon might be, there was yet no reason to fear but that God would be its judge; for it is by no means right to measure his power by our thoughts. And nothing does more hinder or prevent us from embracing the promises of God, than to think of what may be done naturally, or of what is probable. When, therefore, we thus consult our own thoughts, we exclude the power of God, which is superior to all the means that may be used.

Hence the Prophet says here, that though Babylon ascended above the heavens, and in the height fortified strength for itself, yet from me, he says, shall come wasters to it [467] There is to be understood here a contrast between God and men; for if there

[467] The idea seems to be, if Babylon ascended the heavens, or the skies, and fortified there a high place for her strength, yet to this place desolators would come, — Though Babylon mounted the skies, And though she fortified the height as her strength, From me would come to her destroyers, saith Jehovah. — Ed

be a contest between men, they fight one with another; but the way of God is different, for he can thunder from heaven, and thus lay prostrate the highest mountains. We now, then, perceive the purpose of the Prophet by saying, that desolators would come from God to destroy Babylon, were it to ascend above the clouds. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:54

54. A sound of a cry cometh from Babylon, and great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans:

54. Vox clamoris e Babylone, et confractio magna e terra Chaldaeorum.

Jeremiah in a manner exults over Babylon, in order that the faithful, having had all obstacles removed or surmounted, might feel assured that what the Prophet had predicted of the fall of Babylon would be confirmed, he then brings them to the very scene itself, when he says, that there would be the voice of a cry from Babylon, and that there would be great breaking or distress from the land of the Chaldeams

We, at the same time, may render {שבר}, shober, here ``crashing,'' so that it may correspond with the previous clause: he had said, The voice of a cry from Babylon; now he says, a crashing from the land of the Chaldeans They call that sound crashing, which is produced by some great shaking; as when a great mass falls, it does not happen without a great noise. This, then, is properly what the Prophet means. We have already stated why he used these words, even that the faithful might have before their eyes the event itself, which as yet was incredible. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:55

55. Because the LORD hath spoiled Babylon, and destroyed out of her the great voice; when her waves do roar like great waters, a noise of their voice is uttered:

55. Quia perdens Jehova Babylonem (hoc est perdet, aut vastabit proprie est {שדד}) et perdet (nunc aliud est verbum) ex ea vocem magnam (vel, magnificam;) et sonuerunt fluctus eorum tanquam aquae magnae, editus est sonitus vocis eorum.

The reason for the crashing is now added, even because God had resolved to lay waste Babylon, and to reduce it to nothing. Jeremiah again calls the faithful to consider the power of God. He then says, that it would not be a work done by men, because God would put forth his great power, which cannot be comprehended by human minds. He then sets the name of God in opposition to all creatures, as though he had said, that what exceeds all the efforts of men, would yet be easily done by God. He, indeed, represents God here as before our eyes, and says that Babylon would perish, but that it was God who would lay it waste. He thus sets forth God here as already armed for the purpose of cutting off Babylon. And he will destroy from her the magnificent voice, that is, her immoderate boasting.

What follows is explained by many otherwise than I can approve; for they say that the waves made a noise among the Babylonians at the time when the city was populous; for where there is a great concourse of men, a great noise is heard, but solitude and desolation bring silence. They thus, then, explain the words of the Prophet, that though now waves, that is, noises, resounded in Babylon like great waters, and the sound of their voice went forth, yet God would destroy their great or magnificent voice. But I have no doubt but that what the Prophet meant by their

great voice, was their grandiloquent boasting in which the Babylonians indulged during their prosperity. While, then, the monarchy flourished, they spoke as from the height. Their silence from fear and shame would follow, as the Prophet intimates, when God checked that proud glorying.

But what follows I take in a different sense; for I apply it to the Medes and the Persians: and so there is a relative without an antecedent --- a mode of speaking not unfrequent in Hebrew. He then expresses the manner in which God would destroy or abolish the grandiloquent boasting of the Babylonians, even because their waves, that is, of the Persians, would make a noise like great waters; that is, the Persians, and the Medes would rush on them like impetuous waves, and thus the Babylonians would be brought to silence and reduced to desolation. [468] When they were at peace, and no enemy disturbed them, they then gave full vent to their pride; and thus vaunting was the speech of Babylon as long as it flourished; but when suddenly the enemies made an irruption, then Babylon became silent or mute on account of the frightful sound within it. We hence see why he compares the Persians and the Medes to violent waves which would break and put an end to that sound which was before heard in Babylon. It follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:56

56 Because the spoiler is come upon her, even upon Babylon, and her mighty men are taken, every one of their bows is broken: for the LORD God of recompences shall surely requite.

56. Quia venit super eam, super Babylonem, vastator; et deprehensus est fortis ejus (deprehensi sunt, vel, capri, fortes ejus;) confractus est arcus eorum, quia Deus retributionum Jehova reddendo reddet.

He confirms the former verse; for as the thing of which he speaks was difficult to be believed, he sets God before them, and shows that he would be the author of that war. He now continues his discourse and says, that desolators shall come against Babylon. He had ascribed to God what he now transfers to the Medes and the Persians. He had said, Jehovah hath desolated or wasted, {יהוה} {שדד}, shedad Jeve; he says now, coming is a desolator, {שודד}, shudad. Who is he? not God, but Cyrus, together with the united army of the Persians and the Medes; yea, with vast forces assembled from many nations, Now that the same name is given to God and to the Persians, this is done with regard to the ministration. Properly speaking, God was the desolator of Babylon; but as in this expedition he employed the services of men, and made the Persians and the Medes, as it were, his ministers, and the executioners of his judgment, the name which properly belongs to God is transferred to the ministers whom he employed. The same mode of speaking is also used when blessings are spoken of. He is said to have raised up saviors for his people, while yet he himself is the only Savior, nor can any mortal assume that name without sacrilege. (Judges 3:15; 2 Kings 13:5.) For God's peculiar glory is taken away, when

[468] This is the meaning given by the Targum. Venema and Horsley would put a colon or a period after {.{אבד --- 55. For Jehovah is laying waste Babylon and destroying her: From her comes a loud voice! And roar do their waves like great waters, Going forth is the tumult of their voice. According to the preceding verse, the destruction of Babylon is represented as then taking place, --- 54. A voice of howling from Babylon! And of great destruction from the land of the Chaldeans! The commotions and tumults, arising from the invasion of enemies, seem to be set forth in Jeremiah 51:55; and the beginning of the following, Jeremiah 51:56, ought to be rendered in the present tense, the first verb being a participle. --- Ed.

salvation is sought through the arm of men, as we have seen in Jeremiah 17. But though God is the only author of salvation, yet it is no objection to this truth, that he employs men in effecting his purposes. So also he converts men, illuminates their minds by the ministers of the gospel, and also delivers them from eternal death. (Luke 1:17.) Doubtless were any one to arrogate to himself what Christ is pleased to concede to the ministers of his gospel, he could by no means be endured; but as I have already said, we must bear this in mind, that though God acts by his own power and never borrows anything from any one, nor stands in need of any help, yet what properly belongs to him is, in a manner, applied to men, at least by way of concession. So now, then, the Prophet calls God the desolator, and afterwards he honors with the same title the Persians and the Medes.

He adds, that the valiant men of Babylon were taken, according to what we have before seen, that the city was so taken that no one resisted. Then he adds, that their bow was broken, there is a part stated for the whole; for under the word bow he includes all kinds of armor. But as bows were used at a distance, and as enemies were driven from the walls by casting arrows, the Prophet says that there would be no use made of bows, because the enemies would skew themselves in the middle of the city before the watchmen saw them, as we know that such was really the case. We now perceive why the Prophet mentions the bow rather than swords or other weapons.

The reason follows, Because Jehovah is the God of retributions, and recompensing her recompenses, that is, he will recompense. The Prophet here confirms all that he had said, and reasons from the nature or character of God himself. As then the fall of Babylon would hardly be believed by the faithful, the Prophet does not ask what God is in himself, but declares that he is the God of retributions, as though he had said, that it belonged to God, and that it could not be separated from his nature, to be the God of retributions, otherwise his judgment would be nothing, his justice would be nothing. For if the reprobate succeeded with impunity, and if the righteous were oppressed without any aid, would not God be like a stock of wood or an imaginary thing? For why has he power, except that he may exercise justice? But God cannot be without power.

We now, then, see how forcible is this confirmation, with which the Prophet doses his discourse: for it is the same as if he had said, that no doubt could possibly be entertained as to the fall of Babylon, because God is the God of retributions. Either there is no God, he says, or Babylon must be destroyed; how so? for if there be a God, he is the God of retributions; if he is the God of retributions, then recompensing he will recompense. Now, it is well known how wicked Babylon was, and in what various ways it had provoked the wrath of God. Then it was impossible for it to escape his hand unpunished, since it had in so many ways sought its own ruin.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that when thou hidest at this day thy face from us, the miserable despair we apprehend may not overwhelm our faith, nor obscure our view of thy goodness and grace, but that in the thickest darkness thy power may ever appear to us, which can raise us above the world, so that we may courageously

fight to the end, and never doubt but that thou wilt at length be the defender of thy Church, which now seems to be oppressed, until we shall enjoy our perfect happiness in heaven, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

LECTURE ONE HUNDRED AND NINETY THIRD

Jeremiah 51:57

57. And I will make drunk her princes, and her wise men, her captains, and her rulers, and her mighty men: and they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, and not wake, saith the King, whose name is the LORD of hosts.

57. Et inebriabo principes ejus et sapientes ejus et duces ejus et praefectos ejus et fortes ejus; et dormient somnum perpetuum, et non expergefient, dicit rex, cujus nomen est Jehova exercituum.

Jeremiah pursues the same subject, he said yesterday that desolators would come to destroy Babylon. He now confirms this by a similitude; and God himself speaks, I will inebriate the princes and captains as well as the soldiers and all the counselors. He seems here to allude to that feast of which Daniel speaks, and of which heathen authors have written. (Daniel 5:1) For while the feast was celebrated by the Babylonians, the city was that night taken, not only through the contrivance and valor of Cyrus, but also through the treachery of those who had revolted from Belshazzar. As, then, they were taken while at the feast, and as the king was that night slain together with his satraps, God seems to refer to this event when he declares, that when he had inebriated them, they would be overtaken with perpetual sleep; for death immediately followed that feasting. They had prolonged their feast to the middle of the night; and while they were sitting at table, a tumult arose suddenly in the city, and the king heard that he was in the hand of his enemies. As, then, feasting and death followed in close succession, it is a striking allusion given by the Prophet, when God threatens the Babylonians with perpetual sleep, after having inebriated them.

But he mentions here the rulers and the captains, as well as the counsellors and the wise men. We, indeed, know that the Babylonians were inflated by a twofold confidence, --- they thought themselves endued with consummate wisdom, and also that they possessed warlike valor. This is the reason why the Prophet expresses so distinctly, that all the captains and rulers in Babylon, however superior in acuteness and prudence, would yet be overtaken with perpetual sleep before they rose from their table. And we must observe that Jeremiah had many years thus prophesied of Babylon; and hence we conclude that his mind as well as his tongue was guided by the Spirit of God, for he could not have possibly conjectured what would be after eighty years: yet so long a time intervened between the prediction and its accomplishment, as we shall presently see.

Moreover, the Prophet uses here a mode of speaking which often occurs in Scripture, even that insensibility is a kind of drunkenness by which God dementates men through his hidden judgment. It ought, then, to be noticed, that whatever prudence and skill there is in the world, they are in such a way the gifts of God, that whenever he pleases the wisest are blinded, and, like the drunken, they either go astray or fall. But we must bear in mind what I have already said, that the Prophet alludes to that

very history, for there was then an immediate transition from feasting to death. It now follows,

Jeremiah 51:58

58. Thus saith the LORD of hosts; The broad walls of Babylon shall be utterly broken, and her high gates shall be burned with fire; and the people shall labour in vain, and the folk in the fire, and they shall be weary.

58. Sic dicit Jehova exercituum, Murus Babylonis latitudinis (hoc est, latus) dissipando dissipabitur, et portae ejus excelsae igne comburentur, et laborabunt populi ad nihilum, et gentes in igne, et fatigabuntur.

The Prophet again introduces God as the speaker, that what he said might obtain more attention from the Jews; and for this reason he subjoined a eulogy to the last verse, and said that the king spoke, whose name is Jehovah of hosts We have stated elsewhere what is the design of such expressions, even that men may rise above everything seen in the world when God's power is mentioned, that they may not try to contain it in their own small measure. Then the Prophet now again repeats the name of God, that the Jews might receive with becoming reverence what he announced.

And what he says is, The wall of Babylon, however wide it may be, shall yet be surely demolished. We have said that the walls were fifty feet wide, and the feet were indeed long, though Herodotus, as I have said, mentions cubits and not feet. The width, indeed, was such that four horses abreast meeting, could pass, there being space enough for them. It hence, then, appears, that their thickness was so great, that the Babylonians confidently disregarded whatever had been predicted by the Prophet; for no engines of war could have ever beaten down walls so thick, especially as they were made of bricks and cemented by bitumen. As, then, the material, beside the thickness, was so firm and strong, this prophecy was incredible. It did not indeed reach the Babylonians, but the Jews themselves regarded as a fable all that they had heard from the mouth of the Prophet. Yet God did not in vain refer to width of the wall, in order that the faithful might feel assured that the walls of Babylon could not possibly resist him, however firm they might be in their materials and thickness. The wall, he says, shall surely be demolished.

He afterwards mentions the gates, which Herodotus says were of brass when Darius took them away. He, indeed, means the doors, but the Prophet includes the framework as well as the brazen doors. He then says, they shall be consumed with fire The Babylonians might have laughed at this threatening of Jeremiah, for brass could not have been consumed with fire, even if enemies had been permitted to set fire to them --- for brass could not have been so soon melted. But as the Prophet had predicted this by God's command, so at length his prophecy was verified when he was dead, because it was proved by the event that this proceeded from God; for when the doors were removed, the gates themselves were demolished; and it may have been that Darius put fire to them, that he might the sooner destroy the gates and the towers, which were very high, as well as the walls.

He afterwards adds, Labor shall the people in vain, and the nations in the fire; they shall be wearied So this passage is commonly explained, as though the Prophet

had said, that when the walls of Babylon had begun to burn, and the gates to be consumed with fire, there would be no remedy, though the Babylonians might greatly weary themselves and fatigue themselves in attempting to quench the fire. But this exposition seems to be forced and unnatural. I therefore take the words, though future, in the past tense. And as the walls of Babylon had not been erected without great labor, and a vast number of men had been hired, some to bring bitumen, others to heap up the earth, and others to make the bricks, the Prophet in this place intimates that all this labor would be in vain, even because it was spent for the fire, --- that whatever they did who had been either hired for wages or forced by authority to erect the walls, was labor for the fire; that is, they labored that their work might eventually be consumed by fire. This seems to me to be the real meaning of the Prophet. He then says that the people had labored in vain, or for nothing, and why? because they labored for the fire. The second clause is in my view an explanation of the former. [469] It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:59

59. The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, when he went with Zedekiah the king of Judah into Babylon in the fourth year of his reign. And this Seraiah was a quiet prince.

59. Sermo quem praecepit Jeremias propheta Seraiae filio Neriae, filii Mahesiae, quum profectus est pro Zedechia (vel, a Zedechia,) rege Jehudah, Babylonem, anno quarto regni ipsius; Seraiah autem princeps quietis.

This is a remarkable sealing of the whole of what we have hitherto found said respecting the destruction of Babylon; for the Prophet not only spoke and promulgated what the Spirit of God had dictated, but also put it down in a book; and not contented with this, he delivered the book to Seraiah the son of Neriah, when he went to Babylon by the command of Zedekiah the king, that he might read it there, east it into the Euphrates, and strengthen himself in the hope of all those things which had been divinely predicted.

He says first that he commanded Seraiah what he was to do, even to read the volume and to throw it into the Euphrates, as we shall hereafter see. But he points out the time and mentions the disposition of Seraiah, that we might not think it strange that the Prophet dared to give an authoritative command to the king's messenger, which a man of another character would have refused. As to the time, it was the fourth year of the reign of Zedekiah; seven years before the city was taken, being besieged the ninth year and taken the eleventh. Then seven years before the destruction and ruin of the city, Seraiah was sent by the king to Babylon. There is no doubt but that the message was sent to pacify the king of Babylon, who had been offended with the fickleness and perfidy of King Zedekiah; an ambassador was then sent to seek pardon. But what the Jews say, that Zedekiah went to Babylon, is wholly groundless; and we know that Sederola, whence they have taken this, is full of all

[469] The {{ו before {יגעו} is evidently conversive, and may be rendered so that, or therefore, --- Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, The wall of Babylon, the brroad one, It shall be utterly laid in ruins; And her gates, the lofty ones, They shall be consumed with fire: So that people had labored for vanity, And nations for the fire, and wearied themselves. Several MSS. have ,{חמת} wall, and so it is in the Sept., as required by ``broad,'' which is in the singular number. ``For vanity'' is for the vain object; and ``for the fire'' means for what was to be consumed by fire. The last words may be rendered ``though they wearied themselves.'' --- Ed

kinds of fables and trifles; and on such a point as this, sacred history would not have been silent, for it was a thing of great moment; and then the particle {את}, at, expresses no such thing, but may be rendered in this sense, that the messenger was sent for, or by, or in the place of Zedekiah. Let us then be satisfied with this simple and obvious explanation, that Seraiah was the king's messenger sent to remove the offenses taken by the Babylonians. [470] And this happened in the fourth year of Zedekiah.

Now, by calling Seraiah a prince of quietness, I doubt not but that a reference is made to his gentleness and meekness; and I wonder that in so plain a thing interpreters have toiled so much. One renders it, even the Chaldean paraphrase, ``the prince of the oblations,'' as though he was set over to examine the presents offered to the king. Others imagine that he was a facetious man who amused the king in his fears; and others think that he was called ``prince of quietness,'' because he preserved the city in a quiet state. But all these things are groundless. [471] No other view, then, seems to me right, but that he was a prince of a quiet disposition. Therefore the word ``quietness'' ought not to be referred to any office, but a noun in the genitive case used instead of an adjective. He was, then, a quiet prince, or one of a placid disposition. And this commendation was not without reason added, because we know how haughtily the princes rejected everything commanded them by the servants of God. Seraiah might have objected, and said that he was sent to Babylon, not by a private person, and one of the common people, but by the king himself. He might then have haughtily reproved the Prophet for taking too much liberty with him, ``Who art thou, that thou darest to command me, when I sustain the person of the king? and when I am going in his name to the king of Babylon? and then thou seekest to create disturbances by ordering me to read this volume. What if it be found on me? what if some were to suspect that I carry such a thing to Babylon? would I not, in the first place, carry death in my bosom? and would I not, in the second place, be perfidious to my king? for thus my message would be extremely disliked.''

As then Seraiah might have stated all these things, and have rejected the command which Jeremiah gave him, his gentleness is expressly mentioned, even that he was a meek man, and who withheld not his service --- who, in short, was ready to obey God and his servant. What, in a word, is here commended, is the meekness of Seraiah, that he received the Prophet with so much readiness, --- that he suffered himself to be commanded by him, and that he also hesitated not to execute what he had commanded, when yet it might have been a capital offense, and it might especially have been adverse to his mission, which was to reconcile the king of Babylon.

[470] The Vulg. and Syr. have "with," but the Sept. and Targ. give it the meaning of "from;" and {את has often the meaning of ;{מאת} see Genesis 6:1; Genesis 44:4; Genesis 50:9, 25. So Gataker, Venema, and Blayney. --- Ed

[471] The variety in the early versions is remarkable; the Sept. and the Targ. have "the prince of gifts" or presents; the Vulg., "the prince of prophecy;" and the Syr., "the prince of warfare." A similar phrase is found in 1 Chronicles 22:9; Solomon is said to be "a man of rest," {איש. {מנוחה The meaning most suitable to this passage is that if Calvin and of our version. So though Gataker; but Lowth and Parkhurst regarded the words as pointing out his office as the king's chief chamberlain, ``the prince of the resting-place,'' or chamber; but the objection to this is, that the word is never used in this sense; it means not the rest of sleep, but the rest of peace and quietness. --- Ed

And surely it is an example worthy of being noticed, that Seraiah was not deterred by danger from rendering immediate obedience to the Prophet's command, nor did he regard himself nor the omee committed to him, so as to reject the Prophet, according to the usual conduct of princes, under the pretext of their own dignity; but laying aside his own honor and forgetting all his greatness, he became a disciple to Jeremiah, who yet, as it is well known, had been long despised by the people, and had sometimes been nearly brought to death. It was, then, a remarkable instance of virtue in Seraiah, that he received with so much modesty and readiness what had been said to him by the Prophet, and that he obeyed his command, to the evident danger of his own life. It now follows, ---

Jeremiah 51:60-64

60. So Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, even all these words that are written against Babylon.

60. Et scripsit Jeremias omne malum, quod venturum erat contra Babylonem in libro uno, omnes sermones istos scriptos contra Babylonem.

61. And Jeremiah said to Seraiah, When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words;

61. Et dixit Jeremias ipsi Seraiae, Quum ingressus fueris Babylonem, et conspexeris eam, tunc leges omnes sermones istos,

62. Then shalt thou say, O LORD, thou hast spoken against this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever.

62. Et dices, Jehova, tu loquutus es contra locum hunc, ad excidendum ipsum, ut non sit in eo habitator, ab homine ad bestiam, quia vastationes perpetuae erit (hoc est, erit in vastationes perpetuas, vel redigetur.)

63. And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of Euphrates:

63. Et erit quum finem feceris legendo librum hunc, alligabis ad ipsum lapidem, et projicies in medium Euphratem:

64. And thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary. Thus far are the words of Jeremiah.

64. Et dices, Sic mergetur Babylon, et non exurget a facie mali quod ego immitto contra eam, et volabunt (aut, fatigabunt.) Hue usque sermones Jeremiae.

Here we see, on one hand, what courage the Prophet had, who dared to command the king's messenger; for though Seraiah was a meek man, so as to render himself submissive, yet Jeremiah exposed himself to danger; for he might have been timid, though he was neither proud nor arrogant; and thus, as men are wont to do when terrified, he might have referred to the king what he had heard from the Prophet. Then Jeremiah did what we here read, not without danger; and hence appears his firmness. We then see that he was endued with the spirit of invincible courage, so as to discharge his office freely and intrepidly.

On the other hand, we have to observe not only the meekness of Seraiah, but also his piety, together with his modesty; for except he had in him a strong principle of religion, he might have adduced plausible reasons for refusing. As, then, he was

so submissive, and dreaded no danger, it is evident that the real fear of God was vigorous in his soul.

And these things ought to be carefully noticed; for who of our cornfly princes can be found at this day who will close his eyes to all dangers, and resolutely disregard all adverse events, when God and his servants are to be obeyed? And then we see how pusillanimous are those who profess to be God's ambassadors, and claim to themselves the name of Pastors. As, then, teachers dare not faithfully to perform their office, so on the other hand courtly princes are so devoted to themselves and to their own prudence, that they are unwilling to undertake duties which are unpopular. On this account, then, this passage, with all its circumstances, ought to be carefully noticed.

Jeremiah, then, wrote in a book all the evil which was to come on Babylon, even all those words, (he refers to the prophecies which we have seen;) and Jeremiah said to Seraiah, [472] etc. Here the boldness of Jeremiah comes to view, that he hesitated not to command Seraiah to read this book when he came to Babylon and had seen it. To see it, is not mentioned here without reason, for the splendor of that city might have astonished Seraiah. Then the Prophet here seasonably meets the difficulty, and bids him to disregard the height of the walls and towers; and that however Babylon might dazzle the eyes of others, yet he was to look down, as from on high, on all that pomp and pride: When thou enterest the city, and hast seen it, then read this book The verb {קרא}, kora, means to call, to proclaim, and also to read. Then Seraiah must have read this book by himself; nor do I doubt but that the words ought to be so understood, as we shall see. It was not then necessary for Seraiah to have a pulpit, or in a public way to read the book to an assembled people; but it was sufficient to read it privately by himself, without any witnesses; and this may be gathered from the context.

And thou shalt say, Jehovah, thou hast spoken against this place It hence appears that Seraiah was commanded to read the book, not for the benefit of hearers, for they would have been doubly deaf to the words of Seraiah. And it is not probable that the Hebrew language was then familiar to the Chaldeans. There is a great affinity, as it is well known, in the languages, but there is also some difference. But we conclude, from this passage, that the reading was in a chamber, or in some secret place; for Seraiah is bidden to fix all his thoughts on God, and to address his words to him. He did not then undertake the work or office of a preacher, so as openly to proclaim all these things to the Babylonians. But having inspected the city, he was to read the book by himself, that is, what had been written.

And this also deserves to be noticed; for however courageous we may be, yet our constancy and boldness are more apparent when we have to do with men than when we are alone, and God is the only witness; for when no one sees us, we tremble; and though we may have previously appeared to have manly courage, yet when alone, fear lays hold on us. There is hardly one in a hundred who is so bold as he ought to be

[472] That the connection may appear more evident, Jeremiah 51:60 and the first sentence in Jeremiah 51:61 ought to be put within a parenthesis; for "the word which Jeremiah commanded Seraiah," mentioned in Jeremiah 51:59, is what follows, "When thou comest to Babylon," etc. — Ed.

when God alone is witness. But shame renders us courageous and constrains us to be firm, and the vigor which is almost extinct in private is roused in public. As, then, ambition almost always rules in men, this passage ought to be carefully noticed, where the Prophet commands Seraiah to deal alone with God, and, though no mortal was present, to strengthen himself, by relying on the certain and infallible fidelity of God; Thou shalt then say, Jehovah, etc. And it is doubtless a real experiment of faith, when we consider within ourselves the promises of God, and go not forth before the public to avow our firmness; for when any one in silence acknowledges God to be true, and strengthens himself in his promises, and so disregards the false judgments of all, that were he alone in the world, he would not yet despond, --- this is a true and real trial of faith.

Thou shalt then say, Jehovah, thou hast spoken against this place The design of the words was, that Seraiah might feel assured that God was true, and embrace in his presence what he read, and not doubt but that the word, which came from God, would, in due time, be accomplished: how so? because God is true. The word Jehovah, then, ought to be regarded as emphatical; and thou shalt say, Thou, Jehovah, hast spoken against this place; that is, neither Jeremiah, nor any other mortal, is the author of this prophecy; but thou, O Lord, has dictated to thy servant whatever is contained in this volume.

To destroy it, so that there should not be an inhabitant in it, neither man nor beast: how so? because it shall be reduced to desolations, or the particle {כי}, ki, may be taken adversatively, but it shall be reduced to perpetual desolations [473]

He afterwards adds, And when thou hast made an end of reading, thou shalt tie a stone to it and cast it into the Euphrates, and shalt say, Thus sink shall Babylon Here is added an external symbol to confirm the faith of Seraiah. We must yet bear in mind, that this was not said to Seraiah for his own sake alone, but that the people might also know, that the king's messenger, who had been sent for the sake of conciliating, was also the messenger of God and of the Prophet, who might have otherwise been despised by the people. When, therefore, the faithful knew this, they were in no ordinary way confirmed in the truth of the prophecy. Jeremiah, then, not only consulted the benefit of Seraiah alone, but that of all the godly; for though this was unknown for a long time, yet the messenger afterwards acknowledged that this command had been given him by Jeremiah, and that he took the book and cast it into the Euphrates. This, then, was given as a confirmation to all the godly.

As to the symbols by which God sealed the prophecies in former times, we have spoken elsewhere; I therefore pass them by slightly now: only we ought to bear in mind this one thing, that these signs were only temporary sacraments; for ordinary sacraments are permanent, as the holy supper and baptism. But the sign mentioned here was temporary, and referred, as they say, to a special action: it yet had the force and character of a sacrament, as to its use, the confirmation of this prophecy. Seraiah was then bidden to tie a stone to the book, and then to cast it into the Euphrates: why so? that the volume might not swim on the surface of the water, but

[473] Literally the words are, — For desolations of perpetuity shall it (or she) be. Babylon is sometimes referred to as masculine, and sometimes as feminine. — Ed.

be sunk down to the bottom; and the application follows, Thou shalt say, etc. We see that words ought ever to be connected with signs. We hence conclude how fatuous the Papists are, who practice many ceremonies, but without knowledge. They are, indeed, dead and empty things, whatever signs men may devise for themselves, except God's word be added. Thou shalt then say, Thus sink shall Babylon, and shall not rise from the evil which I shall bring upon her In short, Seraiah was commanded, as the Prophet's messenger, to predict by himself concerning the fall of Babylon; but it was for the sake of all the godly, who were afterwards taught what had been done. 474

The Conclusion follows, Thus far the words of Jeremiah We have said that the prophets, after having spoken in the Temple, or to the people, afterwards collected brief summaries, and that these contained the principal things: from these the prophetic books were made up. For Jeremiah did not write the volume as we have it at this day, except the chapters; and it appears evident that it was not written in the order in which he spoke. The order of time is not, then, everywhere observed; but the scribes were careful in this respect, that they collected the summaries affixed to the doors of the Temple; and so they added this conclusion, Thus far the words of Jeremiah But this, in my view, is not to be confined to the prophecies respecting the fall of Babylon; for I doubt not but that the scribe who had collected all his prophecies, added these words, that he had thus far transcribed the words of Jeremiah.

We hence conclude that the last chapter is not included in the prophetic book of Jeremiah, but that it contains history only as far as was necessary to understand what is here taught: for it appears evident that many parts of the prophecy could not be understood without the knowledge of this history. As to the book of Lamentations, we know that it was a work distinct from the prophecies of Jeremiah: there is, then, no wonder that it has been added, Thus far the words of Jeremiah

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that Since thou hast deigned to choose us for thy people, we may not doubt but that our enemies will be before thee like Babylon, so that when thou hast chastised us, thou wilt at length, by a fatal and perpetual destruction, so lay them prostrate, that they shall rise up no more; and when thou hast killed the body, manifest thyself as our deliverer, until we shall at length be gathered into that celestial kingdom which has been prepared for us by thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

474 Calvin takes no notice here of the verb which closes this sentence, {;{ויעפו but in his version he renders it, ``and they shall fly,'' or they shall be wearied. Critics know not what to make of it: it is omitted in the Sept., and rendered by the Vulg., ``and it shall be dissolved;'' by the Syr., ``but they shall be thrown down;'' and by the Targ., ``and they shall fail.'' It is left out in no MS. Blayney, following the Sept., omits it. The best explanation is given by Junius and Tremelius, ``though they may weary themselves,'' that is, the citizens of Babylon: their attempt to rise and resist their enemies would be ineffectual, however much they might toil in the effort. The emendator, Houbigant, proposes to read the word, ,{ויפוז} ``and they shall come to an end.'' This agrees nearly with the Targ., ``and they shall fail.'' --- Ed

Jeremiah 52

The last chapter, as it is historical, and all its parts have been elsewhere handled, holy Calvin did not expound in his Lectures, that he might not burden the hearers with superfluous repetitions: however, to render the book complete, we here add it.

CHAPTER 52

Jeremiah 52:1-34

1. Zedekiah was one and twenty years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

1. Viginti et unius anni erat Sedechias quando regnavit, et undecim annis regnavit in Jerusalem, et nomen matris ejus Hamutal filia Jeremiae de Libnah.

2. And he did that which was evil in the eyes of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

2. Et fecit malum in oculis Jehovae, secundum omnia quae fecerat Jehoiakim:

3. For through the anger of the LORD it came to pass in Jerusalem and Judah, till he had cast them out from his presence, that Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

3. Nempe propter furorem Jehovae qui fuit contra Jerusalem et Jehudah, donec projiceret eos a facie sua, rebellavit Sedechias contra regem Babylonis. [475]

4. And it came to pass in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth day of the month, that Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and pitched against it, and built forts against it round about.

4. Fuit autem anno nono regni ejus, mense decimo, decima mensis, venit Nabuchadrezer rex Babylonis, ipse et universus exercitus ejus adversus Jerusalem, et castrametati sunt contra eam, et aedificaverunt contra earn munitionem undique.

[475] The best rendering of this verse is by Venema, — Therefore the height of the wrath of Jehovah (that is, the extreme wrath of Jehovah) was on Jerusalem and Judah, until he cast them from his presence: and Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. The same words, in 2 Kings 24:20, ought to be rendered in the same way. — Ed.

5. So the city was besieged unto the eleventh year of king Zedekiah.

5. Venitque civitas in obsidionem usque ad undecimum annum regis Sedechiae.

6. And in the fourth month, in the ninth day of the month, the famine was sore in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land.

6. Mense quarto, nona mensis, invaluit fames in urbe, (adeo) ut non esset panis populo terrae.

7. Then the city was broken up, and all the men of war fled, and went forth out of the city by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, which was by the king's garden; (now the Chaldeans were by the city round about:) and they went by the way of the plain.

7. Et dirupta fuit urbs, et omnes viri bellatores fugerunt, exieruntque de urbe noete per viam portae (quoe erat) inter duos muros, qui (erant) juxta hortum regis (Chaldaei autem erant juxta urbem per circuitum) abieruntque per viam solitudinis.

8. But the army of the Chaldeans pursued after the king, and overtook Zedekiah in the plains of Jericho; and all his army was scattered from him.

8. Persecutus vero est exereitus Chaldaeorum regem, apprehenderuntque Sedechiam in desertis Jericho; quia omnis exercitus ejus dispersus est ab eo.

9. Then they took the king, and carried him up unto the king of Babylon to Riblah in the land of Hamath; where he gave judgment upon him.

9. Comprehenderunt igitur regem, et duxerunt eum ad regem Babylonis in Riblatah, in terram Chamath, qui disceptavit cure eo judiciis.

10. And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes: he slew also all the princes of Judah in Riblah.

10. Et jugulavit rex Babylonis filios Sedechiam in oculis ejus, et etiam omnes principes Jehudah jugulavit in Riblatah:

11. Then he put out the eyes of Zedekiah; and the king of Babylon bound him in chains, and carried him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day of his death.

11. Oculos autem Sedechiae excaecavit, et vinxit catenis, adducique fecit eum rex Babylonis, Babylonem, et posuit eum in domo carceris [476] usque ad diem quo mortuus est.

12. Now in the fifth month, in the tenth day of the month, which was the nineteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, which served the king of Babylon, into Jerusalem,

12. Mense autem quinto, decima mensis [477] (is annus erat decimus nonus annus regis Nabuchadrezer regis Babylonis) venit Nebuzaradan princeps militum, qui stabat [478] coram rege Babylonis, in Jerusalem,

13. And burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house; and all the houses of Jerusalem, and all the houses of the great men, burned he with fire.

13. Et incendit domurn Jehovae et domum regis, atque cunctas domos Jerusalem,

[476] Literally, “in the house of visitations,” that is, of punishments. — Ed.

[477] It is “the seventh” in 2 Kings 25:8. This discrepancy is accounted for by Blayney and others, by suppposing a typographical mistake of putting the numeral {,{ז seven, for ,{ו} ten, or vice versa. --- Ed

[478] It is {,{עבד ``served,'' in 2 Kings 25:8; but the meaning is the same. To stand before one is phrase which designates the office of one who serves. See Luke 1:29. It would be better, in rendering this part of the verse, to change the place of the verb, to come, --- ``Nebuzar-adan, the prince of the executioners, who stood before the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.'' --- Ed

et omnem domum magnam combussit igni: [479]

14. And all the army of the Chaldeans, that were with with the captain of the guard, brake down all the walls of Jerusalem round about.

14. Onmesque muros Jerusalem undique destruxerunt totus exercitus Chaledaeorum, qui erat cum magistro militum.

15. Then Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive certain of the poor of the people, and the residue of the people that remained in the city, and those that fell away, that fell to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the multitude.

15. De pauperibus autem populi, et de reliquo populo qui remanserant in urbe, et de transfugis qui transfugerunt ad regem Babylonis, et de reliquiis multitudinis transmigrare fecit Nebuzaradan nmgister militum. [480]

16. But Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, left certain of the poor of the land for vinedressers and for husbandmen.

16. De pauperibus vero terrae reliquit Nebuzaradan magister militurn vinitores et agricolas.

17. Also the pillars of brass that were in the house of the LORD, and the bases, and the brasen sea that was in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans brake, and carried all the brass of them to Babylon.

17. Et columnas aereas quae erant in domo Jehovae, et bases et mare aereum quod erat in domo Jehovae confregerunt Chaldaei, et detulerunt omne aes eorum Babylonem.

18. The caldrons also, and the shovels, and the snuffers, and the bowls, and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass wherewith they ministered, took they away.

18. Lebetes quoque et scopas et psalteria et pelves et cochlearia et omnia vasa aerea quibus ministrabant, tulerunt.

19. And the basons, and the firepans, and the bowls, and the caldrons, and the candlesticks, and the spoons, and the cups; that which was of gold in gold, and that which was of silver in silver, took the caprain of the guard away.

19. Et hydrias et thuribula et pelves et ollas et candelabra, et mortariola et cyathos, quae aurea, aurea, et quae argentea, argentea, [481] tulit magister militum.

20. The two pillars, one sea, and twelve brasen bulls that were under the bases, which king Solomon had made in the house of the LORD: the brass of all these vessels was without weight.

20. Columnas duas, mare unum, et boves duodecim aereos, qui erant sub basibus quas fecerat rex Solomo in domo Jehovae, non erat pondus, aeris eorum omnium

[479] The literal rendering is, “even every great house burnt he with fire.” This clause qualifies the former one. — Ed.

[480] Though in the parallel passages in Jeremiah 39:9, and in 2 Kings 25:11, the words, “Some of the poor of the people,” ar3e not found, yet the Vulg., the Syr., and the Targ., retain them here, and they are found in all the MSS. except one. Some of the poor of the city were evidently left, as well as some of the poor of the land. In the following words, the Vulg. for the most part is followed, which is not correct: the words should be, “et reliquum populum,” and, “et reliquias multitudinis.” And the past words should be, “even the remnant (or remainder) of the multitude,” that is, of the people that formerly inhabited the city. See Jeremiah 39:9. — Ed.

[481] “Which gold, gold, and which silver, silver:” {,אשר ``which,'' repeated, may be rendered here, ``some;'' and the repetition of ``gold,'' and of ``silver,'' is the same as to say, that some of the vessels were pure gold, and that some were pure silver: then the version would be this, ``some gold of gold,'' i.e., pure gold, ``and some silver of silver,'' i.e., pure silver, there being no mixture in either. --- Ed

(nempe) vasorum istorum.

21. And concerning the pillars, the height of one pillar was eighteen cubits; and a fillet of twelve cubits did compass it; and the thickness thereof was four fingers; it was hollow.

21. Quod ad columnas, octodecim cubitorum erat altitudo columnae unius, et filum duodecim cubitortum circuibat eam, cujus crassitudo (quoe) erat quatuor digitorum; (erat) vacua.

22. And the chapiter of brass was upon it; and the height of one chapiter was five cubits, with network and pomegranates upon the chapiters round about, all of brass. The second pillar also and the pomegranates were like unto these.

22. Capitellum autem quod erat super earn aereum; altitudo vero capitelli unius, quinque cubitorum erat, et reticulum, et malogranata super capitellum per circuiturn, omnia aerea et similia erant columnae secundae et malogranata.

23. And there were ninety and six pomegranates on a side; and all the pomegranates upon the network were an hundred round about.

23. Fuerunt autem malogranata nonaginta et sex ad plagam (unam) onmia malogranata, centum super reticulum per circuitum.

24. And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah the second priest, and the three keepers of the door:

24. Tulit quoque magister militurn Seraiah sacerdotem primum, et Sephaniah sacerdotem secundum, et tres custodes liminis.

25. He took also out of the city an eunuch, which had the charge of the men of war; and seven men of them that were near the king's person, which were found in the city; and the principal scribe of the host, who mustered the people of the land; and threescore men of the people of the land, that were found in the midst of the city.

25. Et de urbe tulit eunuchum unum, qui erat praepositus super viros bellatores, et septem viros ex iis qui videbant faciem regis, qui inventi sunt in urbe, et scribam principem militiae, qui colligebat ad militiam populum terrae, et sexaginta viros de populo terrae, qui inventi sunt in medio urbis.

26. So Nebuzaradan, the captain of the guard took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon to Riblah.

26. Tulit, inquam, cos Nebuzaradan magister militum, et deduxit eos ad regem Babylonis in Riblatha:

27. And the king of Babylon smote them, and put them to death in Riblah in the land of Hamath. Thus Judah was carried away captive out of his own land.

27. Et percussit eos rex Babylonis, et interfecit eos in Riblatha in terra Chamath; et translatus est Jehudah de terra sua.

28. This is the people whom Nebuchadrezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year three thousand Jews and three and twenty:

28. Iste est populus quem transferre fecit Nabuchadrezer, anno septimo, Judaeos tria millia et viginti tres.

29. In the eighteenth year of Nebuchadrezzar he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred thirty and two persons:

29. Anno decimo octavo Nabuchadrezer transferre fecit de Jerusalem animas octingentas triginta duas.

30. In the three and twentieth year of Nebuchadrezzar Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred forty and five persons: all the persons were four thousand and six hundred.

30. Anno tertio et vigesimo Nabuchadrezer, transferre fecit Nelmzar-adan magister militum, Judaeorum animus septingentas quadraginta quinque; omnes animae quatuor millia et sexcentae. [482]

31. And it came to pass in the seven and thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the five and twentieth day of the month, that Evilmerodach king of Babylon in the first year of his reign lifted up the head of Jehoiachin king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison,

31. Fuit autem tricesimo septimo anno transmigrationis Jehoiakin regis Jehudah, duodecimo mense, vicesima quinta mensis, elevavit Evil-merodach rex Babylonis, anno regni sui, caput Jehoiakin regis Jehudah, et eduxit eum de domo carceris;

32. And spake kindly unto him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon,

32. Loquutusque est eum eo bolla, et posuit thronum ejus super thronum regum, qui erant secum in Babylone;

33. And changed his prison garments: and he did continually eat bread before him all the days of his life.

33. Et mutavit vestimenta carceris ejus, et comedebat panem coram eo semper omnibus diebus vitae suae.

34. And for his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life.

34. Et portio ejus, portio perpetua dabatur ei a rege Babylonis, per singulos dies ejus, usque ad diem quo mortuus est, omnibus diebus vitae ejus.

Laus Deo

[482] The number here given is to be restricted to the years here specified, that is, the seventh, the eighteenth, and the twenty-third of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. We read of other captives; that is, in the third year of Jehoiakim's reign, (Daniel 1:1) which was the first of Nebuchadnezzar; and in the eighth year of his reign, (2 Kings 24:12) when Jehoiachin was taken prisoner, and with him not less than ten thousand people, (2 Kings 24:14.) We have no account of the number in the first captivity, when Daniel was taken to Babylon. The largest number in the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, even ten thousand. The amount of three captivities mentioned here, the last of which must have been after the murder of Gedaliah, is four thousand six hundred. All these being men, and of full age, there must have been many women and children. It has been thought that all, taken captive all these times, could not have been less than fifty thousand. — Ed.

Commentary on Lamentations

Calvin's Preface to Lamentations

PRELECTIONS OF JOHN CALVIN

ON

THE LAMENTATIONS OF JEREMIAH

PREFACE

I undertake now to explain The Lamentations of Jeremiah. We must inquire when the Book was composed by the Prophet, and also what was the object of the author. Grossly mistaken was Jerome, who thought that it is the Elegy which Jeremiah composed on the death of Josiah; for we see nothing here that is suitable to that event. There is indeed mention made in one place of a king, but what is said there cannot be applied to Josiah; for he was never driven into exile, but was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers. From the whole contents of the Book we may justly conclude, that it was written after the city was destroyed, and the people led into exile.

Some think that Jeremiah, before this calamity happened, historically described it, and that he thus prophesied of what was future and yet unknown. But this is by no means probable; for Jeremiah here sets before the eyes of all, those things which they knew as facts; and we shall easily discover that his manner of stating things is wholly different from that used in prophetic writings. There is, then, no doubt but that Jeremiah, after the city was destroyed and the Temple burnt, bewailed the miserable state of his own nation, not after the manner of heathens, but that he might shew that even in so disastrous a state of things some benefit might be derived from what he says. And this is what ought to be especially noticed; for except we bear this in mind, the Book will lose its peculiar interest, but if we direct our minds to that desolation, which wholly dejected not only the people in general, but also the Prophet himself, so that he lost all hope, we may surely hence derive no small benefit. It is an easy thing to extol in high terms the favor of God in prosperity, and also to exhort those who have reasons to hope well to entertain confidence, and to bring forward God's promises, that the minds of the godly may recumb on them; but when

things are in a state of despair, and God seems to have forsaken his Church, since prophecy still remains in its force, and God appears as stretching forth his hand to the miserable, and to such as are almost in a hopeless state, we hence derive much benefit, and this is the chief use of what is taught here. But. we see that Jeremiah, when the kingdom had fallen, when the king with all his children was exposed to extreme disgrace, when in short the covenant of God seemed wholly abolished, still continued to discharge his office, which he certainly did not do in vain.

When, therefore, he understood that his teaching would not be without fruit, he was thus induced to speak first of God's judgments; secondly, to exhort the people to repentance; thirdly, to encourage them to hope; and lastly, to open the door for prayer to God, so that the people in their extremities might venture to flee to God's mercy; which could not have been done without faith.

We now in a measure understand for what purpose this Book was written by Jeremiah: his object was to shew that though nothing in the land appeared but desolation, and the Temple being destroyed, the Covenant of God appeared as made void, and thus all hope of salvation had been cut off, yet hope still remained, provided the people sought God in true repentance and faith; and he thus proceeded in the course of his calling, and made it evident that his doctrine would not be without benefit.

He indeed bewails, as I have said, the extreme calamity of his people; but he mingles with his lamentations the doctrine of repentance and faith' For, on the one hand, he shews that the people suffered a just punishment for the many iniquities, of which they could not have been healed; and then, on the other hand, he gives them some intimations of God's mercy, that in death itself the Jews might seek life, nay, that in the lowest depths they might know that God would be propitious to them. He at length by his own example stimulates them to pray; but prayer is founded on faith. It then follows, that Jeremiah, when the people had become wholly alienated from the worship of God, yet spent his labor in collecting together the remnant. Though, then, the whole Church was not only in the greatest disorder, but also reduced as it were almost to nothing, yet Jeremiah constructed some sort of building out of the ruins. This is the substance of this Book.

The Greek Translators call this Book {Θρήνους}, Lamentations, and very properly, as also the Hebrews call it {קינוה}, kinut; though the common name or title is {אכה}, aike, from the first word in it. But when they wish to express what the Book contains, they call it {קינות}, kinut, Lamentations.

Let us now proceed to the words; for what I have now briefly touched upon, can be more fully explained as we go on.

Lamentations 1

CHAPTER 1

Lecture First.

Lamentations 1:1

1. 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!

1. Quomodo sedet solitaria civitas, quae abundavit populo! facta est tanquam vidua, quae magna fuit in gentibus! Quae dominataest in provinciis, redacta est ad tributum!

The Prophet could not sufficiently express the greatness of the calamity, except by expressing his astonishment. He then assumes the person of one who on seeing something new and unexpected is filled with amazement. It was indeed a thing incredible; for as it was a place chosen for God to dwell in, and as the city Jerusalem was not only the royal throne of God, but also as it were his earthly sanctuary, the city might have been thought exempted from all danger. Since it had been said,

``Here is my rest for ever, here will I dwell,''
(Psalm 132:14,)

God seemed to have raised that city above the clouds, and to have rendered it free from all earthly changes. We indeed know that there is nothing fixed and certain in the world, and that the greatest empires have been reduced to nothing; but, the state of Jerusalem did not depend on human protection, nor on the extent of its dominion, nor on the abundance of men, nor on any other defenses whatever, but it was founded by a celestial decree, by the promise of God, which is not subject to any mutations. When, therefore, the city fell, uprooted from its foundations, so that nothing remained, when the Temple was disgracefully plundered and then burnt by enemies, and further, when the king was driven into exile, his children slain in his presence, and also the princes, and when the people were scattered here and there,

exposed to every contumely and reproach, was it not, a horrible and monstrous thing?

It was not, then, without reason that the Prophet exclaimed, How! for no one could have ever thought that such a thing would have happened; and then, after the event, no one with a calm mind could have looked on such a spectacle, for innumerable temptations must have come to their minds; and this thought especially must have upset the faith of all --- ``What does God mean? How is it that, he has promised that this city would be perpetual? and now there is no appearance of a city, and no hope of restoration in future.'' As, then, this so sad a spectacle might not only disturb pious minds, but also upset them and sink them in the depths of despair, the Prophet exclaims, How! and then says, How sits the city solitary, which had much people! Here, by a comparison, he amplifies the indignity of the fact; for, on the one hand, he refers to the flourishing state of Jerusalem before the calamity, and, on the other hand, he shews how the place had in a manner been turned into darkness. For this change, as I have said, was as though the sun had fallen from heaven; for the sun has no firmer standing in heaven than Jerusalem had on earth, since its preservation was connected with the eternal truth of God. He then says that this city had many people, but that now it was sitting solitary. The verb to sit, is taken in Hebrew in a good and in a bad sense. Kings are said to sit on their thrones; but to sit means sometimes to lie prostrate, as we have before seen in many places. Then he says that Jerusalem was lying solitary, because it was desolate and forsaken, though it had before a vast number of people.

He adds, How is she become, etc.; for the word how, {אכה}, aike, ought to be repeated, and applied to both clauses. How, then, is she become as a widow, who was great among the nations! [483] He says that Jerusalem had not only been full of citizens, but had also extended its power through many nations; for it is well known that many contiguous nations were tributary to it under David and Solomon. And to the same purpose is what follows, She who ruled among provinces is become tributary! that is, is become subject to a tribute. This phrase is taken from Deuteronomy 28, for the prophets were wont freely to borrow expressions from Moses, that chief teacher and prophet, as we shall presently see again.

We now then see the meaning of the Prophet. He wonders at the destruction of the city Jerusalem, and regarded it as a prodigy, which not only disturbed the minds of men, but in a manner confounded them. And by this mode of speaking he shews something of human infirmity; for they must be void of all feeling who are not seized with amazement at such a mournful sight. The Prophet then spoke not only according to his own feelings, but also according to those of all others; and he deplored that calamity as it were in the person of all. But he will hereafter apply a remedy to this astonishment For when we thus exaggerate evils, we at the same time sharpen our grief; and thus it happens that we at length become overwhelmed

[483] The word is not repeated in the early Versions, nor by Blayney and Henderson. The word {,{איכה means properly, ``Whence thus?'' and it may be rendered, ``How is this?'' and the passage would be more emphatic, --- 1. How is this? alone sits the city, that was full of people! Like a widow is she that was great among nations! A princess among provinces is under tribute! 2. Weeping she weeps in the night, and her tear on her cheek! None to her a comforter of all her lovers! All her friends have deceived her, they are become her enemies! These were the various things which created astonishment in the Prophet. --- Ed.

with despair; and despair kindles rage, so that men clamor against God. But the Prophet so mourned, and was in such a way amazed, that he did not yet indulge his grief nor cherish his amazement; but as we shall see, he restrained himself, lest the excess of his feelings should carry him beyond due bounds. It then follows, ---

Lamentations 1:2

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.

2. Plorando ploravit noctu, et lachrymae ejus super genas ejus, non est ei consolator ex omnibus amicis ejus, et omnes socii ejus Perfide egerunt cum ea, fuerunt illi inimici.

Jeremiah still pursues the same subject, for he could not have spoken briefly and in a few words of things so bitter and mournful; and he seems to have felt deeply the ruin of his own country. And when we wish to penetrate into the hearts of those whose sorrow we desire to alleviate, it is necessary that they should understand that we sympathize with them. For when any one stronger than another seeks to mitigate another's grief, he will be disregarded if what he adduces seems to proceed from an unfeeling barbarity. Had, then, Jeremiah spoken as it were in contempt., he could have hardly hoped for any fruit from his teaching, for the Jews would have thought him void of all human feelings. This, then, is the reason why he bewails, as one of the people, the calamity of the city. He did not, however, dissemble in any degree in the history he related; but we know that God's servants, while they speak in earnest, do not yet forget prudence; for they regard in this respect what is useful; and their doctrine ought in a manner to be so regulated as to produce effect on the hearers.

He then says that the weeping of Jerusalem was continual; for he says first, Weeping she wept, and then, in the night; by which words he means that there was no intermission. For the night is given us for rest, and God intends some relaxation to men by the interchange of nights and days. When, therefore, the Prophet says that Jerusalem, weeping, wept in the night, he intimates that her sorrow, as I have stated, was continual. Then he adds, her tears are on her cheeks. Some render it jaws, but improperly; the word {לחי}, lachi, indeed means a jaw, but it is to be taken for cheeks, or cheek-bones. Then he means that tears were so profuse as to wet the whole face. It is possible in weeping to restrain tears; but when they flow over the whole face and cover the cheeks, it is an evidence of great mourning. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet says that tears were on her cheeks; for he wished to shew that tears were profusely shed.

He says further, She has no comforter. And this circumstance ought to be noticed, for nothing is more seasonable in grief than to have friends near us to shew us kindness, to be partakers of sorrow, and to apply the consolations which may be had. But when no one feels for us in our evils, our sorrow is much more increased. The Prophet then says that there was no one seeking to soothe the griefs of Jerusalem. He adds, of all thy friends. Had Jerusalem been always forsaken, she could have borne it better when no comforter was present. For we see that miserable men are not thus soft and tender when very grievous calamities happen to them; they do

not look here and there for friends to come to them, and why? because they have always been disregarded. It is, then, nothing new to them, even in the greatest adversities, to have no one to shew them any tokens of kindness. But when they who have had many friends, and thought that they would be always ready to bring them aid --- when they see themselves forsaken, their sorrow becomes much more grievous. This, then, is what the Prophet means in saying, that of many friends there were none to comfort Jerusalem in her miseries.

There is not yet a doubt but that he indirectly reproved Jerusalem; and by {אהבים}, aebim, he understood lovers, as we have seen in other places; for as they thought themselves safe by means of ungodly treaties, the prophets say that they were like harlots who everywhere prostitute themselves and make gain by their lasciviousness, and allure lovers on every side. It was, therefore, right of the Prophet to remind the Jews in this place of that wickedness, even that they had conciliated at one time the Egyptians, at another, the Assyrians, like an impudent woman, who is not satisfied with her own husband, but draws lovers from all quarters. However this may be, he no doubt understands by friends those who confederated with them; and who were these? even those with whom the Jews had connected themselves, having disregarded God; for they had been sufficiently warned by the prophets not to form connections with the heathens. But, at. the same time, Jeremiah sets forth the atrocity of the thing by saying that there was none of all her friends a comforter to Jerusalem, because all her friends had acted perfidiously. It follows, ---

Lamentations 1:3

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.

3. Migravit (tanquam in exilium) Jehudah prae magnitudine servitutis; ipsa sedet in gentibus, (ad verbum, sedens in gentibus,) non invenit requiem, (vel, in praesenti tempore, non invenit;) omnes apprehensores ejus apprehenderunt eam inter angustias.

Interpreters apply this, but in my view improperly, to the captivity of the people; on the contrary, the Prophet means that the Jews had been scattered and sought refuges when oppressed, as they were often, by the tyranny of their enemies, and then by degrees he advances to their exile; for he could not have said all things at the same time. Let, then, the order in which he speaks be observed: before he bewails their exile, he says that Judah had been scattered; for many, fleeing the cruelty of enemies, went into voluntary exile. We have before seen that many concealed themselves with the Moabites; nor is there a doubt but that many went into Egypt: in short, there was no country in which some of the Jews were not fugitives.

The real meaning, then, of the Prophet here is, that the Jews had migrated, that is, had left their own country and fled to other countries, because they were subjected to miseries and cruel servitude.

Some take the words in a passive sense, even that Judah migrated, because they had inhumanly oppressed their servants. But I suspect what has led them astray, they thought that exile is meant here; and then one mistake produces another; for it

would have been absurd to say, that the Jews had migrated into exile on account of affliction, and had migrated willingly; for we know that they were violently driven by the Chaldeans. They did not, then, willingly migrate. When these two things could not be connected, they thought that the cruelty of the Jews is what is referred to, which they had exercised towards their own brethren. But the migration of which the Prophet speaks is improperly applied, as I have said, to the captivity; but on the contrary, he means those who had removed into different parts of the world, because this was more tolerable than their condition in their own country. And we hence learn how severely they had been harassed by the Chaldeans, for they had willingly fled away, though, as we know, exile is hard. We then conclude that it was a barbarous and a violent oppression, since the Prophet says, that the Jews thus went into exile of their own accord, and sought hiding-places either in Egypt or in the land of Moab, or among other neighboring nations. [484]

He afterwards adds another evil, that they never found rest; and lastly, that they had been taken by their enemies between straits, so that no escape was possible. It must have been a sad condition for the people to live in a foreign land; for we know that such a precarious life differs but little from death; and there were no contiguous nations by whom the Jews were not hated. When they then fled to such people, it was no small evil. But when they had nowhere a quiet abode, the indignity was still greater, and this is what the Prophet now refers to. But when we flee and tremblingly turn here and there, it is one of the greatest of evils to fall into the hands of enemies, and to be taken by them when we are enclosed as it were between two walls, or in a narrow passage, as some explain the word. It follows, ---

Lamentations 1:4

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.

4. Viae Sion lugentes a non venientibus (ad verbum; quia non sint qui veniant) ad solennitatem; omnes portae ejus solitariae (vastatae, {שוממין};) sacerdotes ejus plorantes, virgines ejus afflictae, et ipsa amaritudo ei (hoc est, ipsa in amaritudine, ut vertit Hieronymus

Jeremiah refers here to another cause of sorrow, that the worship of God had ceased, it having been interrupted; nay, it seemed to have become extinct for ever. He then says that the ways of Sion mourned, because none came to the feasts. The words are figurative, for we know that feelings belong not to ways; but the Prophet ascribes feeling to what is inanimate. And this sort of personification is

[484] Blayney and Horsley agree in this view; but Gataker, Henry, and Henderson take the previous view, that is, that Judah went to exile on account of the oppression they practiced, and the multiplied servitude they exacted, especially the servitude or slavery to which servants were subjected, as recorded in Jeremiah 34. What confirms this view is the word "Judah," which, as it implies the greater part, could not be applied to the comparatively few who voluntarily migrated. 3. Removed is Judah for oppression and for much servitude; She dwells among nations without finding rest; All her pursuers seized her in the straits. The Targum paraphrases "oppression" by mentioning orphans and widows, and "servitude," by referring to what servants were subjected to, as related in Jeremiah 34. These were sins for which the Jews had often been threatened with banishment. "Pursuers" rather than "persecutors;" and to be "seized in (or, between) the straits," is, as Lowth says, a metaphor taken from hunters, who drive the game to narrow places, from which there is no escape. Houbiqant proposes to connect "oppression and servitude" with the following words, and not with the preceding, — Removed is Judah; for oppression and for much servitude, She dwells among the nations without finding rest. — Ed.

more emphatical than if he had introduced the people as mourning. But when the Jews saw that God's worship had fallen, it was more grievous than to find themselves bereaved of children or of wives, or plundered of all their goods; for the more precious God's worship was to them, and the more religion was thought of, in which consisted the eternal salvation of their souls, the more severe and mournful was it to see the Church, so scattered, that God could no longer be worshipped and invoked.

It is indeed true that God's worship was not tied to ceremonies; for Daniel never ceased to pray, and he was heard no less in his exile than if he came to the sacrifices with great solemnity to make an offering in the Temple. This is no doubt true; but as God had not in vain instituted these duties and rites of religion, the Prophet exhibits the thing itself by its symbols. As, then, feasts were testimonies of God's grace, it was the same as though the Jews were called together by a standard being lifted up, and as though God appeared in the midst of them. Hence the Prophet, referring to these external symbols, shews that the worship of God had in a manner ceased.

Her gates are solitary, or desolate; her priests are in mourning, her virgins in afflictions; she is in bitterness. [485] Now this passage reminds us, that when God afflicts his Church, however grievous it may be to see innocent men slain, blood shed promiscuously, the sexes, men and women, killed indiscriminately; and though it be a sad spectacle to see houses robbed and plundered, fields laid waste, and al! things in a confusion, yet when all these things are compared with the abolition of God's worship, this passage reminds us that all these things ought to appear light to us. Though David greatly deplored his condition, because he was banished from the Temple, and did not as usual lead thither the assembly, when he was not the only one ejected from the sanctuary of God; yet when the sanctuary itself was destroyed, together with the altar, when there were no sacrifices, no thanksgiving, no praises; in short, no prayer, it was surely much more bitter.

This lamentation of the Prophet ought then to be carefully noticed, when he says, that the ways of Sion mourned, that no one went up to the feasts. What follows I pass over; I shall hereafter dwell more on these things when we advance towards the end of the narrative.

Lamentations 1:5

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.

5. Fuerunt inimici ejus in caput; hostes ejus feliciter egerunt (fuerunt in pace, {ושלו};) quia Jehova afflixit eam super magnitude scelerum, ejus; parvuli ejus the enemy. Profecti sunt in exilium coram adversario.

He first says that her enemies had become the head; and by this expression he doubtless means power; and this way of speaking he borrowed from Moses, for these are his words,

``Thou shalt be the head and not the tail,
in a high place, not obscure.'' (Deuteronomy 28:13.)

[485] Participles are used throughout this verse, which express the present state of things, — The ways of Sion are mourning, for none are coming to the feasts; All her gates are made desolate, her priests are sighing; Her virgins are afflicted, and she, bitterness is to her. — Ed.

He then says, that enemies were the head, that is, ruled over them. And the opposite of that is to be understood, even that they had become the tail, that is, were under the feet as it were of their enemies. And he says that her enemies had acted successfully, even because Jehovah had afflicted her. He here laments after the common practice, as ungodly men are wont to do; but he mixes instruction with his mourning, and shews that God, in a state of things so turbulent and confused, appeared as a righteous judge. He then recalled them to the consideration of God's hand, when he said that her enemies had acted successfully, because God had afflicted her. Jerome renders the words, ``because Jehovah hath spoken.'' He derives the verb from {הגה}, ege, which means to speak or to meditate. But this is an evident mistake, as we shall find another presently in this very chapter. There is no doubt but that the Prophet intimates that the cause of all evils was, that God had afflicted her, even on account of the greatness of her impieties, or of her sins. He now then begins to shew that there is no reason why the Jews should be swallowed up with grief and despair, if only they considered whence their evils proceeded. He thus begins to call their attention to God's judgment. This indeed of itself would not have been sufficient; but he afterwards points out a fruitful source of consolation. But we shall see these things mentioned in their due order.

Prayer

Grant, Almighty God, that as the deformity of thy Church at this day is sufficient to dishearten us all, we may learn to look to thine hand, and know that the reward of our sins is rendered to us, and that we may not doubt but that thou wilt be our physician to heal our wound, provided we flee to thy mercy; and do thou so retain us in the assurance of thy goodness and paternal care, that we may not hesitate, even in extreme evils, to call on thee in the name of thine only-begotten Son, until we shall find by experience that never in vain are the prayers of those, who, relying on thy promises, patiently look for a remedy from thee alone, even in extreme evils, and also in death itself. --- Amen.

Lecture Second

We began yesterday to explain the passage where the Prophet says, that the enemies of Jerusalem had become the head and had been successful. It was a trial which must have grievously assailed the minds of the faithful, when they saw their enemies having fortune, as they commonly say, as it were in their own hand; for it appeared as though God shewed himself favorable to them. Hence the Prophet assigns the reason, lest the faithful should fall off from religion and the fear of God, and says that the whole of this proceeded from the just vengeance of God, it being his purpose to afflict his own Church; and he states not this alone, but adds, on account of the greatness of her iniquities For ungodly men sometimes acknowledge that they have to do with God, but yet they murmur and think that God is unjust and cruel. Hence the Prophet not only taught the Jews that God was the author of the calamities which had happened, but at, the same time reminded them that they were worthy of such a reward, not only because they had transgressed, but because they had added sins to sins; for this is what he means by the greatness of iniquities. But he will presently repeat this sentence and enlarge upon it: it is then enough now

to state his object. It was for this cause, then, as he says, that her little ones went into captivity before the adversary.

It was, indeed, an indignity, calculated to embitter the minds of the faithful, to see not only their young men but also infants so cruelly treated. For men always think that they have some just cause to contend with God, and especially when the case of infants is brought forward; who, then, is not disposed to say that God's vengeance exceeds its due limits? ``If his purpose be,'' say they, ``to punish men for their wickedness, why does he not restrain his wrath as to the innocent? for how have miserable infants sinned?'' But the Prophet here checks such audacity, and says that God had just reasons for extending his vengeance even to the little ones. [486] It now follows, ---

Lamentations 1:6

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.

6. Et egressus est a filia Sion omnis decor ejus; fuerunt principes ejus tanquam cervi qui non inveniunt pascuum: et profecti sunt abaque Virtute coram persequutore.

He continues the same subject. He says here that the daughter of Sion was denuded of all her ornaments. Now, we know what was the honor or dignity of that people; for Moses, in order to set forth the greatness of God's grace, exclaims,

``What nation so illustrious under heaven!''
(Deuteronomy 4:7.)

As, then, the singular gifts of God had been conferred on that people, it was a very sad spectacle to see that city, which once possessed the highest glory, robbed of all its honor and covered with disgrace, as we shall hereafter see. He then says that all her glory was taken away from the daughter of Sion.

Now, there is no need to enumerate all the kinds of honor or glory which belonged to the city Jerusalem. But it may be said first, that God had chosen there a habitation for himself; and then a sacerdotal kingdom was there, --- the people were holy to God --- they were his heritage, --- there God had deposited his covenant, --- he deemed all the Jews his children, and his will was that they should in return count him as their Father. As, then, they had been enriched with so many ornaments and so superior, it is no wonder that the Prophet deplored the state of the city when stripped of all its glory.

He then adds, that her princes were like famished harts for harts, as they are by nature swift, when pressed by want run as though they were flying. Since then the swiftness of that animal is so great, the Prophet says that the princes, who were wont to walk with so much gravity and to carry the appearance of great authority, had become swift, like harts oppressed with hunger; for they also labored under the

[486] 5. Become have her oppressors the head, Her enemies have prospered; For Jehovah has afflicted her For the number of her transgressions; Her children are gone into captivity Before the face of the oppressor. The word {{צר is not an'' adversary,'' but an oppressor, one who straitens and oppresses another. --- Ed.

want of everything. [487] He adds that at length they went away, that is, they fled before their pursuers without strength. He intimates by these words that they dared not to contend with their enemies, but that they were so frightened that they fled, and thus proved that they were wholly disheartened and lifeless. It follows, ---

Lamentations 1:7

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.

7. Recordata est Jerusalem diebus afflictionis suae et penuriae suae, omnium desiderabilium suorum quae fuerunt a diebus antiquis, cum caderet populus ejus in manu hostis et nullus auxiliator ei: viderunt hostes, subsannarunt (vel, riserunt) super sabbatio (vel, cessatione) ejus.

He confirms the former verse when he says, that Jerusalem remembered her desirable things when she was afflicted by God's hand, and reduced to extreme want. And he in-intimates by these words, that when Jerusalem was in its splendor, it did not sufficiently consider the blessings of God; for the despisers of God cram themselves with whatever flows from his bounty, and yet do not acknowledge him; for ingratitude is like an abyss which absorbs all the fullness of God's blessings. Then the Prophet intimates that when Jerusalem flourished in wealth and in abundance of all things, when it was adorned with singular gifts, she became as it were inebriated, and never considered as she ought to have done, the benefits which God had bestowed on her. And now, when she was reduced to want and surrounded with extreme miseries, she remembered her desirable things, even the glory before mentioned; for by desirable things he means those gifts in which Jerusalem excelled as long as God manifested himself as a bountiful Father towards it.

I wonder how all have given this version, ``Jerusalem remembered the days,'' etc. Some rightly explain the passage, but all agree in giving a wrong version. But the meaning is sufficiently evident, Jerusalem remembered her desirable things in the days of her affliction and of her want, or of her groaning, or of her transmigration; for some derive the word from {רוד}, rud, which means to complain, or to migrate. Hence they render it ``exile,'' or migration. But others render it ``complaint.'' Others, again, derive it from {מרד}, mered, which sometimes means to fail, and render it ``want,'' or indigence. Why some have translated it ``iniquities'' I know not, and there is no reason for such a version. I do not approve of ``complaint;'' exile or want is the best word. [488]

The days of affliction he more clearly expresses, when he says, When the people fell into the hand of the enemy, and there was no helper. We now see what

[487] The idea here is somewhat different: the princes are compared to harts reduced and enfeebled by famine, so that they were driven by their enemies like a herd of tame cattle. — Ed.

[488] The versions and the Targ. are evidently wrong here, and are not consistent with one another. There is no meaning except {{ב be considered as understood before ,{ימי} ``days.'' The only difference among critics is about the meaning of .{מרוד} There is no different reading. It is rendered ``rejections --- {ἀπωσμῶν},'' by the Sept., ``prevarication'' by the Vulg., and ``punishment'' by the Syr Parkhurst and Blayney derive it from ,{ירד} to come down, to descend. It means the descending or abasement's to which Jerusalem had been subjected, and has the same meaning in Lamentations 3:19. ``In the days of her affliction and of her abasement's.'' --- Ed

the Prophet means, even that Jerusalem was as it were roused from her lethargy when God afflicted her. For as the drunken, after being satiated, so sleep in their excess that they know and feel nothing, but seem half dead; so prosperity inebriated Jerusalem for a long time; but being at length awakened, she perceived whence she had fallen. As long, then, as she stood in her high place of honor, she did not consider God's indulgence towards her; but after she was stripped of all her blessings, and became deeply afflicted, she then remembered her desirable things, that is, she at length began to perceive what she had lost, because she had fallen from the grace of God.

We may hence gather a useful doctrine; for what the Prophet relates of Jerusalem is seen almost in all mankind; but we must beware lest this should be true of us. For God has not only in a common manner dealt liberally hitherto with us, but he has also been pleased to favor us with evidences of favor even more than paternal; he has separated us from the unbelieving, and has bestowed on us many of his blessings. Let us now, then, take heed lest we become stupid while God deals liberally with us; but, on the contrary, let us learn to appreciate the blessings of God, and consider the end for which they have been given us, otherwise what is said here of Jerusalem will happen to us; for being too late awakened, we shall know that we were happy when God shewed himself a father to us. We see the same thing exemplified in Adam the first man; for though God adorned him with excellent gifts, yet being not content with his lot, he wished to exalt himself beyond due limits; after he fell and was reduced to extreme want, he then began to know what he had previously been, and what he had become through his fall. (Genesis 1:26, 27; 3:6,7.) But as this testimony of the Prophet is peculiarly suitable to the Church, let us know that we are warned by the example of Jerusalem, so that when God shews to us his bounty, his gifts ought as they deserve, to be valued, lest when too late we shall at length begin to acknowledge how desirable had been our previous condition. Then, in a word, Jeremiah here reproves the stupidity of the people, who did not know how desirable was their state, until they were deprived and plundered of all their blessings. He also says, from the days of old. By these words he probably intimates that the course of God's kindness had been perpetual; for God had not for a short time been bountiful to that people, but had shewed them favors successively and continually.

When her people fell, etc. It was a heavier misery, because they had so long flourished. It is added, Seen, her have enemies, they laughed at her Sabbath, or at her cessation, which I do not dislike. But they who render it ``leisure,'' or idleness, either pervert or too much obscure the meaning of the Prophet. In the word ``cessation,'' there is an irony, for the enemies did not simply laugh at cessation, but did so in mockery, as they took this opportunity to taunt them for their religion. We know that the Sabbaths of the Jews were always hated by the heathens; and they were thereby subjected to many reproaches; for by way of reproach they called the Jews Sabbatharians. And when they wished ignominiously to traduce the whole service of God, as under the law, they named it ``Sabbaths.'' There is, then, no doubt but that the heathens reproachfully taunted the Jews because they observed the Sabbath; ``See, now is the time to worship God.'' And we also see that God upbraided the

Jews in a similar way by saying,

``Until the land shall enjoy its Sabbaths.'' (Leviticus 26:43.)

For when the Jews had the opportunity and leisure (when no enemies molested them) to observe the worship of God, they contemptuously profaned the Sabbaths. As, then, God's worship had been so disgracefully neglected by them, God said, ``The land itself shall in your stead keep the Sabbath;'' how? it shall not be ploughed, it shall not bring forth fruit. (Leviticus 26:34, 35.) That cessation was called by God Sabbath, but not without a taunt; for he cuttingly reproved the Jews for having violated the Sabbaths, as was also done by Jeremiah, (Jeremiah 17:22, 27.) [489]

It then appears to me probable that taunts were cast by enemies against the Jews, that they might now have a long and a continual Sabbath, while the city was deserted and no one dwelt there. For it would have been cold and unmeaning to say that the enemies laughed at the cessation of it. The Prophet would have no doubt used a different word, if his purpose had been to point out the blasphemy of enemies as to God's worship. The enemies then saw and laughed at her cessation; but this cessation they called by way of reproach Sabbatharian. It follows, ---

Lamentations 1:8

8. Jerusalem hath grievously sinned; therefore she is removed: all that honoured her despise her, because they have seen her nakedness: yea, she sigheth, and turneth backward.

8. Peccatum peccavit Jerusalem (hoc est, scelerate egit;) proterea in migrationem (vel, commotionem) facta est (hoc est, Reddita fuit instabilis;) omnes qui honore eam persequebantur, spreverunt eam, quia viderunt turpitudinem (vel, foeditatem) ejus; etiam ipsa gemens, et conversa est retrorsum.

Here the Prophet expresses more clearly and strongly what he had briefly referred to, even that all the evil which the Jews suffered proceeded from God's vengeance, and that they were worthy of such a punishment, because they had not lightly offended, but had heaped up for themselves a dreadful judgment, since they had in all manner of ways abandoned themselves to impiety. This is the substance of what is said. We hence learn that the Prophet did not compose this song to lament the calamity of his own country as heathens were wont to do. An example of a heathen lamentation we have in Virgil: ---

``Come is the great day and the unavoidable time
Of Dardania: we Trojans have been; Ilium has been,
And the great glory of the Teuerians: cruel Jupiter has to Argos
Transferred all things: the Danai rule in the burnt city.'' [490]

[489] There are in this verse four lines, while there are only three in all the rest; but there is no ground for supposing an interpolation, as some have thought; for it is found in every Hebrew copy and in the versions, and the Targum. As to the last word, it is rendered by the Sept., "habitation," or according to the Alexandrian copy, "emigration;" by the Vulg. "sabbaths;" and by the Syr. "sorrow." The word is nowhere found to signify the Sabbath. It is either from {,{שבה to lead captive, as Parkhurst thinks, and means captivity, emigration; or from ,{שבת} to cease, to come to an end, according to Blayney and Henderson, and may be rendered ``discontinuance,'' i.e., as a nation or a state, or ``ruin.'' But the former meaning agreeing with the Sept. is to be preferred, --- When fall did her people, and she had no helper, See her did oppressors, they laughed at her captivity. --- Ed

[490] "Venit summa dies et ineluctabile tempus Dardaniae: fuimus Troes; fuit Ilium et ingens Gloria Teucrorum: ferus omnia Jupiter Argos Transtulit: incensa Danai dominantur in urbe." Virg. AEn. 2.

He also repeats the same sentiment in other words: ---

``O country! O Ilium, the house of the gods! and the famous for war,
The camp of the Dardanidans! cruel Jupiter has to Argos
Transferred all things.'' [491]

He thus mourns the destruction of Troy; but he complains of the cruelty of God, and calls Him cruel Jupiter, because he was himself enraged, and yet the speaker was Pantheus the priest of Apollo. We hence see how the unbelieving, when they lament their own calamities, vomit forth blasphemies against. God, for they are exasperated by sorrow. Very different is the complaint of the Prophet from that of the ungodly; for when he deplores the miseries of his people, he at the same time adds that God is a righteous avenger. He does not then accuse God of cruelty or of too much rigor, but reminds the people to humble themselves before God and to confess that they justly deserved all their evils.

The unbelieving do indeed sometimes mingle some words, by which they seem to give glory to God; but they are evanescent, for they soon return to their perverseness. They are sometimes moderate, ``If thou art turned by any entreaties.'' In that case they expostulate with God:, as though he were deaf to the prayers of his servants. At length they break out into open blasphemies, ---

``After it seemed good to the gods to subvert the affairs of Asia
And the undeserved nation of Priam.'' [492] ---

They regarded the nation which had been cut off unworthy of such a punishment; they called it an undeserved nation. Now, then, we perceive what is the difference between the unbelieving and the children of God. For it is common to all to mourn in adversities; but the end of the mourning of the unbelieving is perverseness, which at length breaks out into rage, when they feel their evils, and they do not in the meantime humble themselves before God. But the faithful do not harden themselves in their mourning, but reflect on themselves and examine their own life, and of their own accord prostrate themselves before God, and willingly submit to the sentence of condemnation, and confess that God is just.

We hence now see how the calamity of the Church ought to be lamented by us, even that we are to return to this principle, that God is a just avenger, and does not punish common offenses only, but the greatest sins, and that when he reduces us to extremities, lie does so on account of the greatness of our sins, as also Daniel confessed. For it was not in few words that he declared that the people were worthy of exile and of the punishment which they suffered; but he accumulated words,

We have sinned, we have acted impiously, we have done wickedly, we have been transgressors.'' (Daniel 9:5.)

Nor was the Prophet satisfied without this enumeration, for he saw how great the impiety of the people had been, and how mad had been their obstinacy, not for a few years, but for that long time, during which they had been warned by the prophets, and yet they repented not, but always became worse and worse. Such, then, is the

[491] "O patria! O divum domus Ilium! Et inclyta bello Moenia Dardanidum! Ferus omnia Jupiter Argos Transtulit." — AEn 2.

[492] "Postquam res Asiae, Priamique everterre gentem Immeritam visum Superis." — Virg. AEn. 3.

mode of speaking adopted here.

He says that she was made a commotion, that is, that she was removed from her country. There seems to be implied a contrast between the rest which had been promised to the Jews, and a wandering and vagrant exile; for, as we have seen, the Jews had not only been banished, but they had nowhere a quiet dwelling; it was even a commotion. This may at the same time be referred to the curse of the law, because they were to be for a commotion --- for even the unbelieving shook their heads at them. But the word, {נידה}, nide, ought properly to be applied to their exile, when the Jews became unfixed and vagrant. [493] It is added, that she was despised and treated reproachfully by all who before esteemed and honored her. This also did not a little increase the grievousness of her calamity; she had been repudiated by her friends, by whom she had before been valued and honored. The reason is mentioned, because they saw her nakedness. But the word properly means turpitude or ignominy. It is at length added, that she even groaned and turned backward; that is, that she was so oppressed with grief, that there was no hope of a remedy; for to turn backward means the same as to be deprived of all hope of restoration. [494] It now follows, ---

Lamentations 1:9

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

9. Ignominia ejus in fimbriis ejus, non est recordata finis sui; et descendit mirabiliter, nemo consolator ei; vide, Jehova, afflic tionem meam, quia magnifice se effert hostis (ad verbum, magnificatus est hostis.)

He continues here, as I think, the same subject; he had said at the end of the last verse that turpitude or baseness had been seen at Jerusalem; and now he says that it was on the very fringes or skirts. The Prophet seems to allude to menstruous women who hide their uncleanness as much as they can; but. such a thing is of no avail, as nature must have its course. In short, the Prophet intimates that the Jews had become filthy in no common degree, being so afflicted that their uncleanness appeared on their skirts. This seems to be the Prophet's meaning. Interpreters think that Jeremiah speaks of the sins of the people, but they are mistaken; for I doubt not but that the reference is to their punishment. They say that filthiness was on the skirts, because the people had shamelessly prostituted themselves to all kinds of wickedness, and that they remembered not their end, because they had become altogether foolish, according to what is said in the song of Moses,

``O that they were wise, and would foresee their end?
(Deuteronomy 32 29.)

But let any one duly consider the design of the Prophet, and he will readily agree

[493] "Fluctuation," by the Sept.; "instable," by the Vulg.: "vagrant," or wandering, by the Targ.; and "horror", by the Syr. The verb means to remove; and the reference here is evidently to banishment, and not to uncleanness, as some take it, because the noun is sometimes so taken, persons being removed from society on account of uncleanness. — Ed.

[494] "To turn back" or backward, is a phrase which some regard as expressive of shame, as those who feel shame recede from the public view and hide themselves. — Ed.

with me that he speaks not of guilt, but on the contrary of punishment. [495]

The Prophet then says that the reproach of the Jews was on their skirts, because they could not hide their disgrace, For shame often makes men to hide their evils and silently to bear them, because they are unwilling to expose themselves to the mockery of their enemies. But the Prophet says that the miseries of the people could not be kept hidden, but that they appeared to all, as the case is with women subject to an overflow --- it issues forth to the extremities of their garments.

And when he says that she remembered not her end, I understand this to mean, that the Jews were so overwhelmed with despair, that they did not raise up their thoughts to God's promises; for it is no ordinary source of comfort, and what even common sense dictates to us, to take breath in extreme evils, and to extend our thoughts farther, for misery will not always oppress us --- some change for the better will happen. As then men are wont thus to sustain themselves in adversities, he says that the Jews remembered not their end; that is, they were so demented by their sorrow, that they became stupified, and entertained no hope as to the future. In short, by these words, he denotes extreme despair; for the Jews were so stupified that they could not raise up their minds to any hope.

And the reason is expressed, because they had come down wonderfully, that is, because they had been cast down in an extraordinary manner. A noun is here put instead of an adverb, and in the masculine gender, {צפלאים} pelaim; sometimes we have {פלאות}, pelaut, but in the same sense. He then says that the Jews had sunk as it were miraculously; but by a miracle he means a prodigy, the word being taken in a bad sense; then miraculously has Jerusalem come down. It hence followed that it succumbed under its miseries, so that it could not turn its thoughts to any hope, nor think of another end; but. became stupid in its miseries, as men usually become desperate, when they think that there is no deliverance for them. He repeats what he had said before, that there was no comforter

These things ought to be carefully observed, for Satan at this day uses various means to lead us to despair. In order to avert us from all confidence in the grace of God, he sets before us extreme calamities. And when sorrow lays such hold on our minds, that the hope of grace does not shine forth, from that immoderate sorrow arises impatience, which may drive us to madness. Hence it comes that we murmur, and then clamor against God. As, then, at this day Satan supplies materials to harass our minds, that we may succumb under our griefs, let us bear in mind what the Prophet says, that Jerusalem, which was then the only true Church of God in the world, was overwhelmed with so many and so great evils, that she remembered not her end. This, indeed, ought to be understood of external circumstances, for God no doubt sustained the minds of the godly, and always so mitigated their grief that they had regard to their end. But the reference is to the people in general, and also to the outward appearance of things, when the Prophet says that the Jews remembered not their end.

He now encourages them to pray, and suggests words to them, for he speaks as

[495] "She carries the marks of her sins in the greatness of her punishment," is Lowth's remark, which seems to favor this view. — Ed.

in the person of all: See, Jehovah, my affliction, for the enemy hath highly exalted himself. Though the Prophet here represents the Church, yet he exhorts them no doubt, according to the obligations of his office, to entertain good hope, and encourages them to pray, for true and earnest prayer cannot be offered without faith; for when the taste of God's grace is lost, it cannot be that we can pray from the heart; and through the promises alone it is that we can have a taste of God's paternal goodness. There is, then, no doubt but that the Prophet here promises a sure deliverance to the Jews, provided they turned to God, and believed and were fully persuaded that he would be their deliverer.

We now, then, see what is the right way of teaching, even that men are to be humbled, and that their just condemnation is to be set before them, and that they are also to be encouraged to entertain hope, and a hand is to be stretched out to them, that they may pray to God, and not hesitate in extreme evils not only to hope for but even to request aid from him. This is the order observed by the Prophet; we must learn in adversities ever to come down to ourselves, and to acknowledge our guilt; and then when we are sunk deep, we must learn to elevate our minds by faith that thence prayer may arise by which our salvation is to be attained.

One thing has escaped me; the Prophet, in order to obtain favor, says, that enemies had greatly exalted themselves. And this deserves a special notice; for what seems to occasion despair to us, ought, on the contrary, to encourage us to entertain good hope, that is, when enemies are insolent and carry themselves with great arrogance and insult us. The greater, then, is their pride and the less tolerable, with more confidence may we call on God, for the Holy Spirit has not in vain taught us this truth, that God will be propitious to us when enemies thus greatly exalt themselves, that is, when they become beyond measure proud, and immoderately indulge themselves in every kind of contempt. It follows ---

Lamentations 1:10

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.

10. Manum suam extendit hostis ad omnia desiderabilia ejus; quia vidit gentes quum ingresse sunt sanctuarium ipsius, de quibus praeceperas, ne ingrederentur in congregationem tibi (hoc est, quae tibi sacrata est.)

The Prophet again deplores the profanation of all sacred things; and this complaint, as I have said, proceeded from the bitterest sorrow; for though it was a sad thing for the faithful, to lose all their property, to wander in exile and to suffer the want of all things, yet it must have been more grievous to them to see the Temple polluted, and all religion exposed to shame. This calamity, then, the Prophet again deplores, when he says that enemies had stretched forth their hand against all desirable things. Now, by desirable things, he does not mean riches, nor anything that belongs to the condition of an earthly and fading life, but those invaluable treasures which God had deposited with the chosen people. The enemy, then, had extended his hand against the altar, against the table, against the ark of the covenant, against all the sacred vessels.

Then this indignity was increased, because Jerusalem saw the heathens entering into her sanctuary; for the pronoun is in the feminine gender. But the sanctuary of Jerusalem was God's Temple for, though properly speaking, it was alone God's sanctuary, it was yet at the same time the sanctuary of the people, because God had not caused the Temple to be built for his own benefit, but rather for the benefit of his people. What God, then, had consecrated for himself is rightly called the sanctuary of the people. He still increases the indignity, because God had forbidden the heathens to enter the sanctuary; but they had violently rushed in there. They did not, however, enter for the sake of worshipping God, for it was his command to keep them from the holy assembly; but they had by force entered for the purpose of violating the Temple, and also of abolishing the whole worship of God, and of exposing religion to all kinds of mockery. [496]

Prayer.

Grant, Almighty God, that as at this day we see thy Church miserably afflicted, we may direct our eyes so as to see our own sins, and so humble ourselves before thy throne, that we may yet cease not to, entertain hope, and in the midst of death wait for life; and may this confidence open our mouth, that we may courageously persevere in calling on thy name, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Third

Lamentations 1:11

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.

11. Totus populus ejus gementes, quae rentes panem, diderunt desiderabilia sua (hoc est, quicquid habebant pretiosum) Pro cibo ad revocandum animan: vide, Jehova, et aspice, quia facta sum vilis (aut, contempta.)

The Prophet here complains that all the citizens of Jerusalem were constantly groaning through want and famine. He first says, that all were sighing. The word ``people'' is collective, and hence he uses the plural number, {נאנחים}, nanechim. Then he says that they were all sighing; but he expresses also the reason, because they were seeking bread. To seek bread is indeed common to all; but by this word he intimates extreme want., as though he had said, that they begged their bread. He then compares them to beggars, who go about here and there to seek bread.

He says also, that they gave the most precious things for meat, to recover the soul. Here he refers more clearly to famine, for he says that in a manner they suffered want. Others render the last clause, ``to refresh the soul,'' which is not unsuitable. But the Prophet no doubt meant to denote a deficiency as to the support of life, when he said, that they gave whatever precious thing they had to restore their souls, as it were from death to life.

A prayer follows, See, Jehovah, and look, for I am become vile. We said yesterday, that the complaints which humbled the faithful, and, at the same time, raised them

[496] The verse may be thus rendered, — His hand has the oppressor expanded over all her desirable things; Indeed she saw it: nations entered her sanctuary; Though thou hast commanded this, “They shall not come to thine assembly.” “The desirable things” were sacred things, and might be so rendered. To expand the hand over them was to seize them, to take possession of them. — Ed.

to a good hope, and also opened the door to prayers, were dictated by the Spirit of God. Otherwise, when men indulge in grief, and torment themselves, they become exasperated; and then to be kindled by this irritation is a kind of madness. The Prophet, therefore, in order to moderate the intensity of sorrow, and the raging of impatience, recalls again the faithful to prayer. And when Jerusalem asks God to see and to look, there is an emphasis intended in using the two words; and the reason given does also more fully shew this, because she had become vile; [497] so that the Church set nothing else before God, to turn him to mercy, but her own miseries. She did not, then, bring forward her own services, but only deplored her own miseries, in order that she might obtain the favor of God. It follows, ---

Lamentations 1:12

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.

12. Non ad voc omnes qui transitis per viam? Aspicite et videte, an sit dolor sicut dolor meus, qui factus est mihi, quia affixit me (vel, dolore affecit) Jehova in die excandescentiae irae suae.

The beginning of the verse is variously explained. Some read it interrogatively, ``Is it nothing to you who pass by the way?'' Others more simply, ``I see that I am not cared for by you; to you my sorrow is nothing.'' Some again read thus, ``Let it not be a sorrow to you;'' and others, ``Let not sorrow be upon you,'' that is, let not what I have happen to you; so that it is a prayer expressive of benevolence.

What I prefer is the interrogation, Is it nothing to you who pass by the way? for the letter, {ה}, He, the note of a question, is often omitted. But were it read affirmatively, the meaning would not be unsuitable: ``It does not concern you who pass by,'' as though Jerusalem, in its lamentations, felt grieved that all those who passed by were not touched either with pity or with sorrow. [498]

But she addressed those who passed by, that she might more fully set forth the greatness of her calamity. For. had she directed her words to neighbors alone, there would not have been so much force in them; but when she spoke to strangers, she thus shewed that her calamity was so great, that it ought to have roused the sympathy of men from the remotest parts, even while on their journey. And she asks them to look and see. The order is inverted, for she said before, ``See, Jehovah, and look.'' Then Jerusalem asked God, first to turn his eyes to see her calamities, and then attentively to notice them: but now for another purpose she says, look ye and see, that is, consider how evident is my calamity, which otherwise might have been in a measure hidden from you. Look ye, she says, is there a sorrow like my sorrow? she adds, which is come to me: some render the words actively, ``which Jehovah has brought on me;'' but the other version is more correct, for it is more literal. Jerome's rendering is, ``who has gleaned me;'' and {צעלל} olal, means sometimes to glean, nor do I wish to reject this interpretation. But what follows is incorrectly rendered, as in a former instance, by Jerome, ``of which Jehovah has spoken:'' for he derived the

[497] That is, she was treated as vile or worthless: "dishonored" is the Sept. — Ed.

[498] It is evidently taken as {לו by the Sept., the Vulg., and the Targ.; but as a negative by the Syr., and the sentence is taken as a question: and this gives the best meaning. --- Ed

verb, as before stated, from {הגה}, ege; but it comes from {יגה}, ige, as it is evident from the letter {ו}, vau, being inserted. There is then no doubt but that the Church intimates that God was the author of that sorrow which she deplored.

And it is necessary to know this, lest men should be carried away into excesses in their mourning, as it frequently happens. For the majesty of God imposes a check, when we perceive that we have to do with him. Simple and bare knowledge of this is not, indeed, sufficient, for, as it has been said, the ungodly, while they know that their sorrows proceed from God, yet murmur against him: but it is nevertheless the beginning of patience and meekness when we have a regard to God. It was, then, for this reason that Jerusalem said that she had been afflicted by God.

And it is added, In the day of the indignation of his wrath. Here the Prophet wished to express the grievousness of God's vengeance, by mentioning the indignation of wrath. Some render {חרום}, cherun, ``fury;'' but as the word ``fury'' is too harsh, the word ``indignation,'' or great heat (excandescentia) is not unsuitable. We must, however, bear in mind the design of the Prophet, which was to shew that God's vengeance had been so dreadful, as though his wrath had all been on a flame against Jerusalem: and this is more fully confirmed in the following verse, ---

Lamentations 1:13

13. From above hath he sent fire into my bones, and it prevaileth against them: he hath spread a net for my feet, he hath turned me back: he hath made desolate and faint all the day.

13. E sublimi misit ignem in ossa mea, et dominatus est in ipso (est mutatio numeri, refertur quidem ad oss, sed perinde est ac Si diceret, dominatus est ignis in unoquoque ossium;) extendit rete suum pedibus meis, convertet me retrorsum; dedit me (reddidit me, vel, posuit) vastam vel, desolatam) toto die dolentem (vel, infirmam.)

The Prophet proceeds with the same subject, that God's vengeance had raged most dreadfully agsinst Jerusalem. But employing a metaphor she says, that fire had been sent to her bones. They who interpret bones of fortified places, weaken the meaning of the Prophet. I take bones in their proper sense, ss though it was said, that God's fire had penetrated into the inmost parts. This way of speaking often occurs in Scripture. By bones is denoted strength or valor. Hence David sometimes deplored, that his bones were vexed or troubled. (Psalm 6:2.) And Hezekiah said in his song

``As a lion he hath broken my bones.'' (Isaiah 37:13.)

In the same sense the Prophet now says, that fire had been sent by God, which ruled in his bones, that is, which not only burnt the skin and the flesh, but also consumed the bones. {רדה}, rede, means also to take away or to receive: but as the former rendering is most commonly taken, I am disposed to follow it --- that fire ruled in his bones

There is another similitude added, that God had spread a net before her feet; and thus he had taken away every means of escape. She intimates (for it is Jerusalem who speaks) that she had been ensnared by God's judgments, so that she was bound over to ruin, as though she had fallen into toils or snares. It is stated in the third place,

that she was desolate all the day, so that she sorrowed perpetually. By all the day is meant continually. It is then said, that she sorrowed without end, beyond measure, because she had been turned back by the nets of God, and her bones had been consumed by celestial fire: for the expression from above, {ממרום}, memerumn, is emphatical, for the Prophet means that it was no common or human burning; because what is ascribed to God exceeds what is human or earthly. It is, then, as though he had said, that it had been such a vengeance as betokened the dreadful power of God; for it was the same as though God had thundered from heaven. We now perceive the import of the words. It follows, ---

Lamentations 1:14

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 fall, the Lord hath delivered me into their hands, from whom I am not able to rise up.

14. Ligatumest (hic vertit Hieronymus, vigilavit, namhallucinatus est inpuncto duntaxat {צנשקד} et legendum est {צנשקד} quia est punctum sinistrum, quod significat ligave, ligatum est igitur) jugum iniquitatum mearum in manu ejus; implicitae sunt (vel, perplexae,) ascenderunt super collum meum; corruere fecit (vel, debilitavit) robur meum; dedit me Dominus in manus eorum (est in regimine, et tamen nulla sequitur additio, quae respondeat, sed apparet aliquid esse subaudiendum, in manus ergo hostium) ex quibus non potero surgere.

Here, again, Jerusalem confesses that God had been justly displeased. She had ascribed to God's vengeance the evils which she suffered; but now she expresses the cause of that displeasure or wrath. Hence she says, that the yoke of her iniquities had been bound in God's hand. Though interpreters explain the words, yet they touch not the meaning of the Prophet; for they consider not that there is a continued metaphor. We ought then to bear in mind the two clauses, --- that God's hand held the yoke tied, and also that the yoke was bound around the neck of Jerusalem. As when a husbandman, after having tied a yoke to oxen, holds a rein, and folds it rotund his hand, so that the oxen not only cannot throw off the yoke, but must also obey the hand which holds the reins; so also it is said, that the yoke of iniquities was fastened: ``I bear the yoke,'' she says, ``but it is tied, and so fastened, that it cannot be shaken off; and then, however furious I may be, or kick, God holds the tied yoke by his own hand so as to constrain me to bear it.''

We now, then, see the design and import of the Prophet's words, that God was justly incensed against Jerusalem, and had justly used so much severity. Expressed at the same time is the atrocity of the punishment, though wholly just; for, on the one hand, Jerusalem complains that a yoke was laid on her neck, tied and fastened, and also that it was tied by the hand of God, as though she had said, that she was under such a constraint, that there was no relaxation. On the one hand, then, she bewails the grievousness of her calamity; and on the other, she confesses that she fully deserved what she suffered; and thus she accused herself, lest any should think that he clamored against God, as is commonly the case in sorrow. [499]

[499] All the versions agree in rendering {{נשקד in the sense of watching; and when they agree, there is a strong presumption that they are right. And all agree as to {על} being a preposition, and not a noun, ``yoke,'' except the Vulg., which hardly gives any meaning. The Rabbins have invented a new meaning for the verb, which it has in no other place, and some have

It is added, He hath made to fall, or weakened, etc. The verb {כשל}, cashel, in Hilphil, means, as it is well known, to stumble, or to cause to stumble or fall. He hath, then, weakened my strength; the Lord hath given me up into the hand of my enemies, from whom I shall not be able to rise; that is, he hath so subjugated me, and so laid me prostrate under the hands of my enemies, that there is no hope of rising again. Were any one to ask, ``Why then does she pray, and again will pray often?'' the answer is, that when she says here, that she will not be able to rise again, the reference is made to the outward state of things: in the meantime, the grace of God is not taken to the account. and this goes beyond all human means. She then says, that according, to the thoughts of the flesh, she had no hope, because there appeared to be no means of rising. But yet she did not despair, but that God would at length, by His almighty power, cause her to rise from fatal ruin. And this is a mode of speaking that ought to be borne in mind; for hope sees things which are hidden. But at the same time the faithful speak according to the common appearance of things, and when they seem to despair, they regard what falls under their own observation and judgment. So then Jerusalem now says that she could not rise, except God manifested his extraordinary power, which far exceeds all human means. It follows, ---

Lamentations 1:15

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 winepress.

15. Calcavit omnes fortes meos Dominus in medio mei; vocavit super me diem (hoc est, edixit statum diem, alii vertunt congregationem; et {מועד}, tam coetum ipsum significat, quam condictum tempus,) ad conterendos adolescentes meos (vel, electos;) torcular calcavit Adonai super virginem (vel, puellam,) filiam Jehudah.

She first says, that all her valiant men had been trodden underfoot. Now we know how much the Jews trusted in their men even to the very time when they were wholly subdued. As then they had shewed so much insolence and pride towards the prophets, it hence became a cause of greater sorrow, when Jerusalem herself saw that she was destitute of every protection, and that her valiant men were trodden under foot. She says, in the midst of me. And this ought to be observed; for if they had fallen on the field of battle, if they had been taken in the fields by their enemies, such a thing would not have been so grievous: but that they had been thus laid prostrate, in the very bosom of the city, was indeed a token of vengeance from above. We now see that this circumstance was not superfluous, that all the valiant men of Jerusalem were laid prostrate in the midst of her.

It is then said that it was the fixed time, when God destroyed her chosen men, or her youth. Should it seem preferable to take {מועד}, muod, as meaning a con-

followed them. It is rendered impersonally by the Sept., ``there has been watching,'' but by the Vulg., ``he hath watched.'' To ``watch over transgressions,'' is similar to ``watch upon (or over) the evil,'' in Daniel 9:14; it is to watch over them in order to punish them. The whole verse I render thus, --- 14. He hath watched over my transgressions, by his hand they are twined; His yoke is upon my neck, he hath made to fail my strength; Yea, given me hath the Lord into the hands of the oppressor, I cannot stand. The word ``hands'' is in a construct form, which shews that there is a word left out. ``I cannot stand,'' i.e., against the oppressor; I cannot resist. The future is used in the sense of the present; literally it is, ``I shall not be able to stand,'' or resist. So it is exactly in Welsh; it is the future, but understood as expressing what is present. In the first line, ``his hand'' is connected in all the versions with ``twined,'' or wreathed together. --- Ed.

gregation, I do not object; yet I do not approve of this meaning, for it seems forced. It agrees better with the context to regard it as the fixed time, the time before appointed by God to destroy all the strong men. [500]

There is then another metaphor used, --- that God had trodden the winepress as to the daughter of Zion. This figure occurs elsewhere, as in Isaiah 63:1,

``Who is this that cometh from Edom? and why are his garments red?''

For the Prophet wonders how God could come forth from Edom, sprinkled with blood. God answers, ``The winepress have I trod alone;'' that is, because he had avenged the wrongs done to his people. For we know that the Idumeans had always been incensed against the miserable Jews. Then God, in order to shew that lie was the defender of his Church, says that he came from Edom, and was sprinkled and even made wet with blood. As when any one is red with wine after having toiled in the winepress, so also is the representation in this place. We have also seen in Jeremiah 51:33, that Babylon was like a threshing-floor. The metaphor, indeed, is different, but bears a likeness to the present. As, then, God is said to tread, or to thresh, when he afflicts any land, so he is said to tread the winepress, as here. [501] It follows, ---

Lamentations 1:16

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.

16. Propter id ego plorans, oculus meus, oculus meus, descendunt aquae, (hoc est, defluit in aquas,) quia remotus est a me consolator, qui animam revocet, (vel, recreat animam, {משיב};) Fuerunt filii mei desolati, quia praevaluit hostis.

He describes at large the calamities of Jerusalem. But it is no wonder that the Prophet, thus lengthened his discourse; for we know that those who are heavily oppressed never satisfy themselves with mourning and lamentations. If, indeed, we duly consider how great the evils were, the Prophet will not appear to us wordy, nor will his prolixity be wearisome to us. For when any one compares the flourishing state of Jerusalem with that desolate ruin which the Prophet laments, it will surely appear to him that no words, however many, can fully express what it really was; nay, though the expressions may seem hyperbolical, yet they do not exceed the greatness of that calamity. This point is briefly adverted to, lest any one should be wearied with those various modes of expression which the Prophet employs, when yet he might have at once said that Jerusalem was destroyed.

He says, For this will I weep. He throughout sustains the person of a woman; for Jerusalem herself speaks, and not Jeremiah. I, she says, for this will weep; mine eye mine eye! it shall descend into waters. Others read, ``Waters will descend from mine

[500] If the word be rendered “assembly,” or congregation, the meaning is, the assembly of the Chaldeans, and an allusion, as Gataker says, is made to the calling of the people to their feasts. It is rendered “time” by the Sept. and the Vulg., but “assembly” by the Syr. To call against or upon one a fixed time, is no suitable expression. Our version is no doubt right; and with it agree Blayney and Henderson. — Ed.

[501] The words are as follows, — The winepress has the Lord trodden as to the virgin, the daughter of Judah. The {{ל sometimes means ``as to,'' or, with respect to. ``The daughter of Judah'' is in apposition with ``virgin.'' --- Ed

eyes;'' but such a rendering is too loose. I do not, then, doubt but that Jerusalem says that her eyes would be like fountains of waters. She indeed speaks in the singular number, and repeats the words, mine eye! mine eye! it shall descend, or flow as waters, that is, as though they were two fountains, because alienated from me, or far from me, is a comforter, to revive my soul [502] By these words she intimates that she was fainting, and as it were dying and that there was no one present to administer comfort, so that her soul might be revived. As it appeared before, that it is deemed an extreme evil when there is no friend to do the duty of humanity by alleviating sorrow; so now again Jerusalem repeats the same complaint, and says that all her sons were destroyed, because the enemy had prevailed. It follows, ---

Lamentations 1:17

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.

17. Expandit Sion in manibus suis (id est, manus suas, vel, complosit manibus suis, alii vertunt, confregit,) nullus consolator ei; mandavit Jehova super Jacob per circuitus ejus adversarios ejus; facta est Jerusalem in abominationem inter ipsos (vel, tanquam immunda, vel, menstruata, {נדה}, enim vocater mulier menstruata apud Moseu.)

The Prophet first says that Jerusalem had expanded her hands, as a token of sorrow, or that she might seek friends from every side; for when we wish to move men to pity, we stretch forth our arms. I wonder how it came to the minds of some to say that Jerusalem had broken bread with her hands. This is extremely puerile. Some have rendered the words, that she had broken with her hands, understanding thereby that she had clapped with her hands. It is, however, a harsh mode of speaking; I retain the most suitable sense, that Jerusalem had expanded her hands. The word {פרש}, peresh, means also to disperse, or scatter; but the Prophet no doubt means the expansion of the hands, as though Jerusalem had said that she was like a woman lamenting her calamities, and seeking friends on every side to give her some consolation. And we may gather the meaning of the Prophet from the passage itself, Sion, it is said, by spreading hands calls her friends, and no one is a comforter: these clauses ought to be read together, that is, that Sion expanded her hands, and yet no one responded to alleviate her sorrow by consolation.

It follows, that Jehovah had commanded respecting Jacob, that through his circuits adversaries should afflict him. The Prophet again reminds us that these evils did not happen through men, but that God had resolved in this manner to punish the obstinate impiety of the people. Lest, then, the Jews should give vent to their sorrow, and ascribe it to the Chaldeans, as it was commonly done, he recalls their attention to God himself, and says that the Chaldeans, however cruel they were, yet did nothing merely through their own impulse, but through God's command. He adds, through

[502] Though the Sept. and Vulg. do not repeat the “eye,” yet the Targ. has “my two eyes,” and the Syr., “mine eyes.” The repetition is in most copies, and it is very emphatical. See a similar instance in Jeremiah 4:9. 16. For these things I weep: mine eye! mine eye! it brings down water; For far from me is a comforter, a restorer of my life; Become desolate are my sons, for the enemy has prevailed. — Ed

the circuits, that the Jews might know that there was no escape, for God held them all as though they were shut up. For we can in various ways escape from the hands of men; but when God is our enemy, we in vain seek hiding-places. The Prophet then teaches us that subterfuges did not avail the Jews, because God on every side kept them shut up.

He says at length that Jerusalem was like a menstruous woman, or was an abomination; for {נדה}, nede, may be rendered uncleanness, or abomination, and is often a noun substantive; and I am disposed so to render it, even that Jerusalem was regarded as filth, as though the Prophet had said that there was no humanity or moderation in the enemies of the Jews, because they were not counted as men, but as offscourings, as an abominable filth. [503]

Now, if such a thing happened to the ancient Church, let us not wonder if at this day also God should deal with us more severely than we wish. It is, indeed, a very bitter thing to see the Church so afflicted as to have the ungodly exulting over its calamities, and that God's children should be as the refuse and filth of the world. But let us patiently bear such a condition; and when we are thus contemptuously treated by our enemies, let us know that God visits us with punishment, and that the wicked do nothing except through the providence of God, for it is his will to try our faith, and thus to shew himself a righteous judge: for if we rightly consider in how many ways, and how obstinately we have provoked his wrath, we shall not wonder if we also be counted at this day an abomination and a curse. It follows, ---

Lamentations 1:18

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.

18. Justus ipse Jehova, quia os ejus exacerbavi: Audite agedum omnes populii, videte dolorem meum; virgines meae et adolescentes mei profecti sunt in captivitatem.

Jerusalem again acknowledges, and more clearly expresses, that she suffered a just punishment. She had before confessed that her enemies were cruel through God's command; but it was necessary to point out again the cause of that cruelty, even that she had too long provoked the wrath of God.

She says, first, that God was just, or righteous, [504] because she had provoked his mouth. By the mouth of God we are to understand the prophetic doctrine, as it is well known. But the phrase is emphatical, for when the word of God was proclaimed by the mouth of prophets, it was despised as an empty sound. As, then, prophetic doctrine has not its own majesty ascribed to it, God calls whatever his servants declare his mouth. This mode of speaking is taken from Moses, and often occurs in

[503] The same word, {{נדה occurs in Lamentations 1:8, only there is a {ו} in it; and the phrase in its form is similar. The Versions, except the, Syr., and also the Targ., give to it there the idea of wandering, but here of uncleanness. There seems to be no reason for this change; and the end of the next verse favors the idea of wandering: Jerusalem had become a wanderer, or a fugitive, among her oppressors, --- 17. Expanded hath Sion her hands, no comforter is to her; Commanded has Jehovah as to Jacob, Let those around him be his oppressors; Become has Jerusalem a wanderer among them. The word {נד} is a fugitive, a wanderer, and as Jerusalem is feminine, {ה} is added, a feminine termination. ``Jerusalem'' here, as in Lamentations 1:8, means its citizens. --- Ed

[504] "Righteous he, Jehovah:" the pronoun is used instead of the verb is, — a common thing in Hebrew. — Ed.

his writings. Jehovah, then, is just; how so? because I have provoked his mouth. And it was more grievous and less excusable to provoke the mouth of God than simply to offend God. The ungodly often offend God when they labor under ignorance; but when the Lord is pleased to open his mouth to recall the erring, and to shew the way of salvation, and then men rush headlong, as it were designedly, into sins, it is certainly a mark of extreme impiety. We hence understand why the Prophet mentions the mouth of God, or the teaching of the prophets, even to exaggerate the wickedness of Jerusalem, which had so obstinately disregarded God speaking by his prophets.

The greatness of her sorrow is again deplored; and what follows is addressed to all nations, Hear, I pray, all ye people; see my sorrow. And what was the reason for this great sorrow? because, she says, my virgins and my young men have been driven into captivity. This might seem a light thing; for a previous account has been given of other calamities, which were far more severe; and exile in itself is but a moderate punishment. But we must bear in mind what we have before stated, that the Jews dwelt in that land, as though they had been placed there by the hand of God, that Jerusalem was to be a perpetual rest, which had been granted them from above; in short, that it was as it were a pledge of the eternal inheritance. When, therefore, they were driven into captivity, it was the same as though God had cast them down from heaven, and banished them from his kingdom. For the Jews would not have been deprived of that land, had not God rejected them and shewed his alienation from them. It was then the same as repudiation. It is therefore no wonder that Jerusalem so much lamented because her sons and her daughters were driven into exile.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast hitherto dealt so mercifully with us, we may anticipate thy dreadful judgment; and that if thou shouldest more severely chastise us, we may not yet fail, but that being humbled under thy mighty hand, we may flee to thy mercy and cherish this hope in our hearts, that thou wilt be a Father to us, and not hesitate to call continually on thee, until, being freed from all evils, we shall at length be gathered into thy celestial kingdom, which thine only-begotten Son has procured for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

Lecture Fourth

Lamentations 1:19

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.

19. Clamavi ad amicos nucos, ipsi deceperunt me: sacerdotes mei et seniores mei in urbe obierunt, quia quaesierint cibum sibi et refocillarunt (ad verbum, hoc est, ut refocillarent) animam suam (ad verbum, ut redire facerent, quemadmodum Gallice dicimus, faire revenir le coeur.)

Here the people of God complain in the person of a woman, as we have before seen, that in their calamity they were left destitute of every comfort. And it is a circumstance which increases grief, when no one is present to shew any kindness to the miserable; for it is no small alleviation of sorrow, when friends offer their kind

services, and as far as they can, endeavor to mitigate the severity of the evil.

The Church of God now says, that she was so forsaken by friends as to be left alone to pine away in her mourning and sorrow. There may, however, be here an allusion to shameful and impure connections; for by this term, friends, the Spirit often points out the Egyptians as well as others in whom the Israelites had foolishly trusted; for in this manner, we know, they had turned aside from conjugal fidelity. God had bound them to himself, that they might acquiesce in his favor alone; and so to acquiesce was their spiritual chastity. Rightly, then, does Scripture compare both the Egyptians and the Assyrians to harlots, whenever the Israelites sought aid from them. But as this explanation seems too refined, I am content to view what is said simply as a complaint., that the people of God, though looking in all directions, yet could find no comfort in the world. I cried, she said, to my friends; they deceived me.

It is then added, My priests and mine elders expired in the city. Had they been slain in battle, it would have been no wonder; for they who go against an enemy, go as it were to meet death. But God's people here deplore a more grievous evil, that the priests died in the city, not through the enemies' sword, but through famine, which is as it were the extreme of evils. It is then said, that the priests as well as the elders perished through famine, because they could not find food. And when it is said that they sought food to refresh the soul, there is a contrast to be understood between ordinary food and a remedy for the famine; for we naturally seek food whenever we feel hungry; but the Prophet refers here to something more than this, even that the priests and the elders sought food, because long abstinence urged them; and it was very sad, that the priests, who excelled in honor, and also the elders, were thus reduced to want. Had such a thing happened to the common people, it would not have been so wonderful; for the long siege of the city had consumed all their provisions. But when the priests, and those who had wealth, were thus oppressed with hunger, we may conclude that the want which the Prophet wished to describe was extreme. It follows, ---

Lamentations 1:20

20. Behold, O LORD; for I am in distress; my bowels are troubled; mine heart is turned within me; for I have greviously rebelled: abroad the sword bereaveth, at home there is as death.

20. Vide Jehova, quia afflictio mihi, (vel, augustia,) viscera mea conturbata sunt (alii, contracta;) eversum est cor meum interme, quia rebellando rebellavi; fris orbat gladius, domi tanquam mors.

The people turn again to pray God: and what has been before said ought to be remembered, that these lamentations of Jeremiah differ from the complaints of the ungodly; because the faithful first acknowledge that they are justly chastised by God's hand, and secondly, they trust in his mercy and implore his aid. For by these two marks the Church is distinguished from the unbelieving, even by repentance and faith. To sigh and to mourn in adversities, and to lament also their miseries, are common to both; but the children of God differ greatly from the ungodly, because they humble themselves under his mighty hand, and confess that they deserve to

suffer punishment; and further, they cast not away the hope of salvation, but implore his mercy. Then the Prophet introduces again the people as praying God to look on them. For the ungodly pour forth their complaints into the air; and when at any time nature dictates to them that they ought to address God, yet no prayer arises from a sincere heart.

There is no doubt but that the Prophet here shewed to the faithful how they were to lament their common miseries, even so as patiently to bear the chastisements of God, and also to seek deliverance from him, though they had provoked his wrath. For when we see that we are pressed down by God's hand, we do not murmur, but the knowledge of our sins humbles us, and faith moderates our mourning, which would otherwise exceed moderation. And when we thus humbly flee to God, we in a manner unburden our sorrows into his bosom, as it is said in the Psalms, ``Cast (or roll) on God thy cares.'' (Psalm 55:22.)

He then says first, See, Jehovah, for affliction is to me. He then expresses the manner of the affliction, because his bowels were bound, or troubled. The word is from, {חמר} chemer, which is doubled. Some derive it from {חמור}, chemur, an ass, and so render it ``bound,'' as when a. burden is fastened on an ass. But more probable is the opinion of those who derive the word from mortar or cement, for as cement is made by mixing water with lime and sand, and stirring them together, so by a metaphor the bowels are said to be stirred or troubled; [505] and this explanation agrees better with what follows --- for it is added, my heart is overturned. The reason is given, because the people by rebelling had rebelled, that is, had been very rebellious against God. We have said that the complaints of the godly differ from those of the ungodly, for they not only pray to God, but make also a sincere confession, so as to make it evident that they are justly chastised by God's hand. At the beginning of the verse the faithful prayed, and now again they declare that they deserved what they suffered, because they had been very rebellious. Then Jeremiah proceeds with what he had begun to say respecting the grievousness of their punishment, Abroad, or without, he says, the sword bereaves, and at home it is like death; that is, ``When we go abroad, the sword meets us; and when we hide ourselves at home, there also many deaths surround us.'' He uses the particle of likeness, as, or like; as though he had said that nothing met them at home but what was deadly. [506] It now follows, ---

Lamentations 1:21

21. They have heard that I sign; there is none to comfort me: all mine enemies have heard of my trouble; they are glad that thou hast done it; thou will bring the day that thou hast called, and they shall be like unto me.

21. Audierunt quod sum gemens, (hoc est, quod sim in luctu,) nec quisquam consolator mihi; omnes inimici mei audierunt malum meum, gavisi sunt quod tu feceris, et adduxeris diem, quem tu vocasti; atqui erunt sicuti ego.

The verb {שמעו}, shemou, is put down twice, but at the beginning without a nom-

[505] Troubled,'' or disquieted, is the rendering of all the versions, and also of the Targ. As it is a reduplicate, the verb means greatly troubled or greatly disturbed, or violently agitated. — Ed.

[506] The rendering of the Sept. is, — Abroad the sword has bereaved me, as death at home. To the same purpose is the Syr. and Arab. Having before referred to death by famine, he now adds the devastation of the sword. — Ed.

inative case: hence the sentence is defective, until in the second clause the word {איבי} aibi, is expressed. Jeremiah evidently says, that enemies had heard of the evils under which the people labored, even that they were sighing, and that no one showed them any kindness; for it is commonly the case that sympathy is manifested towards the miserable. By this circumstance he amplifies the grievousness of their punishment, there being no one, as before said, to administer any consolation. But it is repeated, that enemies had heard; for as there is nothing more bitter than reproaches, we seek in adversities to withdraw ourselves in a manner from the observation of men; but our evil is especially doubled, when we become a spectacle to enemies; for they derive joy from our adversities, and then exult over us. When, therefore, the chosen people said, that enemies had heard, they thus showed that nothing could be added to their miseries: They have heard, then, that I was sighing and that no one comforted me. Who had heard? all mine enemies; and they have rejoiced that thou hast done it

Jeremiah seems to intimate, that their enemies, being fully persuaded that God was displeased with his people, did on this account more freely rejoice; and at the same time they believed that it was all over with those miserable people with whom God was displeased. But I know not whether this view is well grounded. I indeed do not reject it, nor will I dispute with any one who may hold that the enemies rejoiced, because they thought that God was become the enemy of that people, whom he had before chosen and also protected: nor is this view unsuitable; for the reprobate then fully triumph when they can boast that God is adverse to us. But when no such thought comes to their minds, they yet cease not to rejoice when they see that we are oppressed and afflicted. Though, then, they may not think of God's hand, yet they rejoice that it is done; that is, they rejoice that we are distressed, though they understand not who the author is. We may then take the meaning simply to be, that the enemies of the Church rejoiced at that calamity, without considering who the author of it was.

But, why is it expressed that God had done it? even to shew that while the ungodly think that fortune is unfavorable to us, it; is our duty to cast our eyes on God, for we ought not to judge of things according to their blindness. As, then, they ascribe not to God the glory due to him when they do not acknowledge him as judge, it ever behooves us to see by the eyes of faith what is hid from the natural perceptions of men, even that nothing happens to us except through the righteous judgment of God. Though, then, enemies had not wisdom to know how it was that the Church was afflicted, yet it behooved the Church itself to use by means of faith such a language as this, that God had done it; they rejoiced that thou hast done it

And it follows, Thou hast brought the day which thou hast called, or proclaimed; for {קרא}, kora, has sometimes this meaning. [507] In short, the faithful now confess not only that they were afflicted by God's hand, but also that what the prophets

[507] Our version is wrong in rendering this clause in the future tense. The reference is not to the day of vengeance to the Babylonians, but to the day of vengeance which God had brought on his own people. The versions, except the Syr., give the verb in the past tense. There are here two instances of {{כי being carried on to the next clause, --- 21. Heard have they that I sigh, that I have no comforter: All mine enemies have heard of my evil; they have rejoiced That thou hast done it, that thou hast brought the day thou hast announced; But they shall be like myself. --- Ed

had so often threatened, and what had been despised, was now fulfilled. For we have seen with what pertinacity that people rejected the threatenings given by the prophets: God had often exhorted them to repent, and also had proclaimed or fixed a time for them, but without effect. Therefore the faithful now reflect on what had not been sufficiently known before, even that the day was brought which had been often proclaimed. And thus they confessed, not only that they were worthy of punishment., but that it was the proper time for them to be chastised, as they had not repented after having been so often warned.

He adds, But they themselves shall be as I am. Here the future tense may be considered as optative, for presently a prayer follows which confirms this view. But we may also take the meaning to be simply this, --- that the faithful began to take courage, as they looked forward to the time when God would render to the wicked according to their proud and disdainful exultation's. It follows, ---

Lamentations 1:22

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.

22. Veniet (aut, veniat) omnis malitia eorum in conspectum tuum, et facias illis, quemadmodum fecisti mihi super omnibus sceleribus meis; quia multa suspiria mea, et cor meum debile (vel, moestum.)

Here, no doubt, the faithful regarded as a part of their comfort the judgment which God would at length execute on the ungodly; and there is no doubt but that this kind of imprecation had been suggested to God's children by the Holy Spirit, in order to sustain them when pressed down by heavy troubles; not that God gave them thus loose reins to desire vengeance on their enemies, but that while those perished who indulged their malice, the faithful might derive from their ruin a hope of deliverance; for the vengeance of God on the reprobate brings with it a token of paternal favor towards the elect.

And that we may better understand what this imprecation means, we must first bear in mind that we cannot complain of enemies, except they are also enemies to God. For should I hurt any one, and should he, impelled by wrath, vex me, there could be no access for my complaint to God, and in vain could I seek a covering from this example; why? because whenever we go before God, it is necessary, as I have said, that our enemies should be also his enemies. But, secondly, it would not be sufficient, except our zeal were also pure; for when we defend our own private cause, something excessive will necessarily be in our prayers. Let us, then, know that we are not to pronounce an imprecation on our enemies, except, first, they are God's enemies; and, secondly, except we disregard ourselves, and plead not our own cause, but, on the contrary, undertake the cause of public safety, having laid aside all turbulent feelings; and especially, except our fervor arises from a desire to glorify God. With these qualifications, then, we may adopt the form of prayer given us here by the Prophet. But as this subject has been explained elsewhere, and often and very fully, I touch on it here but briefly.

He then says, Let all their wickedness come before thee; do to them as thou hast

done to me. Here, again, the faithful take upon themselves the blame for all the evils they were suffering; for they do not expostulate with God, but pray only that he would become the judge of the whole world, in order that the ungodly might also at length have their turn, when God would be pacified towards his children. But they afterwards more clearly express that they had deserved all that they had suffered --- for all my sins. Then they add, because my sighs are many and my heart is weak. We, in short, see that the faithful lay humbly their prayers before God, and at the same time confess that what they had deserved was rendered to them, only they set before God their extreme sorrow, straits, grieves, tears, and sighs. Then the way of pacifying God is, sincerely to confess that we are justly visited by his judgment, and also to lie down as it. were confounded, and at the same time to venture to look up to him, and to rely on his mercy with confidence. Now follows the second elegy, ---

Lamentations 2

CHAPTER 2

Lamentations 2:1

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!

1. Quomodo obnubilavit in iracundia sua Dominus filiam Sion, projecit a coelo in terram decorem Israel, et non recordatus est scabelli pedum suorum in dic iracundiae!

The Prophet again exclaims in wonder, that an incredible thing had happened, which was like a prodigy; for at the first sight it seemed very unreasonable, that a people whom God had not only received into favor, but with whom he had made a perpetual covenant, should thus be forsaken by him. For though men were a hundred times perfidious, yet God never changes, but remains unchangeable in his faithfulness; and we know that his covenant was not made to depend on the merits of men. Whatsoever, then, the people might be, yet it behooved God to continue in his purpose, and not to annul the promise made to Abraham. Now, when Jerusalem was reduced to desolation, there was as it were all abolition of God's covenant. There is, then, no wonder that the Prophet here exclaims, as on account of some prodigy, How can it be that God hath clouded or darkened, etc.

We must, however, observe at the same time, that the Prophet did not mean here to invalidate the fidelity or constancy of God, but thus to rouse the attention of his own nation, who had become torpid in their sloth; for though they were pressed down under a load of evils, yet they had become hardened in their perverseness. But it was impossible that any one should really call on God, except he was humbled in mind, and brought the sacrifice of which we have spoken, even a humble and contrite spirit. (Psalm 51:19.) It was, then, the Prophet's object to soften the hardness which he knew prevailed in almost the whole people. This was the reason why he exclaimed,

in a kind of astonishment, How has God clouded, etc. [508]

Some render the words, ``How has God raised up,'' etc., which may be allowed, provided it be not taken in a good sense, for it is said, in his wrath; but in this case the words to raise up and to cast down ought to be read conjointly; for when one wishes to break in pieces an earthen vessel, he not only casts it on the ground, but he raises it up, that it may be thrown down with greater force. We may, then, take this meaning, that God, in order that he might with greater violence break in pieces his people, had raised them up, not to honor them, but in order to dash them more violently on the ground. However, as this sense seems perhaps too refined, I am content with the first explanation, that God had clouded the daughter of Zion in his wrath; and then follows an explanation, that he had cast her from heaven to the earth. So then God covered with darkness his people, when he drew them down from the high dignity which they had for a time enjoyed. He had, then, cast on the earth all the glory of Israel, and remembered not his footstool

The Prophet seems here indirectly to contend with God, because he had not spared his own sanctuary; for God, as it has been just stated, had chosen Mount Sion for himself, where he designed to be prayed to, because he had placed there the memorial of his name. As, then, he had not spared his own sanctuary, it did not appear consistent with his constancy, and he also seemed thus to have disregarded his own glory. But the design of the Prophet is rather to shew to the people how much God's wrath had been kindled, when he spared not even his own sanctuary. For he takes this principle as granted, that God is never without reason angry, and never exceeds the due measure of punishment. As, then, God's wrath was so great that he destroyed his own Temple, it was a token of dreadful wrath; and what was the cause but the sins of men? for God, as I have said, always preserves moderation in his judgments. He, then, could not have better expressed to the people the heinousness of their sins, than by laying before them this fact, that God remembered not his footstool

And the Temple, by a very suitable metaphor, is called the footstool of God. It is, indeed, called his habitation; for in Scripture the Temple is often said to be the house of God. It was then the house, the habitation, and the rest of God. But as men are ever inclined to superstition, in order to raise up their thoughts above earthly elements, we are reminded, on the other hand, in Scripture, that the Temple was the footstool of God. So in the Psalms,

``Adore ye before his footstool,'' (Psalm 99:5;)

and again,

``We shall adore in the place where his feet stand.''

(Psalm 132:7.)

We, then, see that the two expressions, apparently different, do yet well agree,

[508] The verb here is in the future tense, and the clause might be thus rendered, — Why should the Lord in his wrath becloud the daughter of Sion? And if {,{ישבה in Lamentations 1:1, be in the future tense, as it may be, that clause may be rendered in the same way, --- Why should sit alone the city that was full of people? Then follows here, as in the former instance, a description of what had happened to Sion, --- He hath cast from heaven to earth the glory of Israel, And not remembered his footstool in the day of his wrath. At the same time, the clauses may both be rendered as proposed in a note on Lamentations 1:1, and the tenses of the verbs be preserved. The verb here is clearly in the future tense, and the verb in the former instance may be so; and the future in Hebrew is often to be taken as the present, as the case is in Welsh. How this! in his wrath becloud does the Lord the daughter of Sion! --- Ed.

that the Temple was the house of God and his habitation, and that yet it was only his footstool. It was the house of God, because the faithful found by experience that he was there present; as, then, God gave tokens of his presence, the Temple was rightly called the house; of God, his rest and habitation. But that the faithful might not fix their minds on the visible sanctuary, and thus by indulging a gross imagination, fall into superstition, and put an idol in the place of God, the Temple was called the footstool of God. For as it was a footstool, it behooved the faithful to rise up higher and to know that God was really sought, only when they raised their thoughts above the world. We now perceive what was the purpose of this mode of speaking.

God is said not to have remembered his Temple, not because he had wholly disregarded it, but because the destruction of the Temple could produce no other opinion in men. All, then, who saw that the Temple had been burnt by profane hands, and pulled down after it had been plundered, thought that the Temple was forsaken by God; and so also he speaks by Ezekiel, (Ezekiel 10:18.) Then this oblivion, or not remembering, refers to the thoughts of men; for however God may have remembered the Temple, yet he seemed for a time to have disregarded it. We must, at the same time, bear in mind what I have said, that the Prophet here did not intend to dispute with God, or to contend with him, but, on the contrary, to shew what the people deserved; for God was so indignant on account of their sins, that he suffered his own Temple to be profaned. The same thing also follows respecting the kingdom, ---

Lamentations 2:2

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.

2. Perdidit Dominus, non pepercit (hoc est, non parcendo, absque venia) omnia habitacula Jacob; diruit in excandescentia sua munitiones filiae Jehudah; detraxit ad terram: profanavit regnum ejus et principes ejus.

He pursues the same subject, but in other words. He first says, that God had without pardon destroyed all the habitations of Jacob; some read, ``all the beauty (or the ornament) of Jacob.'' But the other rendering is more suitable, that he had destroyed all the habitations of Jacob; and then that he had demolished in his indignation, etc. The word is derived from what means excess; but we know that all words signifying wrath are transferred to God, but they do not properly belong to him. God, then, in his violent wrath had demolished all fortresses, and cast them to the ground; and afterwards, that he had profaned, etc.

This profanation of the kingdom, and of the princes, corresponds with the former verse, where he said that God had not remembered his footstool for we know that the kingdom was sacerdotal and consecrated to God. When, therefore, it was polluted, it follows that God in a manner exposed his name to reproach, because the mouth of all the ungodly was thus opened, so that they insolently poured forth their slanders. That God, then, spared not the kingdom nor the Temple, it hence followed that his wrath against the Jews was dreadful. Now, as he is a righteous judge, it follows, that such was the greatness of the sins of the Jews, that they sustained the blame for

this extreme sacrilege; for it was through their sins that God's name was exposed to reproach both as to the Temple and the kingdom.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou settest before us at this day those ancient examples by which we perceive with what heavy punishments thou didst chastise those whom thou hadst adopted, --- O grant, that we may learn to regard thee, and carefully to examine our whole life, and duly consider how indulgently thou hast preserved us to this day, so that we may ever patiently bear thy chastisements, and with a humble and sincere heart flee to thy mercy, until thou be pleased to raise up thy Church from that miserable state in which it now lies, and so to restore it, that thy name may, through thine only-begotten Son, be glorified throughout the whole world. --- Amen.

Lecture Fifth

Lamentations 2:3

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.

3. Confregit in excandescentia irae suae omne cornu Israelis: retraxit (vel, redire fecit) retrorsum dexteram suam a facie inimici, et exarsit in Jacob tanquam ignis, flamma devoravit in circuitu.

Jeremiah expresses the same thing in various ways; but all that he says tends to shew that it was an evidence of God's extreme vengeance, when the people, the city, and the Temple, were destroyed. But it ought to be observed, that God is here represented as the author of that calamity: the Prophet would have otherwise lamented in vain over the ruin of his own country; but as in all adversities he acknowledged the hand of God, he afterwards added, that God had a just reason why he was so grievously displeased with his own people.

He then says, that every horn had been broken by God. We know that by horn is meant strength as well as excellency or dignity and I am disposed to include both here, though the word breaking seems rather to refer to strength or power. But the whole clause must be noticed, that God had broken every horn of Israel in the indignation of his wrath. The Prophet intimates that God had not been angry with his people as though he had been offended by slight transgressions, but that the measure of his wrath had been unusual, even because the impiety of the people had so burst forth, that the offense given to God could not have been slight. Then, by indignation of wrath the Prophet does not mean an excess, as though God had through a violent impulse rushed forth to take vengeance; but he rather intimates that the people had become so wicked, that it did not behoove God to punish in an ordinary way an impiety so inveterate.

He then adds, that God had withdrawn, his right hand from before the enemy, and that at the same time he had burned like a fire, the flame of which had devoured all around. The Prophet here refers to two things; the first is, that though God had been accustomed to help his people, and to oppose their enemies, as they had experienced his aid in the greatest dangers, yet now his people were forsaken

and left destitute of all hope. The first clause, then, declares, that God would not be the deliverer of his people as formerly, because they had forsaken him. But he speaks figuratively, that God had drawn back his right hand; and God's right hand means his protection, as it is well known. But the Prophet's meaning is by no means obscure, even that there was hereafter no hope that God would meet the enemies of his people, and thus preserve them in safety, for he had drawn back his hand. [509] But there is a second thing added, even that God's hand burned like fire. Now it was in itself a grievous thing that the people had been so rejected by God, that no help could be expected from him; but it was still a harder thing, that he went forth armed to destroy his people. And the metaphor of fire ought to be noticed; for had he said that God's right hand was against his people, the expression would not have been so forcible; but when he compared God's right hand to fire which burned, and whose flame consumed all Israel, it was a much more dreadful thing. [510]

Moreover, by these words the Israelites were reminded that they were not to lament their calamities in an ordinary way, but ought, on the contrary, to have seriously considered the cause of all their evils, even the provoking of God's wrath against themselves; and not only so, but that God was angry with them in an unusual degree, and yet justly, so that they had no reason to complain. It follows, ---

Lamentations 2:4

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.

4. Extendit arcum suum tanquam inimicus, stetit dextera ejus tanquam adversarius, et occidit omnex desiderabiles aspectu (oculo) in tabernaculo filiae Sion (vel, in tabernaculum filiae Sion); effudit tanquam ignem Iracundiam suam.

He employs now another metaphor, that God, who was wont to defend his people, now took up arms against them; for stating a part for the whole, he includes in the bow every other weapon. When, therefore, he says that God had bent his bow, it is the same as though he said that he was fully armed. The bow, then, as we have before seen, means every kind of weapon. He then adds, that his right hand stood as an adversary. Here he more plainly describes what he had before touched upon, even that God had not only given up his people to the will of their enemies, but that he himself had held up a banner to their enemies, and went before them with an armed hand. Nor is there a doubt but that by the right hand of God he means all their enemies; for it was necessary carefully to impress this fact on the minds of the people, that the war had not been brought by the Chaldeans, but that God

[509] Gataker, Henry, Blayney, and Henderson, consider "the right hand" as that of Israel — that God drew back or restrained the right hand of Israel, so that he had no power to face his enemies. But Scott agrees with Calvin; and favorable to the same view are the early versions, except the Syr., for they render the pronoun, "his own — suam:" the Targ. also takes the same view. Had the word been "hand," it might have been applied to Israel; but it is "the right hand," which commonly means protection, or rather God's power, as put forth to defend his people and to resist enemies. This is farther confirmed by what is said in the following verse, that God "stood with his right hand as an adversary." See Psalm 74:11 — Ed.

[510] The last clause may be literally rendered thus, — And he burned in Jacob as fire, the flame devoured around. — Ed

had resolved thereby to punish the wickedness of the people, and especially their desperate obstinacy, for he had omitted nothing to restore the people to the right way.

Whenever, then, there is mention made here of God, let us know that the people are reminded, as I have already said, that they had to do with God, lest. they should forget this, or think that it was adverse fortune, or dream of some other causes of evils, as men are wont in this respect to be very ingenious in deceiving themselves. And we shall see this more clearly hereafter, where it is said, that God had thought to destroy the wall of Jerusalem; but this thought was the same as his decree. Then the Prophet explains there more fully what is yet here substantially found, even that God was brought forward thus before the people, that they might learn to humble themselves under his mighty hand. The hand of God was not indeed visible, but the Prophet shews that the Chaldeans were not alone to be regarded, but rather that the hidden hand of God, by which they were guided, ought to have been seen by the eyes of faith. It was, then, this hand of God that stood against the people.

It then follows, He slew all the chosen men; some read, ``all things desirable;'' but it seems more suitable to consider men as intended, as though he had said, that the flower of the people perished by the hand of God in the tabernacle of the daughter of Sion; though the last clause would unite better with the end of the verse, that on the tabernacle of the daughter of Sion God had poured forth his wrath, or his anger, as fire

He repeats the metaphor which he had used in the last verse; and this is what we ought carefully to notice; for God threatens by Isaiah that he would be a fire to devour his enemies:

``The light of Israel shall be a fire, and his Holy One a flame of fire, and it shall devour all briers and all kinds of wood.''
(Isaiah 10:7.)

There God threatened the Chaldeans, as though he had said that his vengeance would be dreadful, when as a patron and defender of his people he would contend with the Chaldeans. He there calls himself the light of Israel and the Holy One; and hence he said that he would be a fire and a flame as to the Chaldeans. But what does he say here? even that God had poured forth It is wrath as fire, that its flame had devoured all around whatever was fair to be seen in Israel. We hence see that the people had provoked against themselves the vengeance of God, which would have been otherwise poured forth on their enemies; and thus the sin of the people was doubled. It follows, ---

Lamentations 2:5

5. The Lord was 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.

5. Fuit Dominus tanquam hostis, perdidit Israelem, perdidit omnia palatia ejus, corrupit munitiones ejus, auxit in filia Jehudah fletum Et lamentationem.

These words might seem superfluous, since the Prophet has often repeated, that God was become an enemy to his own people; but we shall hereafter see, that though

they were extremely afflicted, they yet did not rightly consider whence their calamity arose. As, then, they had become so stupified by their evils, that they did not turn their eyes to God, they were on this account often urged and stimulated, that they might at length understand by their evils that God was a judge. Now, as it was difficult to convince them of this truth, the Prophet did not think it enough briefly to touch on it, but found it necessary to dwell on it at large, so that the people might at length be roused from their insensibility.

He then says that God himself was to them as an enemy, lest the Israelites should fix their eyes on the Chaldeans, and thus think that they had been the chief movers of the war. He therefore says, that they had undertaken that war through the secret influence of God, and had carried it on successfully, because God endued them with his own power. And hence the faithful ought to have concluded, that nothing could have been more grievous than to have God as their adversary; for as long as they had suffered themselves to be defended by the hand of God, they were victorious, we know, over all their enemies, so that they could then brave all dangers with impunity. The Prophet now reminds them, that as they had been successful and prosperous under the defense and protection of God, so now they were miserable, for no other reason but that God fought against them. But we ought at the same time to bear in mind the truth, which we have noticed, that God is never angry with men without reason; and since he was especially inclined to shew favor to his people, we must understand that he would not have been thus indignant, had not necessity constrained him.

He has destroyed Israel, he says; he has destroyed all his palaces; and afterwards, he has dissipated or demolished all his fortresses; and finally, he has increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation; {ואניה} {תאניה} tanie veanie, words derived from the same root, but joined together for the sake of amplifying, not only in this place, but also in the twenty-ninth chapter of Isaiah, and in other places. The meaning is, that God had not put an end to his vengeance, because the people had not resolved to put an end to their obstinate wickedness. He afterwards adds, ---

Lamentations 2:6

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.

6. Et transtulit (vel, dissipavit, vel evertit) tanquam hortum tabernaculum suum (alii vertunt, tabernaculum suum tanquam hortum,) perdidit testimonium suum, oblitus est Jehova in Sion conven tus solemnis (vel, sacrificii) et sabbathi, et quidem sunt voces, sed ego non adeo scrupulose distinguo) regem et sacerdotem.

Then he says first, that his tabernacle had been overthrown by God. They who render it ``cottage'' extenuate too much what is spoken of; nor does the Prophet simply compare the sanctuary of God to a cottage. Then I take tabernacle in a good sense. With regard to the verb {חמם}, chemes, as it means to migrate, they properly render it, as I think, who give this version, that God had removed his tabernacle; nor do I disapprove of repeating the word tabernacle. God, then, had removed his

tabernacle, as though it were a cottage in a garden. Watchmen, as it appears from the first chapter of Isaiah, had then cottages in their gardens, but only for a time, as is the case at this day with those who watch over their vineyards; they have, until the time of vintage, small chests in which they conceal themselves. The Prophet then says, that though God's tabernacle was honorable, and of high dignity, it was yet like a cottage in a garden. It is not, however, a simple comparison, as before stated, and therefore I reject the opinion of those who render it cottage, for it is not suitable, and it would be unmeaning. God, then, hath removed his tabernacle as a garden, that is, the sanctuary where he dwelt. And how did he remove it? even as a garden-cottage. And as watchers of gardens were wont to construct their little cots of leaves of trees and slight materials, so the Prophet, in order to increase commiseration, says, that the sacred habitation of God was like a cottage in a garden, because it was removed from one place to another; and thus he intimates that God regarded as nothing what he had previously adorned with singular excellencies. [511]

He then adds, that God had destroyed his testimony. By the word, {מועד}, muod, he means the same throughout; but some confine it to the ark of the covenant, and of this I do not disapprove. We must yet bear in mind the design of the Prophet, which was to shew that by the entire ruin of the Temple the covenant of God was in a manner abolished. It is, indeed, certain, that God had not forgotten his faithfulness and constancy, but this abolition of his covenant refers to what appeared to men. He then says, that the sanctuary which was, as it were, the testimony of God's favor, had been overthrown. Now, as he repeats again the word {מועד}, muod, it may be that he thus refers to the Tabernacle, either because the holy assemblies met there, or because it had been solemnly dedicated, that God might there hold intercourse with his people. For {מועד}, muod, means a fixed time, it means an assembly, it means a festival, and sometimes it means a sacrifice; and all these signification's are not unsuitable: yet when he says that God had destroyed his testimony, I apply this to the Tabernacle itself, or, if it seems to any preferable, to the ark of the covenant; though the former is the most suitable, because it was a place consecrated, as it has been stated, for mutual intercourse.

He afterwards says, that God had forgotten the assembly, the sacrifice, or the tabernacle; for it is the same word again, but it seems not to be taken in the same sense. Then I think that {מועד}, muod, is to be taken here for the assembly. As he had previously said, that the place where the holy assemblies met had been overthrown or destroyed, so now he says, that God had no care for all those assemblies, as though they had been buried in perpetual oblivion; for he mentions also the Sabbath, which corresponds with the subject. God, then, had forgotten all the assemblies as well as the Sabbath. There is, again, as to this last word, a part stated for the whole, for this word was no doubt intended to include all the festivals. The meaning of the

[511] The word {{שכו is rendered by the versions in the sense of ,{סכו} ``his tabernacle;'' but by so doing they make it the same in effect with ,{מועדו} ``his place of meeting,'' in the following clause. The verb {חמס} never means what Calvin says, to migrate or to remove, but to cast off, or to throw down, that is, with force or violence. Then ,{שר} a fence or enclosure, is what suits the verb, --- 6. And he has thrown down as that of a garden his enclosure, He has destroyed his assembling-place; Forgotten hath Jehovah in Sion the assembly and the Sabbath; And has cast off, in the foaming of his wrath, the king and the priest. The ``enclosure,'' or fence, refers to the courts which surrounded the Temple; hence the place where the people assembled was destroyed. God had regarded it no more than the fence of a common garden. There is ``fence'' understood after ,{כ} no uncommon thing in Hebrew. --- Ed.

passage then is, that the impiety of the people had been so great, that God, having, as it were, forgotten his covenant, had inflicted such a dreadful punishment, that religion, for a time, was in a manner trodden under foot.

He says, in the last place, that the king and the priest had been rejected by God. We have already said, that these were as two pledges of God's paternal favor; for, on the one hand, he who reigned from the posterity of David was a living image of Christ; and on the other hand, there was always a high-priest from the posterity of Aaron to reconcile men to God. It was then the same as though God shewed himself in every way propitious to the chosen people. Then their true happiness was founded on the kingdom and the priesthood; for the kingdom was, as it were, a mark of God's favor for their defense, and the priesthood was to them the means by which reconciliation with God was obtained. When, therefore, God wholly disregarded the king and the priest, it became hence evident, that he was greatly displeased with his people, having thus, in a manner, obliterated his favors. It follows, ---

Lamentations 2:7

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.

7. Abominatus est Dominus altare suum, repulit (vel, rejecit procul ab animo suo) sanctuarium suum, tradidit in manum hostis muros palatiorum ejus, vocem ediderunt in domo Jehovae tanquam in die sacri conventus (vel, solemnis; iterum ponitur nomen {מועד} tamen accipitur vel pro conventu vel pro die festo.)

He proceeds with the same subject, and adopts similar words. He says first, that God had abominated his altar; [512] an expression not strictly proper, but the Prophet could not otherwise fully shew to the Jews what they deserved; for had he only spoken of the city, of the lands, of the palaces, of the vineyards, and, in short, of all their possessions, it would have been a much lighter matter; but when he says that God had counted as nothing all their sacred things, --- the altar, the Temple, the ark of the covenant, and festive days, --- when, therefore, he says, that God had not only disregarded, but had also cast away from him these things, which yet especially availed to conciliate his favor, the people must have hence perceived, except they were beyond measure stupid, how grievously they had provoked God's wrath against themselves; for this was the same as though heaven and earth were blended together. Had there been an upsetting of all things, had the sun left its place and sunk into darkness, had the earth heaved upwards, the confusion would have hardly been more dreadful, than when God put forth thus his hand against the sanctuary, the altar, the festal days, and all their sacred things. But we must refer to the reason why this was done, even because the Temple had been long polluted by the iniquities of the people, and because all sacred things had been wickedly and disgracefully profaned. We now, then, understand the reason why the Prophet enlarged so much on a subject in itself sufficiently plain.

He afterwards adds, He hath delivered all the palaces, etc.; as though he had said, that the city had not been taken by the valor of enemies, but that the Chaldeans had

[512] Our version, "cast off," gives the real meaning of the verb. — Ed.

fought under the authority and banner of God. He, in short, intimates that the Jews had miserably perished, because they perished through their own fault; and that the Chaldeans had proved victorious in battle, and had taken the city, not through their own courage or skill, but because God had resolved to punish that ungodly and wicked people.

It follows in the last place, that the enemies had made a noise in the temple of God as in the day of solemnity. Here also the Prophet shews, that God would have never suffered the enemies insolently to exult and to revel in the very Temple, had not the Israelites deserved all this; for the insolence of their enemies was not unknown to God, and he might have easily checked it if he pleased. Why, then, did he grant so much license to these profane enemies? even because the Jews themselves had previously polluted the Temple, so that he abhorred all their solemn assemblies, as also he declares by Isaiah, that he detested their festivals, Sabbaths, and new moons. (Isaiah 1:13, 14.) But it was a shocking change, when enemies entered the place which God had consecrated for himself, and there insolently boasted and uttered base and wicked calumnies against God! But the sadder the spectacle, the more detestable appeared the impiety of the people, which had been the cause of so great evils. For we ought ever to remember what I have often stated, that these circumstances were noticed by the Prophet, that the people might at length acknowledge themselves guilty as to all these evils, which they would have otherwise ascribed to the Chaldeans. That, then, the Chaldeans polluted the Temple, that they trod under foot all sacred things, all this the Prophet shews was to be ascribed to the Jews themselves, who had, through their own conduct, opened the Temple to the Chaldeans, who had exposed all sacred things to their will and pleasure. It follows, ---

Lamentations 2:8

8. The LORD hath purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter 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.

8. Cogitavit Jehova ut perderet murum filiae Sion, extendit lineam, non retraxit manum suam a dissipatione; itaque luxit antemurale, et murus; pariter corruerunt (vel, eversi sunt.)

The verb to think, has more force than what is commonly assigned to it; for it would be very flat to say, that God thought to destroy; but to think here means to resolve or to decree. [513] This is one thing. And then we must bear in mind the contrast between this and those false imaginations, by which men are wont to be drawn away, so as not to believe that God is present in adversities as well as prosperity. As, therefore, men go willfully astray through various false thoughts, and thus withdraw themselves, as it were, designedly from God, the Prophet says here that the walls of Jerusalem had not fallen by chance, but had been overthrown through a divine decree, because God had so determined, according to what we have seen in many places throughout the book of Jeremiah: ``See, these are the thoughts which God

[513] The verb is often used in this secondary sense, to purpose or resolve or determine, as the result of thinking. The Vulg. and the Targ. very improperly retain its primary meaning, but the Syr. gives that of resolving or determining. — Ed.

has thought respecting Jerusalem, which he has thought respecting Babylon.'' The Prophet, then, in these instances, taught what he now confirms in this place, that when the city Jerusalem was destroyed, it was not what happened by chance; but because God had brought there the Chaldeans, and employed them as his instruments in taking and destroying the city: God, then, has thought to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion. It is, indeed, true, that the Chaldeans had actively carried on the war, and omitted nothing as to military skill, in order to take the city: but the Prophet calls here the attention of the Jews to a different thought, so that they might acknowledge that they suffered justly for their sins, and that God was the chief author of that war, and that the Chaldeans were to be viewed as hired soldiers.

He afterwards adds, that God had extended a line or a rule, as it is usually done in separating buildings. [514] And then he says, He hath not drawn back his hand from scattering; and so it was, that the ramparts and the walls mourned, and fell down together [515] We now see that what the Prophet had in view was to lead the Jews fully to believe that the destruction was not to be ascribed to the Chaldeans, but, on the contrary, to God. Added at the same time must be another part of what is here taught, that God would not have been so displeased with the holy city which he had chosen, had not the people extremely provoked him with their sins. It now follows, ---

Lamentations 2:9

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.

9. Demersae sunt in terra portae ejus, perdidit et confregit vectes ejus, rex ejus et principes ejus in gentibus (vel, ad gentes;) nulla lex, etiam Prophetae non reperiunt visionem a Jehova.

He again relates in other words what he had said, that the walls of Jerusalem had fallen. But he now speaks of the gates and says, that they had sunk into the ground, or had become fixed in the ground; for it may be explained in both ways; as though he had said, that the gates had been no hindrance to the enemies so as to prevent them to enter the city. He thus derides the foolish confidence of the people, who relied on their defenses and thought the city impregnable. He then says that the gates had sunk, or had become fixed in the ground

He then says that God had destroyed and broken her bars; for no doubt the gates had firm and strong bars. He then says that neither the gates nor the bars were found sufficient, when God stretched forth his hand to the Chaldeans, to lead them into the city. He afterwards adds, that both the king and the princes had been driven into exile; for when he says, among the nations, or to the nations, he intimates that there was no more a king, for he and the royal seed and the princes were gone into banishment. The rest I defer until tomorrow.

[514] It was the line of destruction as mentioned in Isaiah 34:11, designed to point out what was to be destroyed. — Ed.

[515] The verbs {,אבל to mourn, and ,{אמל} to be faint, to fail, when applied to inanimate things, mean to be desolate and to decay. This clause then ought to be thus rendered, --- So that he has made desolate the rampart and the wall, They are become wholly decayed together. The connection shows that the where must be rendered, ``so that;'' and as the last verb has the last letter doubled, the word ``wholly'' ought to be introduced. --- Ed.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that since so many tokens of thy wrath meet us at this day, we may without delay return to thee, and so submit to thee in true repentance, as to strive at the same time to be reconciled to thee; and as a Mediator has been given to us to lead us to thee, --- O grant that we may by a true faith seek him, and follow wherever he may call us, that having been purified from all pollution's, we may be glorified by thee our Father, and may so call on thee, that we may find thy grace present in all our evils. Amen. ---

Lecture Sixth

Among the calamities of Jerusalem which the Prophet deplores, he mentions this as one, that there was no law or doctrine. The Chaldee Paraphraser thought that the reference is to punishment, but he perverts the words of the Prophet. There follows afterwards an amplification; after having said, there is no law, he adds, her prophets also have not found a vision from Jehovah. There is then no doubt but that the Prophet means that among the miseries of the people this was the greatest, that they were without doctrine or teaching, and without prophets. The word {תורה}, ture, is indeed used often by way of excellency to designate the law, but it signifies also doctrine or instruction; and the meaning here is the same, as though the Prophet had said, that the Jews had been so forsaken by God, that they found no consolation in their evils. This may be better understood by a similar complaint in the Psalms:

``Our signs we see not, there is not a Prophet any more, there is no more any one who understands.'' (Psalm 74:9.)

The faithful there say, that they were in a hopeless state, because God shewed them no signs of his favor; and signs were given when God appeared propitious to them. Now, as God had testified that there would be always faithful teachers to guide the people, they therefore complained that there was no Prophet, that there was no one any more who had a vision. And so in this place the Prophet says, that there was no law, and that the prophets were without a vision, even because God, as though wearied, had given up the care of the people: for his paternal favor could not have been better known than by this evidence, that he sent them prophets; and it is certain that all prophecies ceased when the people were driven into exile.

A long time after, Daniel began to exhort the faithful to hope for a return; and on this account it is said by Isaiah,

``Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, will our God say.''
(Isaiah 40:1.)

There Isaiah indicates that there would be a temporary silence; for all the prophets would be mute, that the people might lie in a hopeless state, and for this reason, because they had long abused God's patience, and had disregarded that singular blessing, when God manifested by his servants that he was solicitous for their well-being and safety, as he had often said, that he rose up early and extended his hand to them by the prophets. As, then, the gift of prophecy was to the people a sure pledge not only of God's favor, but also of the solicitude which he entertained for them; so when he withheld prophets from the people, he departed from them, having forsaken

as it were his station among them. [516]

We now then understand what the Prophet meant by saying, that there was no doctrine any more, and that the prophets of Jerusalem found no vision any more from Jehovah; for God, after his word had been long profaned, became silent, and deigned not for a time to open his sacred mouth, because he had seen that he had been treated with derision.

Now this passage teaches us, that nothing is more desirable in evils, and that there is no better remedy, than to have God's promise, that he will at length be merciful to us. For when any promise of God is set before us, it is like a small light kindled in darkness. Though then our misery were like a thick darkness, yet when God shews some token of favor by his promises, that ought to be sufficient to give us hope and joy. On the other hand, when no promises of God occur to us, it is a sure token of reprobation, unless that he sometimes thus tries us, as we read here. But the faithful also themselves, when they perceive no evidence of God's paternal favor in his promises, are as it were in a hopeless state, and sunk in the lowest depths. Hence it is then only that we arise from death to life, and find support so as not to be overwhelmed with despair, when God is pleased to speak to us. It now follows, ---

Lamentations 2:10

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.

10. Sedent ad terram, silent senes filiae Sion, attollunt pulverem super caput suum, accincti sunt saccis; demiserunt (vel, demittunt) ad terram caput suum virgines (aut, puellae) Jerusalem.

The Prophet here strikingly represents the grievousness of the people's calamity, when he says, that the elders, as in hopeless despair, were lying on the ground, that they cast dust on their heads, that they were clad in sackcloth, as it was usually done in very grievous sorrow, and that the virgins bent their heads down to the ground. The meaning is, that the elders knew not what to do, and led others. to join them in acts of fruitless and abject lamentation. We indeed know that young women are over-careful as to their form and beauty, and indulge themselves in pleasures; and that when they roll themselves with their face and hair on the ground, it is a token of extreme mourning. This is what the Prophet means.

They were wont indeed to put on sackcloth as a token of repentance, and to cast dust on their heads; but their minds were often so confused, that they only thus set forth their mourning and sorrow, and had no regard to God; and hypocrites, when they put on sackcloth, pretended to repent, but it was a false pretense. Now in this place the Prophet does not mean that the elders by adopting these rites professed

[516] "No law." Gataker understood this to refer to the fact, that the law written on the tables of stone, deposited in the temple, was lost, having been destroyed by the Chaldeans. Others say, "no law" was observed respecting God's worship, the temple having been destroyed. The law, moral, ceremonial and judicial, was given to Israel, and formed the condition on which they were to inherit the land. When banished, because they kept not the law, they had in exile as it were no law; the covenant respecting the land, dependent on the law, was during the exile made void or suspended. — Ed.

to repent and humbly to solicit pardon; but refers to them only as tokens of sorrow; as though he had said, that the elders had no resources, and that the young women had no hope nor joy. For the elders did lie down on the ground, as it is usual with those who have no remedy. We now understand the meaning of the Prophet. [517] It follows, ---

Lamentations 2:11

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 sucklings swoon in the streets of the city.

11. Defecerunt in lachrymis oculi mei, conturbata sunt viscera mea, effusum est ad terram jecur meum, propter contritionem filiae populi mei, dum evanuit parvalus et sugens Ubera in compitis urbis.

The Prophet himself now speaks, and says that his eyes were consumed with tears, while weeping on account of the calamities of the people: even in the deepest grief tears at length dry up; but when there is no end of weeping, the sorrow, which as it were never ripens, must necessarily be very bitter. Jeremiah then expresses now the vehemence of his grief when he says that his eyes failed through shedding tears. He said in Jeremiah 9, ``Who will give me eyes for fountains?'' that is, who will make my eyes to turn into fountains, that they may continually flow? and this he said, because he saw how dreadful a vengeance of God impended over the obstinate. But now, when he sees accomplished what he had dreaded, he says, that his eyes were consumed with weeping.

To the same purpose is what he adds, that his bowels were disturbed. It is the same verb as we have seen before, {חמרמרו}, chemermeru; which some render ``bound,'' as we also said then. I know not why one expositor has changed what he had elsewhere said rightly; he puts here, ``swollen have my bowels.'' But I see no reason why the verb should be taken here in a different sense, for it immediately follows, my liver is poured forth on the ground. He may, indeed, have included other parts of the intestines by stating a part for the whole. The word here properly means the liver, as when Solomon says,

``He hath pierced my liver.'' (Proverbs 7:23.)

But Jeremiah, in short, shews that all his faculties were so seized with grief, that no part was exempt. He then says that his liver was poured forth, but in the same sense in which he said that his bowels were disturbed. They are indeed hyperbolical expressions; but as to the meaning, Jeremiah simply expresses his feelings; for there is no doubt but that he was incredibly anxious and sorrowful on account of so great a calamity; for he not only lamented the adversity in no ordinary way, but he also considered how wicked was that obstinacy in which the people had hardened themselves for almost fifty years; for he had spent himself in vain, not for a short time, but for nearly fifty years he never ceased to speak to them. He then, no doubt, thought within himself what the people had deserved, so that he had no common dread of God's vengeance. This, then, was the reason why he said that his bowels

[517] The verse may be thus rendered, — 10. They sit on the ground, they are silent, the elders of the daughter of Sion; They have cast dust on their head, they have girded on sackcloth; They have bent to the ground their head, the daughters of Jerusalem. — Ed

were disturbed and his liver poured forth. [518] He, however, mentions the cause of his sorrow, even the breach or destruction of the daughter of his people; and he mentions one thing in particular, because the little one and he who sucked the breasts vanished away in the streets of the city; for so I render the verb {עתף}, otheph, which properly means to cover; but its secondary meaning is to vanish away, as we shall again presently see. It was, indeed, a miserable sight, when not only men and women were everywhere slain, but when, through famine, little children also fainted. We, indeed, know that infants move our pity, for the tears of a child in hunger penetrate into our inmost souls. When, therefore, little children and those who hung on their mothers' breasts, cried through the streets of the city, it must have touched the most iron hearts. It was then not without reason that Jeremiah referred to this in particular, that little children and sucklings vanished away, not in a deserted and barren land, but in the very streets of the city. It follows, ---

Lamentations 2:12

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 mother's bosom.

12. Matribus suis dicunt, Ubi triticum et vinum? cum evanescunt (in evanescendo ipsos, ad verbum) tanquam vulneratus (aut, mortuus; dum evanescunt Ergo tanquam vulnerati, aut, mortui; est numeri enallage) in compitis urbis (iterum repetit,) et cum se effundit (vel, effunditur) anima eorum in sinum matrum ipsorum.

There is either a personification in the words of the Prophet, or he speaks now of another party, for he cannot refer now to children sucking their mothers' breasts, for they could not have expressly said, Where is corn and wine? and the use of wine is not allowed to infants. Then the words of the Prophets extend further, for not infants, but children somewhat grown up, could have thus spoken. And in this view there is nothing unreasonable or forced, for he spoke of little children, and to little children he joined infants. [519] And now he refers only to one party, even that children, who could now speak, complained to their mothers that there was no bread nor wine, that is, no means of support, no food.

If, however, any one prefers a personification, I do not object; and this view would not be unsuitable, that even infants by their silence cried for food; for the tears of children speak more efficaciously than when one gives utterance to words.

However this may be, the Prophet intimates that such was the scarcity, that children died in the bosom of their mothers, and in vain sought food and cried that they were without support. He then says that they said to their mothers; [520] by which

[518] The verbs here are all in the past tense, and the versions so render them. Our version is wrong, as well as that of Blayney and Henderson, in rendering them in the present tense; for the Prophet is describing how he felt when he witnessed the destruction of Jerusalem, — 11. Consume with tears did my eyes, agitated were my bowels, Poured out on the ground was my liver, for the breach of the daughter of my people, When faint did the child and the suckling in the streets of the city. — Ed.

[519] That young children and infants are spoken of, is evident from the end of the verse; the one died in the streets, and the other in the mother's bosom. The question, "Where is corn," &c., is to be understood of the children, young boys and girls. — Ed.

[520] To correspond with the former verse, the versions render this, "They said to their mothers." The verb is, indeed, in the future tense, and it might be rendered, "To their mothers would they say;" for the Hebrew future may be thus rendered, — 12. To their mothers would they

expression he means that their complaints were the more pitiable, because their mothers could afford them no help. And we know how tender and affectionate are the feelings of mothers, for a mother would willingly nourish her own child, not only with her own milk, but even, if possible, with her life. When, therefore, the Prophet says that children cried to their mothers, he means to represent a sad spectacle, and which ought justly to produce horror in the minds of all. Where is bread and wine? he says, even when they vanished away (some say ``fainted,'' but I prefer, as I have said, this rendering) as a dead man in the streets; and further, when they poured out, a sadder thing still, --- when they poured out their souls into the bosom of their mothers. It now follows, ---

Lamentations 2:13

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?

13. Quid contestabor tibi (vel, adducam tibi testes, vel, testificabor tecum?) quid simile tibi filia Jerusalem (vel, cur? {מה} potest trans ferri utroque modo;) quid (vel, cur) aequabo tibi quiequam (est repetitio, sed diverso verbo) ut te Consoler, virgo filia Sion? Quia magna sicut mare contritio tua; quis sanabit te?

When we wish to alleviate grief, we are wont to bring examples which have some likeness to the case before us. For when any one seeks to comfort one in illness, he will say, ``Thou art not the first nor the last, thou hast many like thee; why shouldest thou so much torment thyself; for this is a condition almost common to mortals.'' As, then, it is an ordinary way of alleviating grief to bring forward examples, the Prophet says, ``What examples shall I set before thee? that is, why or to what purpose should I mention to thee this or that man who is like thee? or, What then shall I call thee to witness, or testify to thee?,'' But I prefer this rendering, ``To what purpose should I bring witnesses to thee, who may say that they have seen something of a like kind? for these things will avail thee nothing.'' [521]

The Prophet, then, means that comforts commonly administered to those in misery, would be of no benefit, because the calamity of Jerusalem exceeded all other examples, as though he had said, ``No such thing had ever happened in the world; God had never before thundered so tremendously against any people; were I, then, to seek to bring examples to thee, I should be utterly at a loss; for when I compare thee with others in misery, I find that thou exceedest them all. ``We now, then, perceive the meaning of the Prophet: he wished by this mode of speaking to exaggerate the grievousness of Jerusalem's calamity, for she had been afflicted in a manner unusual and unheard of before; as though he had said that the Jews had become miserable beyond all other nations. Why then should I bring witnesses before thee? and why should I make any one like thee? why should I make other miserable people equal to thee? He adds the reason or the end (for the {ו}, vau, here ought to be so rendered) that I might comfort thee, that is, after the usual manner of men. He

say," Where is corn and wine?" When they fainted as one wounded in the streets of the city, When they poured out their life into the bosom of their mothers. — Ed

[521] The simpler rendering would be, "What shall I testify (or declare) to thee?" So the Sept: or, "What shall I call thee to witness?" — Ed.

afterwards adds, because great as the sea is thy breach or breaking; that is, ``Thy calamity is the deepest abyss: I cannot then find any in the whole world whom I can compare to thee, for thy calamity exceeds all calamities; nor is there anything like it that can be set before thee, so that thou art become a memorable example for all ages.''

But when we hear the Prophet speaking thus, we ought to remember that we have succeeded in the place of the ancient people. As, then, God had formerly punished with so much severity the sins of his chosen people, we ought to beware lest we in the present day provoke him to an extremity by our perverseness, for he remains ever like himself. But whenever it may happen that we are severely afflicted and broken down by his hand, let us still know that there is yet some comfort remaining for us, even when sunk down in the lowest depth. The Prophet, indeed, exaggerates in this place the evils of the people; but he had previously begun to encourage the faithful to entertain hope; and he will again repeat the same doctrine. But it was necessary for the Prophet to use such words until those who were as yet torpid in their sins, and did not sufficiently consider the design of God's vengeance, were really humbled. He adds, ---

Lamentations 2:14

14. Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee: and they have not discovered thine iniquity, to turn away thy captivity; but have seen for thee false burdens and causes of banishment.

14. Prophetae tui viderunt tibi vanitatem et insulsitatem (vel, insipidum,) et non aperuerunt super iniquitate tua (hoc est, non revelarunt tibi; aut, manifestarunt iniquitatem tuam,) ut converterent captivitatem tuam (alii vertunt, aversionem tuam, vel, defectionem) et viderunt tibi prophetias vanitatis, et expulsiones.

Here the Prophet condemns the Jews for that wantonness by which they had, as it were, designedly destroyed themselves, as though they had willfully drunk sweet poison. They had been inebriated with those fallacies which we have seen, when impostors promised them a prosperous condition; for we have seen that false prophets often boldly declared that whatever Jeremiah threatened was of no account. Since, then, the Jews were inebriated with such flatteries, and disregarded God's judgment, and freely indulged themselves in their vices, the effect was, that God's wrath had been always and continually kindled by them. Now, then, Jeremiah reproves them for such wantonness, even because they willfully sought to be deceived, and with avidity cast themselves into snares, by seeking for themselves flatterers as teachers. Micah also reproves them for the same thing, that they sought prophets who promised them a fruitful vintage and an abundant harvest. (Micah 2:10.) The meaning of Jeremiah is the same.

He says that prophets had prophesied, or had seen vanity for them; but the verb refers to prophecies, as prophets are called seers. He then says that the prophets had seen vanity and insipidity [522] This availed not to extenuate the fault of the people;

[522] So it means when applied to eatables, but folly or absurdity when applied to words. It comes from {,{נפל to fall, in the sense of decaying or degenerating. It is what is neither wise nor true. Hence it is rendered ``foolishness'' by the Sept.; ``foolish'' by the Vulg.; and ``without substance'' by the Targ. --- Thy prophets, they have seen vanity and folly. What they had seen were both ``vain,'' useless, and ``foolish,'' absurd. --- Ed.

and Jeremiah does not here flatter the people, as though they had perished through the fault of others; and yet this was a common excuse, for most, when they had been deceived, complained that they had fallen through being led astray, and also that they had not been sufficiently cautious when subtle men were laying snares for them. But the Prophet here condemns the Jews, because they had been deceived by false prophets, as it was a just reward for their vainglory and ambition. For they had very delicate ears, and free reproofs could not be endured by them; in a word, when they rejected all sound doctrine, the devil must have necessarily succeeded in the place of God, as also Paul says,

``that those were justly punished who were blinded by God so as to believe a lie, because they received not the truth.''
(2 Thessalonians 2:11, 12.)

We now perceive the design of the Prophet: he says that the Jews had indeed been deceived by the false prophets; but this had happened through their own fault, because they had not submitted to obey God, because they had rejected sound doctrine, because they had been rebellious against all his counsels. At the same time, not only their crime seems to have been thus exaggerated, but also their shame was brought before them, --- because they had dared to set up these impostors against Jeremiah as well as other servants of God; for they had boasted greatly of these their false prophets whenever they sought to exult against God. How great was this presumption! When the false prophets had promised them security, they immediately triumphed in an insolent manner over Jeremiah, as though they were victorious. As, then, their wickedness and arrogance had been such against God, the Prophet justly retorts upon them, ``Behold now as to your false prophets; for when they lately promised to you prosperity of every kind, I was inhumanly treated, and my calling was disdainfully repudiated by you; let now your false prophets come forward: be wise at length through your evils, and acknowledge what it is to have acted so haughtily against God and against his servants.'' We now understand why the Prophet says, ``They have seen for you vanity and insipidity.''

He adds, they have not opened, or revealed, &c. The preposition {על}, ol, is here redundant; the words are, ``they have not revealed upon thine iniquity.'' There is, indeed, a suitableness in the words in that language, that they had not applied their revelations to the iniquities of the people, for they would have been thus restored to the right way, and would have thus obviated the vengeance of God.

Now, this passage ought to be carefully noticed: Jeremiah spoke of the fallacies of the false prophets, which he said were insipid: he now expresses how they had deceived the people, even because they disclosed not their iniquities. Let us then know that there is nothing more necessary than to be warned, that being conscious of our iniquities we may repent. And this was the chief benefit to be derived from the teaching of the prophets. For the other part, the foretelling of future things would have had but little effect had not the prophets preached respecting the vengeance of God, --- had they not exhorted the people to repentance, --- had they not bidden them by faith to embrace the mercy of God. Then Jeremiah in a manner detects the false doctrines of those who had corrupted the prophetic doctrine, by saying that they had

not disclosed iniquities. Let us then learn by this mark how to distinguish between the faithful servants of God and impostors. For the Lord by his word summons us before his tribunal, and would have our iniquities discovered, that we may loathe ourselves, and thus open an entrance for mercy. But when what is brought before us only tickles our ears and feeds our curiosity, and, at the same time, buries all our iniquities, let us then know that the refined things which vastly please men are insipid and useless. Let, then, the doctrine of repentance be approved by us, the doctrine which leads us to God's tribunal, so that being cast down in ourselves we may flee to his mercy.

He afterwards adds, that they might turn back thy captivity; some prefer, ``thy defection'' --- and this meaning is not unsuitable; but the Prophet, I have no doubt, refers to punishment rather than to a crime. Then the captivity of the people would have been reversed had the people in time repented; for we obviate God's wrath by repentance: ``If we judge ourselves,'' says Paul, ``we shall not be judged.'' (1 Corinthians 11:31.) As, then, miserable men anticipate God's judgment when they become judges of themselves, the Prophet does not without reason say that the false prophets had not disclosed their iniquities, so that they might remain quiet in their own country, and never be driven into exile. How so? for God would have been thus pacified, that is, had the people willingly turned to him, as it is said in Isaiah,

``And be converted, and I should heal them.'' (Isaiah 6:10.)

Conversion, then, is said there to lead to healing; for as fire when fuel is withdrawn is extinguished, so also when we cease to sin fuel is not supplied to God's wrath. We now, then, perceive the meaning of the Prophet; he, in short, intimates that people had been destroyed because they sought falsehoods, while the false prophets vainly flattered them; for they would have in due time escaped so great evils, had the prophets boldly exhorted the people to repentance. [523]

He then adds, And they saw for thee prophecies of vanity and expulsions. Though the word {משאת}, meshat, is often taken in a bad sense for a burden, that is, a hard prophecy which shews that God's vengeance is nigh, yet it is doubtful whether the Prophet takes it now in this sense, since he speaks of prophecies which gave hope of impunity to the people; and these were not {משאות}, meshaut, that is, they were not grievous and dreadful prophecies. But when all things are well considered, it will be evident that Jeremiah did not without reason adopt this word; for he afterwards adds an explanation. The word, {משאה}, meshae, is indeed taken sometimes as meaning any kind of prophecy, but it properly means what is comminatory. But now, what does Jeremiah say? They saw for thee burdens which thou hast escaped. For to render odious the doctrine of the holy man, they called whatever he taught, according to a proverbial saying, a burden. Thus, then, they created a prejudice against the holy man by saying that all his prophecies contained nothing but terror and trouble. Now, by way of concession, the Prophet says, ``They themselves have indeed been prophets to you, and they saw, but saw at length burdens.''

While, then, the false prophets promised impunity to the people, they were flat-

[523] The verb rendered “turn back,” means also to turn away or aside, and this is the meaning given it here by the Syr., and most suitable to the passage, — And they discovered not thine iniquity, to turn aside thy captivity. That is, as the Syr. Expresses it, to avert it. — Ed.

terers, and no burden appeared, that is, no trouble; but these prophecies became at length much more grievous than all the threatenings with which Jeremiah had terrified them; and corresponding with this view is what immediately follows, expulsions. For the Prophet, I doubt not, shews here what fruit the vain flatteries by which the people had chosen to be deluded had produced: for hence it happened, that they had been expelled from their country and driven into exile. For if the reason was asked, why the people had been deprived of their own inheritance, the obvious answer would have been this, because they had chosen to be deceived, because they had hardened themselves in obstinacy by means of falsehoods and vain promises. Since, then, their exile was the fruit of false doctrine, Jeremiah says now that these impostors saw burdens of vanity, but which at length brought burdens; and then they saw, {מדוחים} meduchim, [524] expulsions, even those things which had been the causes of expulsion or exile.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that though thou chastisest us as we deserve, we may yet never have the light of truth extinguished among us, but may ever see, even in darkness, at least some sparks, which may enable us to behold thy paternal goodness and mercy, so that we may especially be humbled under thy mighty hand, and that being really prostrate through a deep feeling of repentance, we may raise our hopes to heaven, and never doubt but that thou wilt at length be reconciled to us when we seek thee in thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Seventh.

Lamentations 2:15

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?

15. Plauserunt super te manibus suis (id est, comploserunt manus suas) omnes transcuntes per viam, sibilarunt, et moverunt caput suum super filia Jerusalem, An haec urbs de qua dixcrunt, perfecta decore, gaudium totius terrae?

The Prophet here reminds the Jews of the miseries by which they had been already in an extreme measure afflicted, so that these words seem redundant and somewhat unkind; for unseasonable is reproof when one lies down, as it were, worn out with evils. As this was the condition of the people, the Prophet ought not to have made more bitter their grief. But we have already referred to the reason for this, even because the Jews, though they mourned and were extremely sorrowful in their calamities, did not yet consider whence their evils came. It was therefore necessary that they should be more and more awakened; for it is but of little profit for any one to suffer evils, except he has regard to God's judgment. We hence perceive the design of the Prophet, why he so much at large speaks of the miseries which were seen by all, and could not escape the notice of the Jews, who were almost overwhelmed

[524] There seems to be a mistake in this word of a {{ר for an ,{ן} two letters very similar; for the Targ., the Syr., and the Arab., must have so read the word, as they render it in the sense of what is deceptive, fallacious, or imaginary. It is in the last rendered ``phantasms.'' The word occurs in Jeremiah 22:14, and is applied to chambers through which air or wind passed freely. It may be rendered here winds or airy things. Such was the character of their prophecies. This is far more suitable to the passage than expulsions or rejections, as given by the Sept. and Vulg. --- Ed

with them; for it was not enough for them to feel their miseries, except they also considered the cause of them.

He then says, All who have passed by clapped their hands and hissed and moved the head, either in token of mockery, or of abhorrence, which is more probable. He then says, that they moved or shook the head at the daughter of Jerusalem, [525] Is this the city of which they said, It is perfect in beauty, and the joy of the whole earth? I know not why some render {כלילת}, calibat, a crown; it comes, as it is well known, from {כלל} calal, which means fullness, or anything solid. He then says, that Jerusalem had been perfect in beauty, because God had adorned it with singular gifts; he had especially favored it with the incomparable honor of being called by his name. Hence Jerusalem was in a manner the earthly palace of God, that is, on account of the Temple; and further, it was there that the doctrine of salvation was to be found; and remarkable was this promise,

``From Sion shall go forth the law,
and rite word of God from Jerusalem.'' (Isaiah 2:3.)

God had also promised to Ezekiel, that this city would be the fountain and origin of salvation to the whole world. (Ezekiel 47:1-12.) As, then, Jerusalem had been adorned with so remarkable gifts, the Prophet introduces here strangers, who ask, ``Could it be that a city so celebrated for beauty had become a desolation?''

He calls it also the joy of the whole earth; for God had poured there his gifts so liberally, that it was a cause of joy to all. For we delight in beautiful things; and wherever God's gifts appear, we ought to have our hearts filled with joy. Some give a more refined explanation --- that Jerusalem had been the joy of the whole earth, because men have no peace except God be propitious to them; and there God had deposited the testimony and pledge of his favor: and thus Jerusalem made glad the whole world, because it invited all nations to God. This, at the first view, is plausible; but it seems to me more refined than solid. I am, therefore, content with this simple view, that Jerusalem was the joy of the whole earth, because God had designed that his favor should appear there, which might justly excite the whole world to rejoice. [526] It afterwards follows, ---

Lamentations 2:16

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

16. Aperuerunt [527] super te os suum cuncti hostes tui, sibilarunt et frenduerunt dente (vel, dentibus;) dixerunt, Devorabimus; utique hic dies quem expectavimus;

[525] Jeremiah relates what had taken place, the verbs being in the past tense. Our version is not correct in rendering the verbs in the present tense. The old versions follow the Hebrew. — Ed.

[526] The words may be rendered, "the joy of the whole land," i.e., the land of Israel; which was strictly true. — Ed.

[527] This verse begins with {,{פ and the next with ;{ע} thus the alphabetical order is deranged. The same thing occurs in the two next chapters, though in the first chapter the usual order of the letters is preserved. Many conjectures have been made on the subject, but no satisfactory reason has been assigned. The Targ. and the early versions, except the Syr., follow in the three places the present text; only the Sept., very strangely, prefix the letters in their alphabetical order, and yet give the verses as they now are. When, added to this, we find the meaning favors the present arrangement, we cannot but conclude that it was the original one, though the reason why Jeremiah changed, as to these two letters, even in three instances, the alphabetical order, cannot now be discovered. --- Ed

invenimus, vidimus.

Here, also, the Prophet introduces enemies as insolently exulting over the miseries of the people. He first says, that they had opened the mouth, even that they might loudly upbraid them; for he is not said to open the mouth who only speaks, but who insolently and freely utters his calumnies. God is, indeed, sometimes said emphatically to open his mouth, when he announces something that deserves special notice; and so Matthew says, that Christ opened his mouth when he spoke of true happiness. (Matthew 5:2.) But in this place and in others the enemy is said to open his mouth, who, with a full mouth, so to speak, taunts him whom he sees worn out with evils. Hence, he refers to petulance or insolence, when he says, that enemies had opened their mouth

He then adds, that they had hissed. By hissing he no doubt means scoffing or taunting; for it immediately follows, that they had gnashed with their teeth, as though he had said, that enemies not only blamed and condemned them, but had also given tokens of extreme hatred; for he who gnashes with his teeth thus shews the bitterness of his mind, and even fury; for to gnash the teeth is what belongs to a wild beast. The Prophet then says, that enemies had not only harassed the people with taunts and scoffs, but had also cruelly and even furiously treated them. Now we know that to men of ingenuous minds, such a treatment is harder than death itself: for it is deemed by many a hard thing to fall in battle --- and we see how men of war expose themselves to the greatest danger; but a disgraceful death is far more bitter. The Prophet, then, no doubt, amplifies the miseries of the people by this circumstance, that they had been harassed on every side by taunts. And he mentions this on purpose, because reproofs by the prophets had not been received by them; for we know how perversely the Jews had rebelled against the prophets, when they reproved them in God's name. As, then, they would not have borne the paternal reproofs of God, they were thus constrained to bear the reproaches of enemies, and to receive the just reward of their pride and presumption. Nor is there a doubt, as I have said, but that the Prophet related reproaches of this kind, and the scoffs of enemies, that the people might at length know that they had been exposed to such evils, because they had proudly rejected the reproofs given them by the prophets.

He says, that enemies spoke thus, We have devoured; surely this is the day which we have expected; as though they triumphed when they saw that they got the victory, and that they could do with the people as they pleased. And as I have said, this in itself was a very bitter thing to the people; but. when the Prophet related, as in the person of the enemies, what was already sufficiently known to them, the people ought to have called to mind the reason why they had been so severely afflicted; and this is what the Prophet clearly sets forth in the next verse; for he, adds, ---

Lamentations 2:17

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.

17. Fecit Jehova quod cogitaverat, complevit sermonem suum quam praeceperat

a diebus anitiquis: diruit (vel, evertit) et non perpercit; et exhilaravit super te inimicum, et extulit corum hostium tuorum.

Had the Prophet related only the boastings of enemies, the people would have probably become more hardened in their sorrow. But now, on the other hand, he assumes a different character. After having represented how insolently the enemies conducted themselves, he now says, Jehovah hath done what he had determined; and thus from the taunts of enemies he calls the attention of the people to the judgment of God. For when enemies insult us, we: indeed feel hurt, but afterwards grief in a manner blunts our feelings. Our best remedy then is, not to have our thoughts fixed on the insolence of men, but to know what the Scripture often reminds us, that the wicked are the scourges of God by which he chastises us. This, then, is the subject which the Prophet now handles. He says that God had done, etc.; as though he had said, that however enemies might exceed moderation, yet if the people attended to God there was a just cause why they should humble themselves.

He says, first, that Jehovah had done what he had determined: for the word to think is improperly applied to God, but yet it is often done, as we have before seen. He then says, that he had fulfilled the word which he had formerly commanded; for had the Prophet touched only on the secret counsel of God, the Jews might have been in doubt as to what it was. And certainly, as our minds cannot penetrate into that deep abyss, in vain would he have spoken of the hidden judgments of God. It was therefore necessary to come down to the doctrine, by which God, as far as it is expedient, manifests to us what would otherwise be not only hidden, but also incomprehensible; for were we to inquire into God's judgments, we should sink into the deep. But when we direct our minds to what God has taught us, we find that he reveals to us whatever is necessary to be known; and though even by his word, we cannot perfectly know his hidden judgments. yet we may know them in part, and as I have said, as far as it is expedient for us. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet, after having spoken of God's counsels and decrees, adds the word

Let us then hold to this rule, even to seek from the Law and the Prophets, and the Gospel, whatever we desire to know respecting the secret judgments of God; for, were we to turn aside, even in the smallest degree, from what is taught us, the immensity of God's glory would immediately swallow up all our thoughts; and experience sufficiently teaches us, that nothing is more dangerous and even fatal than to allow ourselves more liberty in this respect than what behooves us. Let us then learn to bridle all curiosity when we speak of God's secret judgments, and instantly to direct our minds to the word itself, that they may be in a manner enclosed there. Moreover, the Prophet was also able, in this manner, more easily to check whatever the Jews might have been otherwise ready to object: for we know that they were always wont to murmur, and that as soon as the prophets spake, they brought forward many exceptions, by which they attempted to confute their doctrine.

As, then, they were an unteachable people, Jeremiah did not only speak of God's hidden judgments, of which some doubt might have been alleged; but, in order to cut off every occasion for disputes and contentions, he mentioned the word itself; and thus he held the Jews as it were convicted; for, as it is said by Moses, they could

not have objected and said,

``Who shall ascend into heaven? who shall descend into the deep? who shall pass over the sea?'' (Deuteronomy 30:12-14;)

for in their mouth was God's word, that is, God had sufficiently made known his judgments, so that they could not complain of obscurity. We now then perceive another reason why the Prophet joined the word to God's judgments and decrees or counsel.

But he says that this word had been published from ancient days; and here he touches on the untameable obstinacy of the people; for had they been admonished a few days or a short time before, they might have expostulated with God; and there might have been some specious appearance that God had as it were made too great haste in his rigor. But as prophets had been sent, one after another, and as he had not ceased for many years, nay, for many ages, to exhort them to repentance, and to threaten them also that they might repent, hence their inveterate impiety more fully betrayed itself. This is the reason why the Prophet now mentions the ancient days, in which God had published his word.

He at length adds, he hath subverted and not spared. He does not here charge God with too much rigor, but rather he reproves the Jews, so that from the grievousness of their punishment they might know how intolerable had been their iniquity. He would then have them to judge of their sins by their punishment, for God does not act unjustly towards men. It hence follows, that when we are severely afflicted by his hand, it is a proof that we have been very wicked.

He then concludes that it was God who had exhilarated their enemies, and raised up their horn [528] By these words he confirms the doctrine, on which I have already touched, that we ought to turn our eyes to God, when men are insolent to us, and exult over our miseries; for such a reproach might otherwise wholly overwhelm us. But when we consider that we are chastised by God, and that the wicked, however petulantly they may treat us, are yet God's scourges, then we resolve with calm and resigned minds to bear what would otherwise wear us out by its acerbity. It follows,

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Lamentations 2:18

18. Their heart cried unto the Lord, O wall of the daughter of Zion, let tears run down like a river day and night: give thyself no rest; let not the apple of thine eye cease.

18. Clamavit cor corum ad Dominum; Mure filiae Sion, deducas tanquam fluvium lachrymas (vel, tanquam fluvius) die et nocte; ne des requiem Tibi, ne silcat (hoc est, ne quiescat) pupilla oculi tui.

He means not that their heart really cried to God, for there was no cry in their heart; but by this expression he sets forth the vehemence of their grief, as though he had said, that the heart of the people was oppressed with so much sorrow, that their feelings burst forth into crying; for crying arises from extreme grief, and when any one cries or weeps, he has no control over himself. Silence is a token of patience;

[528] Literally it is, — And he hath made to rejoice over thee the enemy, He hath exalted the horn of thine oppressors. — Ed

but when grief overcomes one, he, as though forgetting himself, necessarily bursts out into crying. This is the reason why he says that their heart cried to Jehovah

But we must observe, that the piety of the people is not here commended, as though they complained of their evils to God in sincerity and with an honest heart: on the contrary, the Prophet means that it was a common cry, often uttered even by the reprobate; for nature in a manner teaches this, that we ought to flee to God when oppressed by evils; and even those who have no fear of God exclaim in their extreme miseries, ``God be merciful to us.'' And, as I have said, such a cry does not flow from a right feeling or from the true fear of God, but from the strong and turbid impulse of nature: and thus God has from the beginning rendered all mortals inexcusable. So, then, now the Prophet says, that the Jews cried to God, or that their heart cried; not that they looked to God as they ought to have done, or that they deposited with him their sorrows and cast them into his bosom, as the Prophet encourages us to do; but because they found no remedy in the world --- for as long as men find any comfort or help in the world, with that they are satisfied. Whence, then, was this crying to God? even because the world offered them nothing in which they could acquiesce; for it is indigenous, as it were, in our nature (that is, corrupt nature) to look around here and there, when any evil oppresses us. Now, when we find, as I have said, anything as a help, even an empty specter, to that we cleave, and never raise up our eyes to God. But when necessity forces us, then we begin to cry to God. Then the Prophet means that the people had been reduced to the greatest straits, when he says that their heart cried to God

He afterwards turns to the wall of Jerusalem, and ascribes understanding to an inanimate thing. O wall of Jerusalem, he says, draw down tears as though thou wert a river; or, as a river; for both meanings may be admitted. But by stating a part for the whole, he includes under the word wall, the whole city, as it is well known. And yet there is still a personification, for neither houses, nor walls, nor gates, nor streets, could shed tears; but Jeremiah could not, except by this hyperbolical language, sufficiently express the extent of their cry. This was the reason why he addressed the very wall of the city, and bade it to shed tears like a river [529]

There seems to be some allusion to the ruins; for the walls of the city had been broken down as though they were melted. And then the Prophet seems to allude to the previous hardness of the people, for their hearts had been extremely stupified. As, then, they never had been flexible, whether addressed by doctrine, or exhortations, or threatenings, he now by implication brings forward in contrast with them the walls of the city, as though he had said, ``Hitherto no one of God's servants could draw even one tear from your eyes, so great was your hardness; but now the very walls weep, for they dissolve, as though they would send forth rivers of waters. Therefore the very stones turn to tears, because ye have hitherto been hardened

[529] The meaning suggested by the Vulgate is the most appropriate. The words may be rendered thus, — Cried has their heart to the Lord, “O the wall of the daughter of Sion!” — Bring down like a torrent the tear, day and night; Give no rest to thyself. Let not cease the daughter of thine eye. Their exclamation was, “O the wall,” etc. Then follow the words of Jeremiah to the end of the chapter; but the daughter of Sion, not the wall, is exhorted to weep and repent. “The daughter of the eye,” may be the tear, as suggested by Blayney and approved by Horsley; and it would be more suitable here. — Ed.

against God and all prophetic instruction.''

He afterwards adds, Spare not thyself, give not thyself rest day or night, and let not the daughter of thine eye, or the pupil of thine eye, cease, literally, be silent; but to be silent is metaphorically taken in the sense of ceasing or resting. He intimates that there would be, nay, that there was now, an occasion of continual lamentation; and hence he exhorted them to weep day and night; as though he had said, that sorrow would continue without intermission, as there would be no relaxation as to their evils. But we must bear in mind what we have before said, that the Prophet did not speak thus to embitter the sorrow of the people. We indeed know that the minds of men are very tender and delicate while under evils, and then that they rush headlong into impatience; but as they were not as yet led to true repentance, he sets before them the punishment which God had inflicted, that they might thereby be turned to consider their own sins. It follows, ---

Lamentations 2:19

19. Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine 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.

19. Surge, Clama nocte principio excubiarum (custodiarum ad verbum, sed significat vigilias nocturnas;) effunde tanquam aquas cor tuum coram facie Domini; attolle ad ipsum manus tuas propter Animam parvulorum tuorum, qui deficiunt fame in capite omnium compitorum.

The Prophet now explains himself more clearly, and confirms what I have lately said, that he mentioned not the calamities of the people except for this end, that those who were almost stupid might begin to raise up their eyes to God, and also to examine their life, and willingly to condemn themselves, that thus they might escape from the wrath of God.

The Prophet then bids them to rise and to cry. Doubtless they had been by force constrained by their enemies to undertake a long journey: why then does he bid them to rise, who had become fugitives from their own country, and had been driven away like sheep? He regards, as I have said, the slothfulness of their minds, because they were still lying torpid in their sins. It was then necessary to rouse them from this insensibility; and this is what the Prophet had in view by saying, Rise [530] And then he bids them to cry at the beginning of the watches, even when sleep begins to creep on, and the time is quieter; for when men go to bed, then sleep comes on, and that is the main rest. But the Prophet bids here the Jews to cry, and in their uneasiness to utter their complaints at the very time when others take their rest. et he did not wish them heedlessly to pour forth into the air their wailings, but bade them to present their prayers to God. Then as to the circumstances of that time, he repeats what we have already seen, that so great was their mass of evils, that it allowed the people no relaxation; in short, he intimates that it was a continual sorrow.

But, as I have said, he would have the Jews not simply to cry, but after having exhorted them to pour out their hearts like waters, he adds, before the face of Je-

[530] The simpler meaning, as stated by Gataker, is, “Rise” from thy bed; for she is exhorted to cry in the night. — Ed.

hovah. For the unbelieving make themselves almost hoarse by crying, but they are only like brute beasts; or if they call on God's name, they do this, as it has been said, through a rash and indiscriminate impulse. Hence the Prophet here makes a difference between the elect of God and the reprobate, when he bids them to pour forth their hearts and their cries before God, so as to seek alleviation from him, which could not have been done, were they not convinced that he was the author of all their calamities; and hence, also, arises repentance, for there is a mutual relation between God's judgment and men's sins. Whosoever, then, acknowledges God as a judge, is at the same time compelled to examine himself and to inquire as to his own sins. We now understand the meaning of the Prophet's words.

For the same purpose he adds, Raise up to him thy hands. This practice of itself is, indeed, not sufficient; but the Scripture often points out the real thing by external signs. Then the elevation of the hands, in this place and others, means the same thing as prayer; and it has been usual in all ages to raise up the hands to heaven, and the expression often occurs in the Psalms, (Psalm 28:2; Psalm 134:2;) and when Paul bids prayers to be made everywhere, he says,

``I would have men to raise up pure hands without contention.''
(1 Timothy 2:8.)

God has no doubt suggested this practice to men, that they may first go beyond the whole world when they seek him; and, secondly, that they may thus stimulate themselves to entertain confidence, and also to divest themselves of all earthly desires; for except this practice were to raise up our minds, (as we are by nature inclined to superstition,) every one would seek God either at his feet or by his side. Then God has planted in men this feeling, even to raise upwards their hands, in order that they may go, as I have said, beyond the whole world, and that having thus divested themselves of all vain superstition, they may ascend above the heavens. This custom, I allow, is indeed common among the unbelieving; and thus all excuse has been taken away from them. Though, then, the unbelieving have been imbued with gross and delirious fantasies, so as to connect God with statues and pictures, yet this habit of raising up the hands to heaven ought to have been sufficient to confute all their erroneous notions. But it would not be enough to seek God beyond this world, so that no superstition should possess our minds, except our minds were also freed from all worldly desires. For we are held entangled in our lusts, and then we seek what pleases the flesh, and thus, for the most part, men strive, to subject God to themselves. Then the elevation of the hands does also shew that we are to deny ourselves, and to go forth, as it were, out of ourselves whenever we call on God. These are briefly the things which may be said of the use of this ceremony or practice.

But we must remember what I have referred to, that the Prophet designates the thing itself by an outward sign, when he bids them to raise up the hands to God. He afterwards shews the necessity of this, because of the soul of thy little ones, who faint in famine; [531] but the {ב}, beth, is redundant here, --- who, then, through famine faint or fail, and that openly. For it might have happened that those who

[531] Rather, “who fainted through famine;” for he refers to what had taken place. — Ed.

had no food pined away at home, and thus fainted because no one gave them aid, because their want was not known. But when infants in public places breathed out their souls through famine, hence was evident that extreme state of despair, which the Prophet intended here to set forth by mentioning at the head of all the streets. It follows, ---

Lamentations 2:20

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?

20. Vide, Jehova, et aspice cui feceris sic; an comedent mulieres fructum suum (hoc est, foetus suos,) parvulos educationis? An occidetur in sanctuario Domini sacerdos et propheta?

Here, also, Jeremiah dictates words, or a form of prayer to the Jews. And this complaint availed to excite pity, that God had thus afflicted, not strangers, but the people whom he had adopted. Interpreters do, indeed, give another explanation, ``See, Jehovah, To whom hast thou done this?'' that is, Has any people been ever so severely afflicted? But I do not think that the comparison is made here, which they seek to make, but that the people only set before God the covenant which he had made with their fathers, as though they said, ``O Lord, hadst thou thus cruelly raged against strangers, there would have been nothing so wonderful; but since we are thine heritage, and the blessed seed of Abraham, since thou hast been pleased to choose us as thy peculiar people, what can this mean, that, thou treatest us with so much severity?''

We now, then, perceive the real meaning of the Prophet, when, in the person of the people, he speaks thus, See, and look on, Jehovah, to whom thou hast done this; for thou hast had to do with thy children: not that the Jews could allege any worthiness; but the gratuitous election of God must have been abundantly sufficient to draw forth mercy. Nor do the faithful here simply ask God to see, but they add another word, Look on. By the two words they more fully express the indignity of what had happened, as though they said, that it was like a prodigy that God's people should be so severely afflicted, who had been chosen by him: see, then, to whom thou hast done this

And this mode of praying was very common, as we find it said in the Psalms,

``Pour forth thy wrath on the nations which know not thee, and on the kingdoms which call not on thy name.'' (Psalm 79:6.)

And a similar passage we have before observed in our Prophet. (Jeremiah 10:25.) The sum of what is said is, that there was a just reason why God should turn to mercy, and be thus reconciled to his people, because he had not to do with aliens, but with his own family, whom he had been pleased to adopt. But the rest I shall defer until tomorrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thy Church at this day is oppressed with many evils, we may learn to raise up not only our eyes and our hands to thee, but also our hearts, and that we may so fix our attention on thee as to look for salvation from thee alone;

and that though despair may overwhelm us on earth, yet the hope of thy goodness may ever shine on us from heaven, and that, relying on the Mediator whom thou hast given us, we may not hesitate to cry continually to thee, until we really find by experience that our prayers have not been ill vain, when thou, pitying thy Church, hast extended thy hand, and given us cause to rejoice, and hast turned our mourning into joy, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Eighth

We explained yesterday the complaint of the Prophet, when he set before God his own covenant. For it might have appeared unreasonable that God should deal with so much severity with the Church which he had adopted. Hence the Prophet said, See, Jehovah, to whom thou hast done this. He now mentions some things calculated to produce horror, and thus to obtain pardon from God, Should women eat their own fruit? that is, their own foetus, the infants of nursings? This, as I have said, was a horrible thing: for we see that mothers often forget their own life in their concern for the safety of their infants. That a child, then, should be devoured by its mother, was a most abominable thing; and yet we know that it was done. It hence appears, that; the Israelites, when blinded by God, had fallen into this barbarity: for it happened in the siege of Samaria, as sacred history declares; and the Prophet now mentions the same thing as having taken place in his time, and he repeats the same in the fourth chapter. And Josephus also says, that when the city was besieged by Titus, the state of things was such, that mothers agreed to eat their own children, and that they cast lots who should first slay their child, and that they stole a leg or an arm from one another. Though it was so inhuman a thing, yet the Prophet seeks to turn God to mercy by adducing so great; an enormity. He then says, that it was by no means right, that mothers should eat their own children, the children of nursings, or nurturings. [532]

He afterwards adds, Should the priest and the prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord? This was another indignity, by which he sought to lead God to shew mercy. We indeed know that the priests and the prophets were deemed sacred; and in the Psalms, where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are referred to, God, in order to shew how much they were to be regarded, says,

``Touch not my Christ's, and to my prophets do no harm.''
(Psalm 105:15.)

As, then, the priests and the prophets were especially under the protection of God, what is here said was an intolerable atrocity. But when the profanation of the Temple was added, it was still a greater prodigy. Jeremiah then complains, not only that the priests and the prophets were slain, but that they were slain in the sanctuary. It now follows, ---

[532] Educationum. Our version is nearly the Vulg. It is paraphrased by the Sept., "who suck the breasts;" and the Targ. is, "who are clad in silks." Blayney rightly says, that {{טפח is the open palm of the hand; and he gives this as the literal rendering of the words, ``children of palms;'' that is, children of sufficient age to be carried about. His version of this line is, ``Little ones dandled on the hands.'' Horsley approves of this meaning. The previous word, ,{פדים} has been a difficulty to most, the final mem being masculine. ``Fruit,'' in the sense of offspring, is applied to men as well as to women. We may take the final mem in ,{נשים} as a pronoun, ``their wives;'' the same are meant as in Lamentations 2:18, ``their voice,'' i.e., the citizens of Jerusalem. Thus the construction will be quite grammatical. Should their own wives eat their offspring, Infants dandled on the hands! Should they be killed in the sanctuary of the Lord, The priest and the prophet! It is the language of humble expostulation. --- Ed.

Lamentations 2:21

21. The young and the old lie on the ground in the streets: my virgins and my young men are fallen by the sword; thou hast slain them in the day of thine anger; thou hast killed, and not pitied.

21. Jacuerunt in terra per compita puer et senex; virgines meae et adolescentes mei ceciderunt gladio; occidisti in die irae tuae; mactasti et non pepercisti.

Here he relates in the person of the Church another calamity, that the young and the aged were lying prostrate in the streets; and he joins children to the old men, to shew that there was no difference as to age. Then he says that dead bodies were lying promiscuously in public places. He adds, that virgins and young men had fallen by the sword; by which he confirms the previous clause, for there is nothing new said here, but only the manner is shewn by which they had been slain; for slain by the sword had been the young men and young women without any distinction; the enemies at the same time had not spared the old, while they killed the very flower of the people.

But the Prophet at the same time shews that all this was to be ascribed to God, not. that the Jews might expostulate with him, but that they might cease vainly to lament their calamities, and in order that they might on the contrary turn to God. Hence he does not say that the young and the old had been slain by the enemies, but by God himself. But it was difficult to convince the Jews of this, for they were so filled with rage against their enemies, that they could not turn their thoughts to the consideration of God's judgments. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet makes God the author of all their calamities; Thou, he says, hast slain in the day of thy wrath; thou hast killed and not spared. And though the people seem here in a manner to contend with God, we must yet bear in mind the design of the Prophet, even to teach the people to look to God himself, so that they might know that they had to do with him. For there ought to be a passing from one truth to another, so that men, conscious of their sins, should first give glory to God, and then humbly deprecate the wrath which they have deserved. It follows at length, ---

Lamentations 2:22

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.

22. Vocasti tanquam ad diem festum terrores meos undique, et nou fuit in die indignationis Jehovae superstes ac residuus; quos enutrivi et educavi, hostis meus consumpsit cos (sed abundat relativum.)

Here he uses a most appropriate metaphor, to show that the people had been brought to the narrowest straits; for he says that terrors had on every side surrounded them, as when a solemn assembly is called. They sounded the trumpets when a festival was at hand, that all might come up to the Temple. As, then, many companies were wont to come to Jerusalem on feast-days --- for when the trumpets were sounded all were called --- so the Prophet says that terrors had been sent by God from every part to straiten the miserable people: thou hast, then, called my terrors all around, --- how? as to a feast-day, the day of the assembly; for {מועד},

muod, means the assembly as well as the place and the appointed time. [533]

But we must ever bear in mind what I have already referred to, that though enemies terrified the Jews, yet this was to be ascribed to God, so that every one might acknowledge for himself, that the Chaldeans had not come by chance, but through the secret impulse of God. He afterwards adds, in the day of Jehovah's wrath (he changes the person) there was none alive, or remaining; nay, he says the enemy has consumed those whom I had nursed and brought up. Here he transfers to enemies what he had before said was done by God, but in this sense, that he understood God as the chief author, and the Chaldeans as the ministers; of his vengeance. Now follows, ---

[533] The verb for calling or summoning is in the future tense, and must, be so, to preserve the alphabetical character of the elegy, but it is rendered as in the past tense by all the versions, but the reason why does not appear. The future in Hebrew is often to be rendered as a subjunctive, potential, or optative: so here, — Shouldest thou summon, as on a festival day, My terrors all around! — And there was not, in the day of Jehovah's wrath, A fugitive or a survivor; Whom I dandled and brought up, My enemy has consumed them. The first two lines are a kind of expostulation: "My terrors" mean my terrifiers, according to the Vulg., the abstract for the concrete. — Ed.

Lamentations 3

CHAPTER 3

Lamentations 3:1

1. I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of his wrath.

1. Ego vir videns afflictionem in virga Indignationis ejus.

The word, {עברה} obere, properly means assault, passing over limits; but what is peculiar to man is often in Scripture ascribed to God. Here also he changes the person, for he spoke before of the people under the person of a woman, as it is often done; but now the Prophet himself comes before us. At the same time there is no doubt but that by his own example he exhorted all others to lamentation, which was to be connected with true repentance. And this chapter, as we shall see, is full of rich instruction, for it contains remarkable sentiments which we shall consider in their proper places.

Some think that this Lamentation was written by Jeremiah when he was cast into prison; but this opinion seems not probable to me; and the contents of the chapter sufficiently shew that this ode was composed to set forth the common calamity of the whole people. Jeremiah, then, does not here plead his own private cause, but shews to his own nation what remedy there was for them in such a state of despair, even to have an immediate recourse to God, and on the one hand to consider their sins, and on the other to look to the mercy of God, so that they might entertain hope, and exercise themselves in prayer. All these things we shall see in their due order.

The Prophet then says that he was an afflicted man, or a man who saw affliction. This mode of speaking, we know, is common in Scripture --- to see affliction --- to see good and evil --- to see life and death. He then says that he had experienced many afflictions, and not only so, but that he had been given up as it were to miseries, --- how? by the rod of his fury. He does not mention the name of God, but Jeremiah speaks of him as of one well known, using only a pronoun. Now, then, at the very beginning, he acknowledges that whatever he suffered had been inflicted by God's

hand. And as all the godly ought to be convinced of this, that God is never angry without just reasons, there is included in the word wrath a brief confession, especially when it is added, by the rod, or staff. In short, the Prophet says that he was very miserable, and he also expresses the cause, for he had been severely chastised by an angry God.

Lamentations 3:2

2. He hath led me, and brought me into darkness, but not into light.

2. Me deduxit et proficisci fecit in tenebras, et non in lucem.

The letters of the alphabet are tripled in this chapter, which I had omitted to mention. In the first two chapters each verse begins with the successive letters of the alphabet, except that in the last chapter there is one instance of inversion, for Jeremiah has put {פ}, phi, before {ע}, oin; or it may be that the order has been changed by the scribes; but this is uncertain. Here then, as I have said, each letter is thrice repeated. Then the first, the second, and the third verse begins with {א} aleph; and the fourth begins with {ב}, beth, and so he goes on to the end. [534]

He confirms here the last verse, for lie shews the cause or the manner of his afflictions, for he had been led into darkness and not into light. This kind of contrast has not the same force in other languages as it has in Hebrew. But when the Hebrews said that they were in darkness and not in the light, they amplified that obscurity, as though they had said that there was not even a spark of light in that darkness, it being so thick and obscure. This is what the Prophet now means. And we know what is everywhere understood in Scripture by darkness, even every kind of Lamentation: for the appearance of light exhilarates us, yea, the serenity of heaven cheers and revives the minds of men. Then darkness signifies all sorts of adversities and the sorrow which proceeds from them. He afterwards adds, ---

Lamentations 3:3

3. Surely against me is he turned; he turneth his hand against me all the day.

3. Utique contra me vertetur, eonvertet marrum suam quotidie (vel, toro die, qtuanquam in duobus verbis videtur futurtum tempus debere resolvi in all prceteritutn, vel saltem Propheta actum continuum, designat, ut soepe fieri solet.)

Now he says that God was an adversary to him; for this is what the verb {ישב}, isheb, means, he is turned against me. As an enemy, when intending to fight, comes to meet one from the opposite side, so the Prophet says of God, who had become an enemy to him; and he teaches the same thing in another way when he says that he perceived that the hand of God was against him: He turns, he says, against me his hand daily, or all the day, {היום}-{כל}, cal-eium. But the Prophet simply means constancy, as though he had said that there was no truce, no cessation, because God manifested the rigor of his vengeance without limit or end. He afterwards adds, ---

Lamentations 3:4

[534] The verses in this chapter are needlessly multiplied. It would have been better had each verse contained a letter, for the length of this chapter is the same with the two foregoing; the only difference is, that the lines, or alternate lines, begin with the same letter three times, as follows, — {{א I am the man who hath seen affliction, Through the rod of his indignation; {א} Me hath he led and caused to walk In darkness, and not in light; {א} Surely against me he turns, Upset me does his hand all the day. The three next lines, or alternate lines, begin with ,{ב} and so on to the end of the alphabet --- Ed

4. My flesh and my skin hath he made old; he hath broken my bones.

4. Senio confecit earnera meam (senescere fecit, ad verbum) et pelletn meam (vel, cutem;) confregit ossa mea.

These, as it evidently appears, are metaphorical words. Illness often makes people to look old, for from pain proceeds leanness: thus the skin is contracted, and the wrinkles of old age appear even in youths. As, then, sorrows exhaust moisture and strength, hence he is said to grow old who pines away in mourning. This is what the Prophet now means. God, he says, has made my flesh and my skin, to grow old, that is, he hath worn me out, within and without, so that I am almost wasted away.

He then adds, He hath broken my bones This seems to be hyperbolical; but we have said elsewhere that this simile does not in every instance express the greatness of the sorrow which the faithful feel under a sense of God's wrath. Both David and Hezekiah spoke in this way; nay, Hezekiah compares God to a lion,

``As a lion,'' he says, ``has he broken my bones.''
(Isaiah 38:13.)

And David says at one time that his bones wasted away, at another that they were broken, and at another that they were reduced to ashes; for there is nothing more dreadful than to feel that God is angry with us. The Prophet, then, did not only regard outward calamities, but the evidence of God's vengeance; for the people could see nothing else in their distresses except that God was their enemy --- and this was true; for God had often exhorted them to repentance; but upon those whom he had found incurable, he at length, as it was just, poured forth his vengeance to the uttermost. This, then, was the reason why the Prophet said, that God had broken his bones. He then adds, ---

Lamentations 3:5

5. He hath builded against me, and encompassed me with gall and travail.

5. Ædificavit contra me, et circumdedit felle et molestia.

The words, as translated, may seem harsh, yet they have no common beauty in Hebrew. The Prophet says he was blocked up and straitened as it were by walls; and as we shall see, he repeats this comparison three times; in other words, indeed, but for the same purpose.

God, he says, hath built against me, as, when we wish to besiege any one, we build mounds, so that there may be no escape. This, then, is the sort of building of which the Prophet now speaks: God, he says, holds me confined all around, so that there is no way of escape open to me.

He then gives a clearer explanation, that he was surrounded by gall [535] or poison and trouble. He mentions poison first, and then, without a figure, he shews what that poison was, even that he was afflicted with many troubles. He afterwards adds, ---

Lamentations 3:6

[535] The Sept., the Targ., and the Arab. render this “my head;” but the Vulg. and the Syr., “gall.” It occurs again in Lamentations 2:19, and is rendered “gall” by the Targ. and all the versions. He was “surrounded with gall,” with what was bitter to him, and “with faintness,” with what made him to faint. Hence, in the next verse, he represents himself as being like the dead. — Ed.

6. He hath set me in dark places, as they that be dead of old.

6. In tenebris jacere me fecit tanquam mortuos seculi.

Here he amplifies what he had before said of poison and trouble; he says that he was placed in darkness, not that he might be there for a little while, but remain there for a long time; he hath made me, he says, to dwell in darkness. But the comparison which follows more clearly explains the Prophet's meaning, as the dead of ages. The word {עולם}, oulam, may refer to future or past time. Some say, as the dead for ever, who are perpetually dead. But the Scripture elsewhere calls those the dead of ages who have been long buried, and have decayed, and whose memory has become nearly extinct. For as long as the dead body retains its form, it seems more like a living being; but when it is reduced to ashes, when no bone appears, when the whole skin and nerves and blood have perished, and no likeness to man remains, there can then be no hope of life. The Scripture then calls those the dead of ages, who have wholly decayed. So also in this place the Prophet says, that he dwelt in darkness, into which he had been cast by God's hand, and that he dwelt there as though he had been long dead, and his body had become now putrid.

This way of speaking appears indeed hyperbolical; but we must always remember what I have reminded you of, that it is not possible sufficiently to set forth the greatness of that sorrow which the faithful feel when terrified by the wrath of God. He then adds, ---

Lamentations 3:7

7. He hath hedged me about, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy.

7 Sepsit me, ut non egrediar; aggravavit compedem meum.

Here he says, first, that he was held shut up; for {גדר}, gidar, is to enclose, and {גדרה}, gidare, means a fence or a mound, or an enclosure of any kind. He then says, that he was shut up as it were by a fence, so that he could not go forth; literally, it is, and I shall not go forth; but the conjunction here is to be taken as denoting the end. He has shut me up, he says, or he has enclosed me, that I might not get out.

It then follows, He hath made heavy my fetter. His meaning is, that he was not only bound with fetters, but so bound that he could not raise up his feet, as though he had said, that he not only had fetters, but that they were so heavy that he could not even move his feet.

Lamentations 3:8

8. Also when I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.

8. Etiam si clamem et vociferer, clausit precationem meam (vel precatioi meae.)

The Prophet describes here the extremity of all evils, that it availed him nothing to cry and to pray. And yet we know that we are called to do this in all our miseries.

``The strongest tower is the name of the Lord, to it will the righteous flee and shall be safe.'' (Proverbs 18:10.)

Again,

``Whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.''
(Joel 2:32.)

And Scripture is full of testimonies of this kind; that is, that God graciously invites all the faithful to himself:

``He shall call upon me, and I will hear him.'' (Psalm 91:15.)

``In the day when I call, answer me speedily.''
(Psalm 102:2.)

``Before they call, I will answer.'' (Isaiah 65:24.)

In short, there is no need to collect all the passages; but we may be content with this one thing, that when God claims to himself this prerogative, that he answers prayers, he intimates that it is what cannot be separated from his eternal essence and godhead; that is, that he is ready to hear prayer. And hence the Psalmist concludes,

``To thee shall all flesh come.'' (Psalm 65:3.)

When, therefore, Jeremiah complains that his prayers were in vain, and without any fruit or effect., it seems strange and inconsistent. But we know that God holds the faithful in suspense, and so hears as to prove and try their patience, sometimes for a long time. This is the reason why he defers and delays his aid.

It is no wonder, then, that God did not hear the prayers of his servant, that is, according to the judgment of the flesh. For God never rejects his own, nor is he deaf to their prayers and their sighs; but the faithful often speak according to what the flesh judges. As, then, the Prophet found that he obtained nothing by prayer, he says that his prayer was shut out, or that the door was closed against him, so that his prayer did not come to God.

Now, this passage is worthy of special notice; for except God immediately meets us, we become languid, and not only our ardor in prayer is cooled but almost extinguished. Let us, then, bear in mind, theft though God may not help us soon, yet our prayers are never repudiated by him; and since we see that the holy fathers experienced the same thing, let us not wonder, if the Lord at this day were to try our faith in the same manner. Let us, therefore, persevere hi calling on Him; and should there be a longer delay, and our complaint be that we are not heard, yet let us proceed in the same course, as we shall see the Prophet did. It follows, ---

Lamentations 3:9

9. He hath inclosed my ways with hewn stone, he hath made my paths crooked.

9. Sepivit (idem est verbum quod ante vidimus) vias meas lapide quadrato, semitas meas pervertit.

Other metaphors are used. Some think that the Prophet refers to the siege of Jerusalem, but such a view is not suitable. The metaphors correspond with one another, though they are somewhat different. He had said before, that he was enclosed by God, or surrounded as with a mound; and now he transfers this idea to his ways. When the life of man is spoken of, it is, we know, compared to a way. Then the Prophet includes under this word all the doings of his life, as though he had said, that all his plans were brought into straits, as though his way was shut up, so that he could not proceed: ``Were I to proceed ill any direction, an obstacle is set before me; I am compelled to remain as it were fixed.'' So the Prophet now says, his ways were enclosed, because God allowed none of His counsels or His purposes to be carried into effect.

And to the same purpose he adds, that. God had perverted his ways, that is, that

he had confounded all his doings, and all his counsels.

But these words are added, with a squared stone The verb {גזז} gizaz, means to cut; hence the word {גזית}, gizit, signifies a polished stone, or one trimmed by the hammer. And we know that such stones are more durable and firmer than other stones. For when unpolished stones are used, the building is not so strong as when the stones are squared, as they fit together better. Then the Prophet intimates that the enclosures were such that he could by no means break through them, as they could not be broken. He, in short, means that he was so oppressed by God's hand, that whatever he purposed God immediately reversed it. We now, then, perceive what he means by saying, that all his ways were subverted or overturned by God. [536] This is not to be understood generally, for it is God who directs our ways. But he is said to pervert our ways, when he disconcerts our counsels, when all our purposes and efforts are rendered void; in a word, when God as it were meets us as an adversary, and impedes our course; it is then that he is said to pervert our ways. But this ought not to be understood as though God blinded men unjustly, or as though he led them astray. The Prophet only means that he could find no success in all his counsels, in all his efforts and doings, because he had God opposed to him. here I stop.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou didst in former times so severely chastise thy people, we may in the present day patiently submit to all thy scourges, and in a humble and meek spirit suffer ourselves to be chastised as we deserve; and that we may not, in the meantime, cease to call on thee, and that however slowly thou mayest seem to hear our prayers, we may yet persevere continually to the end, until at length we shall really find that salvation is not in vain promised to all those who in sincerity of heart call on thee, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Ninth

Lamentations 3:10

10. He was unto me as a bear lying in wait, and as a lion in secret places.

10. Urus insidians fuit mihi (ipse mihi,) leo in latebris.

Harsh is the complaint when Jeremiah compares God to a. bear and a lion. But we have said that the apprehension of God's wrath so terrified the faithful, that they could not sufficiently express the atrocity of their calamity; and then borne in mind must also be what we have stated, that they spoke according to the judgment of the flesh; for they did not always so moderate their feelings, but that something fell from them worthy of blame. We ought not, then, to make as a rule in religion all the complaints of holy men, when they were pressed down by the hand of God; for when their minds were in a state of confusion, they uttered much that was intemperate. But we ought, on the other hand, to acknowledge how great must be our weakness, since we see that even the strongest; have thus fallen, when God exercised severity towards them.

[536] "Subverted" is the Vulg., "obstructed" the Sept., and "rendered oblique" the Syr. The meaning is, "turned aside." he had built as it were a wall of hewn stones across his way, and thus he turned aside his goings or his paths, so that he was constrained to take some other course. — Ed.

Though, then, it does not seem that it was said in due honor, that God did lie in wait as bears for travelers, or as lions in their dens; yet, if we consider how much the faithful dreaded the tokens of God's wrath, we shall not wonder at this excess. It is then certain that rite Prophet brings before us here not only evidences of the fear of God, of religion and humility, but also of the corrupt feelings of the flesh; for it cannot be, but that the infirmity of men will betray itself ill extreme evils. He adds, what is of the same import, ---

Lamentations 3:11

11. He hath turned aside my ways, and pulled me in pieces: he hath made me desolate.

11. Vias meas pervertit et scidit me (vel, dissipavit, vel, laceravit,) posuit me vastatam (vel, quasi vastitatem.)

In this verse also the Prophet shews how grievously the faithful are disturbed when they feel that God is adverse to them. But he uses the same figure as yesterday, though the word {סורר}, surer, is different: what he used yesterday was {עוה}, oue, but in the same sense.

He then says that his ways had been perverted; [537] and for this reason, because he had been disappointed in his purpose; whatever he did was made void, because God by force prevented him. When we undertake to do anything, a way is open to us; but when there is no success, our way is said to be perverted. And this is done by God, who has all events, prosperous as well as adverse, in his own hand. As, then, God directs our ways when he blesses our counsels and our actions; so, on the other hand, he perverts them, when all things turn out unsuccessfully, when our purpose is not done and events do not answer our expectations.

He afterwards adds, He hath torn me or broken me. The verb {פשח}, peshech, means properly to cut, but here to tear or scatter. It follows lastly, he hath made me a waste In this expression he includes the other two things; for he who is reduced to desolation, does not hold on his way, nor find any exit; he is also drawn here and there, as though he was torn into several parts. We hence see that the Prophet here complains of extreme evils, for there was no hope of deliverance left. He adds, ---

Lamentations 3:12

12. He hath bent his bow, and set me as a mark for the arrow.

12. Extendit (vel, intendit) arcum suum, et statuit me quasi signum sagittae.

Here the Prophet introduces another metaphor, that God had shot him with arrows, as he was made a mark to them. Jeremiah has elsewhere often used the word {מתרא}, methera, for a prison; but here it means a mark at which arrows are leveled, and such is its meaning in Job 16:12, where there is a similar complaint made. The meaning is, that the people, in whose name Jeremiah speaks, had been like marks, because God had directed against them all his arrows. It is, indeed, a fearful thing when God aims at us, that he may discharge his darts and arrows in order to hit and wound us. But as God had so grievously afflicted his people, that he seemed to have poured forth all his vengeance, the Prophet justly complains that the people

[537] The word, having the last letter doubled, means to turn aside again and again, "He has often turned aside my ways." — Ed.

had been like marks for arrows.

Lamentations 3:13

13. He hath caused the arrows of his quiver to enter into my reins.

13. Induxit in renes meos filion pharetrae sum (id est, sagittas.)

He goes on with the same metaphor; he said in the last verse that God had leveled his bow; he now adds, that his arrows had penetrated into his reins, that is, into his inward parts. But we must bear in mind what the Prophet meant, that God had dealt so severely with the people, that no part, even the innermost, was sound or untouched, for his arrows had perforated their very reins. He afterwards adds, ---

Lamentations 3:14

14. I was a derision to all my people; and their song all the day.

14. Fui risus (vel, ludibrium) toti populo meo, pulsatio (vel, canticum, quod pulsatur ab organo et instrumento musico) quotidie (vel, toto die.)

The Prophet again complains of the reproaches to which God had exposed the Jews. We have said that of all evils the most grievous is reproach, and experience teaches us that sorrow is greatly embittered when scoffs and taunts are added to it; for he who silently bears the most grievous sorrows, becomes broken in heart when he finds himself contumeliously treated. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet again amplifies the miseries of the people, because they were exposed to the scoffs of all men. But it may seem a strange thing that the Jews were derided by their own people. This is the reason why some think that the Prophet complains of his own private evils, and that he does not represent the whole people or the public condition of the Church. But it may also be said in reply, that the Prophet does not mean that the people were derided by themselves, which could not be; but it is the same as though he had said, that their state was so disgraceful, that while they looked on one another, they had a reason for taunting, if this their condition was allowed to continue.

In short, the Prophet does not mean what was actually done, but he simply complains that their calamity was liable to all kinds of reproaches, so that any one looking on Jerusalem might justly deride such a disgraceful spectacle. And it was, as we have said, a most equitable reward, for they had not ceased to reproach God. Then rendered to them was what they had deserved, when God loaded them in turn with dishonor.

He afterwards adds, that he was their song, that is, of derision; for it is a confirmation of the former clause, and the same complaint is also formal in Job. He says that he was their song daily or all the day. This constancy, as it has been said, proved more clearly the grievousness of the evil.

Lamentations 3:15

15. He hath filled me with bitterness, he hath made me drunken with wormwood.

15. Satiavit me amaritudinibus, saturavit me felle.

Some render the last word ``wormwood,'' but this word seems not to me to suit the passage, for though wormwood is bitter, yet it is a wholesome herb. I therefore take it in this and like places for poison or gall; and {ראש}, rash, as we shall see, is joined with it. To satiate, is also a metaphor very common. Then the Prophet means

that lie was full of bitterness and gall; and lie thus had regard to those calamities from which so much sorrow had proceeded.

We hence also gather that the faithful were not free from sorrow in their evils, for bitterness and gall sufficiently shew that their minds were so disturbed that they did not bear their troubles with sufficient patience. But they struggled with their own infirmity, and the example is set before us that we may not despond when bitterness and gall lay hold on our minds; for since the same thing happened to the best servants of God, let us bear in mind our own infirmity, and at the same time flee to God. The unbelieving nourish their bitterness, for they do not unburden their souls into the bosom of God. But the best way of comfort is, when we do not flatter ourselves in our bitterness and grief, but seek the purifying of our souls, and in a manner lay them open, so that whatever bitter thing may be there, God may take it away and so feed us, as it is said elsewhere, with the sweetness of his goodness. He adds, ---

Lamentations 3:16

16. He hath also broken my teeth with gravel stones, he hath covered me with ashes.

16. Confregit (vel, contrivit) lapillo dentes meos, involvit me (foedavit me, alii autem, versavit) hi pulvere.

Many renderings are given of these words' there is, however, no over-statement here; for, as it has been often said, the grief of the people under such a mass of evils could not be sufficiently expressed. The Prophet, no doubt, extended here his hand to the weak, who would have otherwise lain down as dead; for under such evils the ruin of the whole nation, the fall of the city, and the destruction of the temple, it could not be but such thoughts as these must have occurred. Now, as to any one unacquainted with such a trial, he would soon succumb, had no remedy been presented to him. The Prophet then dictates for all the godly such complaints as they might, so to speak, pour forth confidently and freely into the bosom of God.

We hence see that here is even expressed whatever might occur to the minds of God's children, so that they might not hesitate in their straits to direct their prayers to God, and freely confess whatever they suffered in their souls. For shame closes up the door of access; and thus it happens; that we make a clamor as though God were far away from us; hence impatience breaks out almost to a rage. But when an access to God is opened to us, and we dare to confess what burdens our minds, this, as I have said, is the best way for obtaining relief and comfort. We must then understand the design of the Prophet, that he suggests words to the faithful, that they might freely cast their cares and sorrows on God, and thus find some alleviation.

For this reason, he says that his teeth had been broken by a little stone or pebble.[538] The same expression, if I mistake not, is found in Job. It is a metaphor taken from those who press stones instead of bread under their teeth; for when grit lies hid in bread, it hurts the teeth. Then inward and hidden griefs are said to be like

[538] The word means grit or gravel, rendered “pebble” by the Sept., and “stones” by the Syr. and the Targ. It is rendered “gravel” in Proverbs 20:17. The verb only occurs here and in Psalm 119; and to wear out, is its most suitable meaning, — And he hath worn out with grit my teeth. — Ed

small stones, which break or shatter the teeth. For the Prophet does not speak here of large stones, but on the contrary he speaks of pebbles or small stones, which deceive men, for they lie hid either in bread or in meat, or in any other kind of food. As, then, the teeth are hurt by pressing them, so the Prophet says that his sorrows were most bitter, as that part, as it is well known, is very tender; and when any injury is done to the teeth, the pain spreads instantly almost through the whole body. This is the reason why he says that his teeth were broken.

Then he adds, that he was covered with dust, or that he was lying down or dragged along in the dust. The expression is taken from those who are drawn by way of reproach along the ground, as a carcass is, or some filthy thing which we abhor. [539] Thus the Prophet complains that there was nothing short of extreme evils. He adds, ---

Lamentations 3:17

17. And thou hast removed my soul far off from peace: I forgat prosperity.

17. Et remota fuit a pace anima mea, oblitus sum boni.

By saying that his soul was remote from peace, he means that no good remained; for by peace, as it is well known, the Hebrews understood every kind of prosperity. And he explains himself by another clause, that, he had forgotten every good; and this forgetfulness ought to be understood, so to speak, as real or entire; for if there had been any reason for rejoicing, it would not have been forgotten; for all are naturally pleased with what is pleasant, nay, they with avidity seek what delights them. It would then be contrary to nature to forget things good and pleasant, to us. But the Prophet means here a privation. Hence the forgetfulness of which he speaks is nothing else but alienation from everything good, as though he had said (as the previous clause shews) that he was removed from every hope of peace.

But the expression is much more emphatical, when he says, that his soul was far removed from peace. By soul he does not mean himself only, (for that would be frigid,) but he understands by it all things connected with him, as though he had said, ``Wherever I look around me, I find no peace, and no hope appears to me.'' Hence it was, that all the faculties of his soul were far removed from all experience of good things. It follows, ---

Lamentations 3:18

18. And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the LORD:

18. Et dixi, Periit fortitudo mea, et spes mea a Jehova.

This verse shews what I have before reminded you of, that the Prophet does not here speak as though he was divested of every sin, and prescribed a perfect rule for prayer. But, on the contrary, in order to animate the faithful to seek God, he sets before them here an instance of infirmity which every one finds true as to himself. It was yet a most grievous trial, because the Prophet almost despaired; for since faith is the mother of hope, it follows, that when any one is overwhelmed with despair,

[539] The verb rendered “covered,” is found only here, and is translated “fed” by the Sept. and Vulg.; “tumbled” or laid low, by the Targ.; and “besprinkled,” by the Syr. As he had said, that his food had been as it were grit, he could not have said that he was fed with ashes. Therefore the arg. or the Syr. is the most suitable, that God had laid him low in ashes, Tr that he had besprinkled or covered him with ashes. — Ed

faith is extinct. Nevertheless the Prophet. makes this declaration, Perished, he says, has my strength and my hope from God [540]

He does not speak through some inconsiderate impulse, as though he was suddenly carried away, as many things happen to us which we have had no thought of; but he speaks what was, as it were, fixed in his mind. As he said, ``Perished has my hope and strength from Jehovah,'' it is evident that his faith was not slightly shaken, but had wholly failed' but the expression, I said, renders the thing still stronger; for it means, as it is well known, a settled conviction. The Prophet was then fully persuaded that he was forsaken by God; but what does this mean? We ought indeed to maintain this, that faith sometimes is so stifled, that even the children of God think that they are lost, and that it is all over with their salvation. Even David confesses the same thing; for it was an evidence of despair, when he declared,

``I said in my haste, Vanity is every man.'' (Psalm 116:11.)

He had almost failed, and he was not master of himself when he was thus agitated. There is no doubt but that the Prophet also expressly reminded the faithful that they ought not to despair, though despair laid hold on their minds, or though the devil tempted them to despair, but that they ought then especially to struggle against it. This is indeed, I allow, a hard and perilous contest, but the faithful ought not to faint, even when such a thing happens to them, that is, when it seems to be all over with them and no hope remains; but, on the contrary, they ought nevertheless to go on hoping, and that, indeed, as the Scripture says elsewhere, against hope, or above hope. (Romans 4:18.)

Let us then learn from this passage, that the faithful are not free from despair, for it enters into their souls; but that there is yet no reason why they should indulge despair; on the contrary, they ought courageously and firmly to resist it; for when the Prophet said this, he did not mean that. he succumbed to this trial, as though he had embraced what had come to his mind; but lie meant, that lie was as it were overwhelmed for a short time. Were any one to ask, How can it be that hope and despair should reside in the same man? the answer is, that when faith is weak, that part of the soul is empty, which admits despair. Now, faith is sometimes not only enfeebled, but is also nearly stifled. This, indeed, does not happen daily, but there is no one whom God deeply exercises with temptations, who does not feel that his faith is almost extinguished. It is often no wonder, that despair then prevails; but it is for a moment. In the meantime, the remedy is, immediately to flee to God and to complain of this misery, so that he may succor and raise up those who are thus fallen. He then adds, ---

Lamentations 3:19

19. Remembering mine affliction and my misery, the wormwood and the gall.

19. Recordari (vel, recordando, alii, recordare) afflictionis meae et aerumnae maere (alii vertunt, humiliationem, alii, peccatum; sed nomen afflictionis vel aerum-

[540] The word "strength" is rendered "victory" by the Sept., "end" by the Vulg, "splendor by the Syr., and valor by the Targ. means superiority, excellency, rather than strength, — And I said, Perished hath my excellency, And my expectation from Jehovah. Whatever he had that was excellent had perished; and perished also had every good he expected from Jehovah. The meaning is not, that these things perished from Jehovah, but that his excellency and his expectation from Jehovah had perished. — Ed.

noe melius convenit) veneni et fellis (iterum ponitur {לענה} quod vertunt quidam, absynthium, sed potius est amaritudo vel venenum, veneni ergo et fellis.)

The verb may be considered as an imperative; it is an infinitive mood, but it is often taken in Hebrew as an imperative. Thus, many deem it a prayer, Remember my affliction and my trouble, the gall and the poison This might be admitted; but what others teach I prefer: that this verse depends on the last. For the Prophet seems here to express how he had almost fallen away from hope, so that he no longer found strength from God, even because he was overwhelmed with evils; for it is very unreasonable to think, that those who have once experienced the mercy of God should cast away hope, so as not to believe that they are to flee to God any more. What seems then by no means congruous the Prophet here in a manner excuses, and shews that it was not strange that he succumbed under extreme evils, for he had been so pressed down by afflictions and troubles, that his soul became as it were filled with poison and gall. [541]

But in the meantime, he shews by the word remember, how such a trial as this, when it comes, lays hold on our minds, that is, when we think too much of our evils. For the faithful ought to hold a middle course in their afflictions, lest they contract a torpor; for as hence indifference and stupidity arise, they ought to rouse themselves to a due consideration of their evils; but moderation ought to be observed, lest sorrow should swallow us up, as Paul also warns us (2 Corinthians 2:7.) They then who fix their minds too much on the remembrance of their evils, by degrees open the door to Satan, who may fill their hearts and all their thoughts with despair. The Prophet then describes here the fountain of evils, when he says, that he remembered his affliction and trouble; and suitable to this is what immediately follows, ---

Lamentations 3:20

20. My soul hath them still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.

20. Recordando recordabitur, et humiliabitur in me (vel, super me) anima mea.

The Prophet seems in other words to confirm what he had said, even that the memory of afflictions overwhelmed his soul. For the soul is said to be humbled in or upon man, when he lies down under the burden of despair. It is the soul that raises man up, and as it were revives him; but when the soul is cast as it were on man, it is a most grievous thing; for it is better to lie down a dead body than to have this additional burden, which makes the case still worse. A dead body might indeed lie on the ground without strength and motion, but it may still retain its own place; but when the soul is thus cast down, it is said to press down man, though lifeless, more and more. This then is what the Prophet means. And yet he says that he was so occupied with this remembrance, that he could not thence withdraw his mind.

There is no doubt but that he also intended here to confess his own infirmity, and that of all the faithful; and the reason of this we have already explained. Then relying on this doctrine, even when all our thoughts press us down, and not only lead us to despair, but also hurry us on and cast us headlong into it, let us learn to flee even then to God and to lay before him all our complaints, and let us not be ashamed,

[541] The verb "remember" is rendered as an imperative by the Targ., the Vulg., and the Syr.; and it is so rendered by Henderson. — Ed.

because we see that this mode of proceeding is suggested to us by the Holy Spirit. It follows, ---

Lamentations 3:21

21. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope.

21. Hoc revocabo ad cor meum, propterea sperabo.

We see here what I have already stated, that if we struggle against temptations, it will be a sure remedy to us, because our faith will at length emerge again, and gather strength, yea, it will in a manner be raised up from the lowest depths. This is what the Prophet now shews. I will recall this, he says, to my heart, and therefore will I hope How can despair produce hope from itself? This would be contrary to nature. What then does the Prophet mean here, and what does he understand by the pronoun this, {זאת}, zat? Even that being oppressed with evils, he was almost lost, and was also nearly persuaded that no hope of good anymore remained. As then he would recall this to mind, he says that he would then have new ground of hope, that is, when he had recourse to God; for all who devour their own sorrows, and do not look to God, kindle more and more the hidden fire, which at length suddenly turns to fury. Hence it comes that they clamor against God, as though they were doubly insane. But he who is conscious of his own infirmity, and directs his prayer to God, will at length find a ground of hope.

When therefore we recall to mind our evils, and also consider how ready we are to despair, and how apt we are to succumb under it, some hope will then arise and aid us, as the Prophet here says. [542]

It must still be observed, that we ought to take heed lest we grow torpid in our evils; for hence it happens that our minds become wholly overwhelmed. Whosoever then would profit by his evils, should consider what the Prophet says here came to his mind, for he at length came to himself, and surmounted all obstacles. We see then that God brings light out of darkness, when he restores his faithful people from despair to a good hope; yea, he makes infirmity itself to be the cause of hope. For whence is it that the unbelieving east away hope? even because security draws them away from God; but a sense of our own infirmity draws us even close to him; thus hope, contrary to nature, and through the incomprehensible and wonderful kindness of God, arises from despair. It follows, ---

Lamentations 3:22

22. It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

22. Clementite Jehovae, quod non sumus consumpti (vel, certe non sunt consumptae,) certe non defecerunt miscrationes ejus.

The first clause may be explained in two ways: The view commonly taken is, that it ought to be ascribed to God's mercy that the faithful have not been often consumed.

[542] The pronoun “this” is by most referred to what the next verse contains; but as a clause intervenes, this can hardly be the meaning. The Lamentations 3:19, 20, and 21, I render thus, 19. Remember my affliction and my abasement, The wormwood and the gall. 20. Remembering thou wilt remember them, For bowed down within me is my soul: 21. This I recall to my mind; Therefore will I hope. He prays, then he expresses his confidence that God would hear his prayer; and “this” refers to the assurance he felt that God would remember his afflicted state, and on this ground he entertained hope. In the next verse he states what confirmed this hope: — Ed.

Hence a very useful doctrine is elicited --- that God succors his own people, lest they should wholly perish. But if we attend to the context, we shall see that another sense is more suitable, even that the mercies of God were not consumed, and that his compassion's had not failed The particle {כי}, ki, is inserted, but ought to be taken as an affirmative only, surely the mercies of God are not consumed; [543] and then, --- surely his compassion's have not failed. And he afterwards adds, ---

Lamentations 3:23

23. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness.

23. Novae ad singula mane; magna veritas tua.

This verse confirms what I have said, that the same truth is here repeated by the Prophet, that God's mercies were not consumed, nor had his compassion's failed. How so? Because they were new, or renewed, every day; but he puts morning, and that in the plural number. I am surprised at the hour striking so soon; I hardly think that I have lectured a whole hour.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as there are none of us who have not continually to contend with many temptations, and as such is our infirmity, that we are ready to succumb under them, except thou helpest us, --- O grant, that we may be sustained by thine invincible power, and that also, when thou wouldest humble us, we may loathe ourselves on account of our sins, and thus perseveringly contend, until, having gained the victory, we shall give thee the glory for thy perpetual aid in Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Tenth

In the last lecture the Prophet said that the mercies of God are renewed daily. This must indeed be viewed according to the apprehension of men, for to God belongs no charge. But the mercies of God seem to be renewed when he for a time hides his face, and again becomes reconciled to us. The Prophet mentions morning; and he alludes, as I think, to this passage in the Psalms ---

``If weeping dwells with us in the evening,
yet joy will return in the morning.'' (Psalm 30:5.)

He then means that God hastens to succor men in misery.

He subjoins the word truth, because a sense of God's mercy can never come to us except he offers it to us. Were then God to take away the promise, all the miserable would inevitably perish; for they can never lay hold on his mercy except through his word. This, then, is the reason why Scripture so often connects these two things together, even God's mercy and his faithfulness in fulfilling his promises. It now follows, ---

Lamentations 3:24

24. The LORD is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him.

24. Pertie inca Jehova, dixit my soul; anima mea; ideo sperabo in eo.

[543] So the Targ. and all the versions, except the Vulg; they read {.חמו ``The mercies of Jehovah'' is the nominative case absolute, --- 22. The mercies of Jehovah, verily they have no end, For his compassion's never fail. 23. Renewed (are they) in the morning; Great is thy faithfulness. ``Renewed'' refers to ``mercies,'' i.e., blessings, the fruit of mercy; and God's mercies have no end, because his compassion's ever continue. ``In the morning,'' that is, after a night of affliction. If the rendering be made literal, ``in the mornings,'' the meaning is the same; they follow the previous nights of trouble. Blessings, being as it were suspended or withheld during the night, are again renewed in the morning. --- Ed.

The Prophet intimates in this verse that we cannot stand firm in adversities, except we be content with God alone and his favor; for as soon as we depart from him, any adversity that may happen to us will cause our faith to fail. It is then the only true foundation of patience and hope to trust in God alone; and this is the case when we are persuaded that his favor is sufficient for our perfect safety. In this sense it is that David calls God his portion. (Psalm 16:5.) But there is in the words an implied contrast, for most men seek their happiness apart from God. All desire to be happy, but as the thoughts of men wander here and there, there is nothing more difficult than so to fix all our hopes in God so as to disregard all other things.

This then is the doctrine which the Prophet now handles, when he says, that those alone could hope, that is, persevere in hope and patience, who have so received God as their portion as to be satisfied with him alone, and to seek nothing else besides him. But he speaks emphatically, that his soul had thus said. Even the unbelieving are ashamed to deny what we have stated, that the whole of our salvation and happiness is found in God alone. Then the unbelieving also confess that God is the fountain of all blessings, and that they ought to acquiesce in him; but with the mouth only they confess this, while they believe nothing less. This then is the reason why the Prophet ascribes what he says to his soul, as though he had said, that lie did not boast, like hypocrites, that God was his portion, but that of this lie had a thorough conviction. My soul has said, that is, I am fully convinced that God is my portion; therefore will I hope in him. We now understand the meaning of this passage.

It remains for us to make an application of this doctrine. That we may not then fail in adversities, let us bear in mind this truth, that all our thoughts will ever wander and go astray, until we are fully persuaded that God alone is sufficient for us, so that lie may become alone our heritage. For all who are not satisfied with God alone, are immediately seized with impatience, whenever famine oppresses them, or sword threatens them, or any other grievous calamity. And for this reason Paul also says,

``If God be for us, who can be against us? I am persuaded that neither famine, nor nakedness, nor sword, nor death, nor life, can separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ.''
(Romans 8:31, 35-39.)

Then Paul lays hold of the paternal favor of God as a ground of solid confidence; for the words in Christ sufficiently show that those are mistaken interpreters who take this love passively, as though he had said, that the faithful would never cease to love God, though he exercised them with many afflictions. But Paul meant that the faithful ought so to fix their minds on God alone, that whatever might happen, they would not yet cease to glory in him. Why? because God is their life in death, their light in darkness, their rest in war and tumult, their abundance in penury and want. It is in the same sense our Prophet now says, when lie intimates that none hope in God but those who build on his paternal favor alone, so that they seek nothing else but to have him propitious to them. It afterwards follows, ---

Lamentations 3:25

25. The LORD is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him.

25. Bonus Jehova expectanti ipsum, (vel, speranti in eum,) animae quaerenti

ipsum.

He continues the same subject: he however adds now something to it, even that God always deals mercifully with his servants, who recumb on him, mid who seek him. We hence see that the last verse is confirmed, where he said that he was content with God alone, while suffering all kinds of adversity: How so? for God, he says, is good to those who wait for him. [544] It might have been objected and said, that adversities produce sorrow, weariness, sadness, and anguish, so that it cannot be that they retain hope who only look to God alone; and it is no doubt true that, when all confess that they hope in God, they afterwards run here and there; and the consequence is, that they fail in their adversities. As, then, this might have been objected to the Prophet, he gives indirectly this answer, that God is good to those who wait for him, as though he had said, that the confidence which recumbs on God alone cannot disappoint us, for God will at length shew his kindness to all those who hope in him. In short, the Prophet teaches us here, that the blessings of God, by which he exhilarates his own children, cannot be separated from his mercy or his paternal favor. Such a sentence as this, ``Whatever can be expected is found in God,'' would be deemed frigid by many; for they might object and say, as before stated, that they were at the same time miserable. Hence the Prophet reminds us here that God's blessings flow to us from his favor as from a fountain, as though he had said, ``As a perennial fountain sends forth water, so also God's goodness manifests and extends itself.''

We now, then, understand the Prophet's meaning. He had indeed said, that we ought to acquiesce in God alone; but now he adds, by way of favor, regarding the infirmity of men, that God is kind and bountiful to all those who hope in him. The sum of what he states is, as I have said, that God's goodness brings forth its own fruits, and that the faithful find by experience, that nothing is better than to have all their thoughts fixed on God alone. God's goodness, then, ought to be understood, so to speak, as actual, even what is really enjoyed. As, then, God deals bountifully with all who hope in him, it follows that they cannot be disappointed, while they are satisfied with him alone, and thus patiently submit to all adversities. In short, the Prophet teaches here what the Scripture often declares, that hope maketh not ashamed. (Romans 5:5.)

But the second clause must be noticed: for the Prophet defines what it is to hope in God, when he says that he is good to the soul that seeks him. Many indeed imagine hope to be I know not what --- a dead speculation; and hypocrites, when God spares them, go on securely and exult, but their confidence is mere ebriety, very different from hope. We must then remember what the Prophet says here, that they alone hope hi God who from the heart seek him, that is, who acknowledge how greatly they need the mercy of God, who go directly to him whenever any temptation harasses them, and who, when any danger threatens them, flee to his aid, and thus prove that they really hope in God. It now follows, ---

Lamentations 3:26

[544] There is more authority for the word for “wait” being in the singular than in the plural, as it is given in the Syr. — Ed.

26. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the LORD.

26. Bonum et expectabit et silebit ad salutem Jehovae (ad verbum; vertunt tamen quidam, bonus sperabit et silebit ad Jehovae; sed potius it neutro genere accipio vocem, {טוב}, sicut in proximo versu qui sequetur, Bonum viro, et coetera.)

It is, indeed, an abrupt phrase when he says, Good and he will wait; for these words are without a subject; but as it is a general statement, there is no ambiguity. The Prophet means that it is good to hope and to be silent as to the salvation, of God. Then the verbs in the future tense ought to be rendered its subjunctives, as though it was said, ``It is good when any one hopes in the salvation of Jehovah, and is silent, that is, bears patiently all his troubles until God succors him.'' [545]

But; the Prophet here reminds us, that we are by no means to require that God should always appear to us, and that his paternal favor should always shine forth on our life. This is, indeed, a condition sought for by all; for the flesh inclines us to this, and hence we shun adversities. We, then, naturally desire God's favor to be manifested to us; how? In reality, so that all things may go on prosperously, that no trouble may touch us, that we may be tormented by no anxiety, that no danger may be suspended over us, that no calamity may threaten us: these things, as I have said, we all naturally seek and desire. But in such a case faith would be extinguished, as Paul tells us in his Epistle to the Romans,

``For we hope not,'' he says, ``for what appears, but we hope for what, is hidden.'' (Romans 8:24, 25.)

It is necessary in this world that the faithful should, as to outward things, be miserable, at one time exposed to want, at another subject to various dangers --- at; one time exposed to reproaches and calumnies, at another harassed by losses: why so? because there would be no occasion for exercising hope, were our salvation complete. This is the very thing which the Prophet now teaches us, when he declares that it is good for us to learn in silence to wait for the salvation of God.

But to express more clearly his mind, he first says, He will wait, or hope. He teaches the need of patience, as also the Apostle does, in Hebrew 10:36; for otherwise there can be no faith. It hence appears, that where there is no patience, there is not even a spark of faith in the heart of man; how so? because this is our happiness, to wait or to hope; and we hope for what is hidden. But in the second clause he explains himself still more clearly by saying, and will be silent To be silent means often in Scripture to rest, to be still; and here it signifies no other thing than to bear the troubles allotted to us, with a calm and resigned mind. He is then said to be silent to God, who remains quiet even when afflictions supply occasion for clamoring; and hence this quietness is opposed to violent feelings; for when some trouble presses on us, we become turbulent, and are carried away by our fury, at one time we quarrel with God, at another we pour forth various complaints. The same thing also happens, when we see some danger, for we tremble, and then we seek reme-

[545] It may be thus rendered, — Good it is when he hopes and waits quietly For the salvation of Jehovah. The {{ו may often be rendered when. This verse, the preceding, and following, begin with ``good,'' which renders the passage very striking, --- 25. Good is Jehovah to him who waits for him, To the soul who seeks him: 26. Good it is when he hopes and waits quietly For the salvation of Jehovah: 27. Good it is for man That he bears the yoke in his youth. --- Ed

dies here and there, and that with great eagerness. But he who patiently bears his troubles, or who recumbs on God when dangers surround him, is said to be silent or to rest quietly; and hence the words of Isaiah, ``In hope and silence;'' for he there exhorts the faithful to patience, and shews where strength is, even when we trust in God, so as willingly to submit to His will, and to be ready to bear his chastisements, and then when we doubt not but that he will be ready to bring us help when we are in danger. (Isaiah 30:15.)

We now perceive what the Prophet means when he says, that it. is good if we wait and be silent as to the salvation of God; even because our happiness is hid, and we are also like the dead, as Paul says, and our life is hid in Christ. (Colossians 3:3.) As then it is so, we must necessarily be silent as to God's salvation, and cherish hope within, though surrounded with many miseries. It follows, ---

Lamentations 3:27

27. It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth.

27. Bonum viro, si tulerit jugum in pueritia sua.

This verse admits of two meanings; for the word yoke may be explained as signifying teaching, or the scourges of God. We, indeed, undertake or bear in two ways the yoke of God, even when we are taught to receive his doctrine, or when we are resigned when he chastises us, when we are not obstreperous, but willingly submit to his corrections. As then some take the word {עול}, for the yoke of instruction, and others for the yoke of chastisement, two explanations, as I have said, are given; and both are admissible. It is indeed truly said, that it is good for man to be accustomed from his youth to God's corrections; but Jeremiah seems rather to speak of that obedience generally, which the faithful render to God when they submit to his will. It is then our true happiness when we acknowledge that we are not our own, and allow God, by his sovereign power, to rule us as he pleases. But we ought to begin with the law of God. Hence, then, it is, that we are said to bear the yoke of God, when we relinquish our own judgment, and become wise through God's word, when, with our affections surrendered and subdued, we hear what God commands us, and receive what he commands. This, then, is what Jeremiah means by bearing the yoke.

And he says, in youth. For they who have lived unrestrained throughout their life, can hardly bear to be brought into any order. We indeed know, that, the aged are less tractable than the young; nay, whether we refer to the arts or to the liberal sciences, the youthful age is the most flexible. The aged are also much slower; and added to this is another evil, they are very obstinate, and will hardly bear to be taught the first rudiments, being imbued with a false notion, as though they must have lived long in vain. As, then, the disposition in the old is not easily changed, the Prophet says that it is good for us to be formed from childhood to bear the yoke. And this is also seen in brute animals; when a horse is allowed full liberty in the fields, and not in due time tamed, he will hardly ever bear the curb, he will be always refractory. The oxen, also, will never be brought to bear the yoke, if they be put under it in the sixth or eighth year. The same is found to be the case with men. Jeremiah, then, does not say, without reason, that it is good for every one to be trained from his youth in the service of God; and thus he exhorts children and youth not to wait for old age, as it

is usually the case. For it has been a common evil, in all ages, for children and youth to leave the study of wisdom to the old. ``Oh! it will be time enough for me to be wise, when I arrive at a middle age; but some liberty must be given to childhood and youthful days.'' And for this reason, Solomon exhorts all not to wait for old age, but duly to learn to fear God in childhood. So also our Prophet declares that it is good for one to bear the yoke in his childhood. It then follows. ---

Lamentations 3:28

28. He sitteth alone and keepeth silence, because he hath borne it upon him.

28. Sedebit seorsum (vel, solus) et silebit, quia tulit super se.

Here he shews the fruit of teachableness; for when God deals severely with his children, they yet do not rebel, but even then they willingly submit to his authority. For whence comes it that so much impatience rages in men, except that they know not what it is to obey God, to prepare themselves to bear the yoke? so, then, men become furious like wild beasts, never tamed, therefore the Prophet now says, ``Whosoever is thus habituated to the yoke of God, will also be silent in extreme evils, and remain quiet.'' We now perceive what I have just said, that the fruit of docility and obedience is set forth in this verse.

But when he says that those who are thus trained to obey God will sit apart, he expresses most fitly the strength and character of patience. For they for the most part who wish to appear magnanimous make a great display, and think that their valor is nothing except they appear as on a theater; they allow themselves at the same time an unbridled liberty when they are alone; for they who seem the most valorous, except God's fear and true religion prevail in their souls, rage against God and champ the bridle in adversities, though they may not make a clamor before men, for, as I have already said, they regard display. But here a very different account is given of patience, even that we are to sit alone and be silent, that is, even were no one present as a witness, whose presence might make us ashamed; were we even then to sit, and to submit with calm minds to God, and to take his yoke, we should thus prove our patience. This verse then distiguishes between the simplicity of the godly and that will display in which they delight who seek to obtain the praise of courage, patience, and perseverance, from the world; for these also sit and speak words as from heaven, and as though they had put off the flesh. He who has lost a son will say, that he had begotten a mortal: he who is stripped of all his goods will say, ``All my things I carry with me.'' Thus magnanimously do ungodly men speak, so that they seem to surpass in fortitude and firmness all the children of God. But when they give utterance to these swelling words, what they regard is the opinion which men may form of them. But the faithful, what do they do? They sit apart, that is, though they might shamelessly clamor against God, yet they are quiet and submit to his will. We now understand what is meant by sitting apart.

Then he says, because he will carry it on himself Some take {נטל} nuthel, in a transitive sense, ``he will cast it upon him.'' But this is a forced rendering. It would be a simpler meaning, were we to say, because he will carry or raise it on himself. The verb {נטל}, nuthel, means not only to carry, but also elevate or raise up. When, therefore, the Prophet says, that it is an example of real patience when

we carry it on ourselves, he means that we succumb not under our adversities, nor are overwhelmed by them; for it is patience when it is not grievous to us to undergo any burdens which God may lay on us; and on this account we are said to regard his yoke as not grievous --- how so? because it is pleasant to us. As, then, meekness thus extenuates the heaviness of the burden, which would otherwise overwhelm us, the Prophet says that those who raise up on themselves all their troubles sit apart.

I do not, however, know whether this passage has been corrupted; for the expression seems not to me natural. Were we to read {עלו}, olu, his yoke, it would be more appropriate, and a reason would be given for what goes before, that the faithful sit apart and are silent before God, because they bear his yoke; for the pronoun may be referred to God as well as to man. But this is only a conjecture. [546] It follows, ---

Lamentations 3:29

29. He putteth his mouth in the dust; if so be there may be hope.

29. Ponet in pulvere os suum, si forte sit spes.

He continues the same subject; for he describes to us men so subdued to obedience that they are ready to bear whatever God may lay on them. He then says that the sitting and the silence of which he spoke, so far prevailed, that the children of God, though in extreme evils, did not yet cease to persevere in their obedience. For it sometimes happens that those who have made some progress in the fear of God, give proof of their obedience and patience in some small trial; but when they are greatly tried, then breaks forth the impatience which they had previously checked. Then the Prophet teaches us here, that the children of God do not sufficiently prove their patience, when they bear with a calm mind a moderate correction, except they proceed to a higher degree of perseverance, so as to remain quiet and resigned even when the state of things appears hopeless.

By saying that the faithful put their mouth in the dust, he means that they lie down humbly before God and confess themselves to be as dead. The import of what is said is this: In time of extreme affliction the wise will put his mouth in the dust, while seeing things in such confusion that all his thoughts vanish away on account of the atrocity of evils; and thus he intimates that the wise would have nothing to say. To put the mouth, then, in the dust is to become mute, as though he had said, that the faithful shut their mouth, when they do not murmur against God nor abandon themselves to complaints, when they do not expostulate that injury is done them, nor allege what the unbelieving usually do when God deals severely with them. In short, to put the mouth in the dust, means to bring no complaints, and so to check ourselves that no clamorous words proceed from our mouth. Thus another phrase is used to set forth the silence mentioned before.

And that the Prophet here speaks of extreme trials, may be easily gathered from the next clause, If so be that there is hope; not that the faithful doubt whether God would give them hope, for they have no doubt but that God, who shines in darkness itself by his word, would at length by, the effect prove that he is not unfaithful. But the particle {אולי} auli, as it is well known, expresses what is difficult; for when

[546] It is so found in the Syr.; but it comes to the same thing, if the verb be taken passively. in Niphal, — "Because it (the yoke mentioned before) has been laid on him." Blayney's version is, "When it is laid on him." — Ed.

anything appears to be incredible, the Hebrews say, If it may be. But here, as I have said, it does not intimate a doubt; for when the mind of a godly man fluctuates or doubts, how is it that he puts his mouth in the dust? but the Prophet shews that those who are taught to obey God, persevere even in extreme trials, so that while nothing but despair appears, they yet lie down humbly before God, and patiently wait until some hope shines forth. And here hope is to be taken for the ground or occasion of hope. [547] It afterwards follows, ---

Lamentations 3:30

30. He giveth his cheek to him that smiteth him: he is filled full with reproach.

30. Dabit percutienti maxillam, saturbitur opprobriis.

Here he mentions another fruit of patience, that the faithful, even when injuries are done to them by the wicked, would yet be calm and resigned. For there are many who submit to God when they perceive his hand; as, for instance, when any one is afflicted with a disease, he knows that it is a chastisement that proceeds from God; when pestilence happens, or famine, from the inclemency of the weather, the hand of God appears to them; and many then conduct themselves in a suitable manner: but when an enemy meets one, and when injured, he instantly says, ``I have now nothing to do with God, but that wicked enemy treats me disgracefully.''

It is then for this reason that the Prophet shews that the patience of the godly ought to extend to injuries of this kind; and hence he says, He will give the cheek to the smiter, and will be filled with reproaches [548] There are two kinds of injuries; for the wicked either treat us with violence, or assail us with reproaches; and reproach is the bitterest of all things, and inflicts a most grievous wound on all ingenuous minds. The Prophet, then, here declares that the children of God ought meekly to suffer when they are violently assailed, and not only so, but when they are dealt with reproachfully by the wicked. This, then, he says of patience. Now follows another confirmation, ---

Lamentations 3:31

31. For the Lord will not cast off for ever:

31. Quia non respuet (vel, rejiciet) in perpetuum Dominus.

It is certain that there will be no patience, except there be hope, as it has already appeared. As, then, patience cherishes hope, so hope is the foundation of patience; and hence consolation is, according to Paul, connected with patience. (Romans 15:4.) And this is the doctrine which the Prophet now handles, --- that the faithful bear the yoke with meek and calm minds, because they believe that God will at length be propitious to them: hence also arises patience; for the faithful are persuaded that all adversities are temporary, and that there will be a happy end, because God will at length be reconciled to them, though he gives them new evidences

[547] To lay the mouth in the dust, is a token of entire submission. Agreeably with this, the following words may be considered as spoken by the individual, — He will lay in the dust his mouth (and say) — "It may be there is hope." It is better to render the verbs here as they are, in the future tense, as all the versions do; for he describes what is usually the character of the godly under severe trials. — Ed.

[548] That is, he will suffer himself to be filled with reproaches; he will submit to all reproaches. — Ed.

of his wrath. [549] The rest to-morrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as it is expedient for us to be daily chastised by thy hand, we may willingly submit to thee, and not doubt but that thou wilt be faithful, and not prove us with too much rigor, but that thou wilt consider our weakness, so that we may thus calmly bear all thy chastisements, until we shall at length enjoy that perfect blessedness, which is now hid to us under hope, and as it were sealed, until Christ thy Son shall reveal it at his coming. --- Amen.

Lecture Eleventh

Lamentations 3:32

32. But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.

32. Quia si dolore affecerit, etiam miserebitur secundum multitudinem clementiarum suarum.

We saw in the last Lecture that the best and the only true remedy for sorrows is, when the faithful are convinced that they are chastised only by the paternal hand of God, and that, the end of all their evils will be blessed. Now this they cannot of themselves assume; but God comes to their aid, and declares that he will not be angry for ever with his children. For this promise extends generally to the whole Church,

``For a moment I afflicted thee, in the time of mine indignation, but with perpetual mercies will I follow thee,'' (Isaiah 54:7, 8)

and again,

``I will visit their iniquities with a rod, yet my mercy I will not take away from them''

(Psalm 89 33, 84.)

When therefore the faithful feel assured that their punishment is only for a time, then they lay hold on hope, and thus receive invaluable comfort in all their evils.

Jeremiah now pursues the same subject, even that God will shew compassion according to the multitude of his mercies, though he causes sorrow to men. This may indeed be generally explained as to all mankind; but, as we have said, God has promised this to his own Church. All miseries, regarded in themselves, are tokens of the wrath and curse of God; but as all things turn out for good and for salvation to the children of God, when they embrace this truth, that God, as the Prophet Habakkuk says, remembers mercy in wrath, (Habakkuk 3:2,) so they restrain themselves and do not despond, nor are they overwhelmed with despair. We now then understand the Prophet's object in saying, that though God afflicts he yet remembers mercy.

But we must at the same time bear in mind what I have before shewed, that the

[549] This verse is connected with Lamentations 3:25: "Good is Jehovah to him who waits for him;" and the reason is given here, "For not reject perpetually (or, for ever) will the Lord." "For," as assigning a reason, is here repeated three times, in this verse and in the two following verses; and they seem all to be reasons given for the truth contained in Lamentations 3:25, 31. For not reject perpetually Will the Lord: 32. For though he afflicts, yet he will shew compassion According to the multitude of his mercies: 33. For he does not depress from his heart, Nor afflict the children of men. All these particulars explain and elucidate the truth, that God is good. "From his heart," does not mean "willingly," but at his will, that is, arbitrarily, without reason, but when constrained by man's wickedness. — Ed.

faithful are exposed to various evils, because it is profitable for them to be chastised by God's hand. Hence appears the necessity of this doctrine, for were we exempt frown all adversities, this admonition would be superfluous. But as it cannot be but that God will smite us with his rods, not only because we deserve to be smitten, but also because it is expedient, it is necessary to flee to this consolation which is offered to us, even that God having afflicted us with grief will again shew us compassion, even according to the multitude of his mercies He confirms the truth of what he alleges by a reference to the very nature of God himself. Hence, that the faithful might not debate with themselves whether God would be propitious to them, after having inflicted on them a temporary punishment, the Prophet comes to their aid, and sets before them the mercy of God, or rather mercies, in the plural number; as though he had said, that it could not be that God should deny himself, and that therefore he would be always merciful to his people; for otherwise his mercy would be obliterated, yea, that mercy which is inseparable from his eternal essence and divinity.

And hence, when God is pleased briefly to shew what he is, he sets forth his mercy and patience; for except his goodness and mercy meet us, when we come to him, dread would immediately absorb all our thoughts; but when God comes forth as if clothed and adorned with mercy, we may then entertain hope of salvation; and though conscious of evil, yet while we recumb on God's mercy, we shall never lose the hope of salvation. We not: apprehend the Prophet's meaning. It follows, ---

Lamentations 3:33

33. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men.

33. Quia non affligit ex corde suo, et delore afficit filios viri.

This is another confirmation of the same truth, that God takes no delight in the evils or miseries of men. It is indeed a strong mode of speaking which the Prophet adopts, but very suitable. God, we know, puts on, as it were, our form or manner, for he cannot be comprehended in his inconceivable glory by human minds. Hence it is that he transfers to himself what properly can only apply to men. God surely never acts unwillingly nor feignedly: how then is that suitable which Jeremiah declares, --- that God does not afflict from his heart? But God, as already said, does here assume the character of man; for though he afflicts us with sorrow as he pleases, yet true it is that he delights not in the miseries of men; for if a father desires to benefit his own children, and deals kindly with them, what ought we to think of our heavenly Father?

``Ye,'' says Christ, ``who are evil,
know how to do good to your children,'' (Matthew 7:11;)

what then are we to expect from the very fountain of goodness? As, then, parents are not willingly angry with their children, nor handle them roughly, there is no doubt but that God never punishes men except when he is constrained. There is, as I have said, an impropriety in the expression, but it is enough to know, that God derives no pleasure from the miseries of men, as profane men say, who utter such blasphemies as these, that we are like balls with which God plays, and that we are exposed to many evils, because God wishes to have as it were, a pleasant and

delectable spectacle in looking on the innumerable afflict, ions, and at length on the death of men.

That such thoughts, then, might not tempt us to unbelief, the Prophet here puts a check on us, and declares that God does not afflict from his heart, that is, willingly, as though he delighted in the evils of men, as a judge, who, when he ascends his throne and condemns the guilty to death, does not do this from his heart, because he wishes all to be innocent, and thus to have a reason for acquitting them; but. yet he willingly condemns the guilty, because this is his duty. So also God, when he adopts severity towards men, he indeed does so willingly, because he is the judge of the world; but he does not do so from the heart, because he wishes all to be innocent --- for far away from him is all fierceness and cruelty; and as he regards men with paternal love, so also he would have them to be saved, were they not as it were by force to drive him to rigor. And this feeling he also expresses in Isaiah,

``Ah! I will take consolation from mine adversaries.''
(Isaiah 1:24.)

He calls them adversaries who so often provoked him by their obstinacy; yet he was led unwillingly to punish their sins, and hence he employed a particle expressive of grief, and exclaimed Ah! as a father who wishes his son to be innocent, and yet is compelled to be severe with him.

But however true this doctrine may be, taken generally, there is yet no doubt but that the Prophet here addresses only the faithful; and doubtless this privilege peculiarly belongs to God's children, as it has been shown before. It follows, ---

Lamentations 3:34-36

34. To crush under his feet all the prisoners of the earth,

34. Ad conterendum sub pedibus suis omnes vinetos terrae,

35. To turn aside the right of a man before the face of the most High,

35. Ad pervertendum (ad declinandum) judisium viri coram conspectu excelsi,

36. To subvert a man in his cause, the Lord approveth not.

36. Ad pervertendumm hominem in lite sua, Dominus non videt (vel, non vidit)

Many interpreters think that these three verses are connected with the previous doctrine, and show the connection thus, --- that God does not see, that is, does not know what it is to pervert the good cause of a man, and to oppress the innocent; and, doubtless, God is said not to know what iniquity is, because he abhors all evil; for what is the nature of God but the perfection of justice? It may then be truly said, that. God knows not what it is to turn man aside in judgment. Others take not to see, as meaning, not to approve.

If we subscribe to the opinion of those who say that injustice is contrary to the nature of God, there is here an exhortation to patience; as though the Prophet had said that afflictions ought to be borne with resignation, because the Jews had fully deserved them. For the liberty taken to complain arises from this, that men imagine that they are without fault; but he who is convicted dares not thus to rise up against God; for the chief thing in humility is the acknowledgment of sin. This, then, is one meaning. But they who give this explanation, that God does not approve of those who pervert judgment, think that there is here a ground of consolation, because God

would at length succor the miserable who were unjustly oppressed. And doubtless it avails not a little to encourage patience when we are persuaded that God will be an avenger, so that he will at length help us, after having for a time suffered us to be severely treated.

But these expositions seem to me to be too remote; we may give a correcter explanation by supposing a concession to be made, as though the Prophet had said, ``It is indeed true that the wicked take much license, for they imagine that God is blind to all evil deeds.'' For this madness is often ascribed to the ungodly, that they think that they can sin with impunity, because God, as they suppose, cares not for the affairs of men. They then imagine that God is asleep, and in a manner dead, and hence they break out into all kinds of wickedness. And for this reason it was that David so vehemently rebuked them:

``He who has formed the ear, will he not hear? He who has created the heaven, will he not see?'' (Psalm 94:9.)

This explanation also I cannot approve of, it being forced and not obvious.

I therefore think that the reference is to the impious words of those who complain that God is not moved by any compassion. For this thought almost lays hold on us wheel pressed down by adversities, --- that God has forgotten us, that he is either asleep or lies down inactive. In short, there is nothing more difficult to be assured of than this truth, that God governs the world by his counsel, and that nothing happens without a design. This is indeed what almost all confess; but when a trial comes, this doctrine vanishes, and every one is carried away by some perverted and erroneous thoughts, even that all things roll round fortuitously through blind fate, that men are not the objects of God's care. Nor is there a doubt but that in Jeremiah's time words of this kind were flying about; and it appears evident from the context that those Jews were reproved who thought that their miseries were disregarded by God, and hence they clamored; for men are necessarily carried away into a furious state of mind, when they do not believe that they have to do with God. The Prophet, then, refers to such impious words, or if they dared not to express in language what they thought, he refers to what was believed almost by all, --- that the wicked perverted the judgment of man, that they turned aside a man in his cause, that they tore under their feet all the bound of the earth; [550] that is, that all those things were done by the connivance of God. The plain meaning, then, is, that judgment is perverted before the face of the Most High, --- that the bound of the earth such as are helpless, are despised, trodden under foot by the wicked, --- that a man in his cause is unjustly dealt with, and that all this is done because God does not see [551] We now, then,

[550] The order is here reverted. It is a common thing in Scripture to state first the chief thing, the chief good or evil. Here the greatest evil is mentioned first, the tearing under foot of such as were already bound, or imprisoned; then the sparing of the guilty; and thirdly, the withholding of justice to the righteous. To turn aside or divert judgment, is not to punish the guilty; and to wrong a person in his cause, is to deny his right. By "the bound," or "prisoners of the earth," or land, Blayney understands persons imprisoned for debt, who were obliged to work as slaves until they satisfied their creditors. See Matthew 18:30-34. Cruelty to such is referred to in Isaiah 58:3. — Ed.

[551] The Targ. and the versions differ as to the import of this clause. The verb to see, has been taken to mean three things, — to know, to approve, and to regard or to notice. The Vulgate takes the first, our version the second, and Calvin the third. The context seems to favor the last meaning especially the following verses. There is a difficulty as to the antecedent to the

perceive what the Prophet means.

But whence came such madness? even because the Jews, as I have said, would not humble themselves under the mighty hand of God; for hypocrisy had so blinded them, that they proudly clamored against God, thinking that they were chastised with unjust severity,. As then, they thus flattered themselves in their sins, this expostulation arose which the Prophet mentions, that man's judgment was perverted, that the innocent failed in a good cause, that the miserable were trodden under foot; and whence all this? because God did not see, or did not regard these things. Now follows the reproof of this delirious impiety, ---

Lamentations 3:37-38

37. Who is he that saith, and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not?

37. Quis iste, dixit; fuit, Deus non praecepit?

38. Out of the mouth of the most High proceedeth not evil and good?

38. Ex ore Excelsi non egredietur malum et bonum (vel, quasi non egrediatur malum et bonum ex ore Excelsi?)

The Prophet, after having mentioned the blasphemy which prevailed everywhere at that time, strongly condemns so gross a stupidity. Who is this? he says. He checks such madness by a sharp rebuke --- for the question implies an astonishment, as though the Prophet had said, that it was like a prodigy to find men who imagined that God was content with his own leisure, and exercised no care over the world; for this was to annihilate him altogether. God is not a dead being, he is not a spectre; what then? God is the judge of the world. We hence see that it was a monstrous thing, when men entertained the notion that God is idle or forgetful, that he gives up the world to chance. This is the reason why the Prophet asks as of a thing absurd and extremely disgraceful. Who is this? he says; Could it be that men should give themselves up to such a degree of madness? for when they said, that anything could happen without God's command, it was the same as if they denied his power; for what is God without his judgment?

The other verse may be explained in two ways; but as to the meaning, there is but little difference. It may, then, be read as a question, ``Cannot good and evil proceed from the mouth of the most High?'' or it may be rendered thus, ``As though good and evil should not proceed from the mouth of God.'' As to the substance of what is said, we see that there is no need of disputing, for the Prophet confirms what he had said, that men are to be abhorred who imagine God to be as it were dead, and thus rob him of his power and of his office as a judge. And, doubtless, except we hold this truth, no true religion can exist in us; for except all the sayings and doings of men come to an account before the tribunal of God, and also their motives and thoughts, there will be first. no faith and, secondly, there will be no integrity, and all prayer to God will be extinguished. For if we believe that God does not regard what is done in

pronoun “his, before “feet.” It seems to refer to “man” in the last verse; for the words are, “the sons (or children) of man,” not of “men.” The verb {,{ראה when followed by ,{ל} means to look on, at, or simply to see. Psalm 64:5. Then the literal rendering of the passage would be as follows, --- On the tearing under his feet Of all the bound of the land, On the diverting of a man's judgment, In the presence of the most High, On the wronging of a person in his cause The Lord doth not look. Or if the ``on'' be dropped, the last line may be, The Lord doth not see. This is manifestly the saying of unbelieving men, or of those weak in faith, as proved by the next verse, when rightly rendered. --- Ed.

the world, who will trust in him? and who will seek help from him? besides, who will hesitate to abandon himself to cruelty, or frauds, or plunder? Extinguished, then, is every sense of religion by this impious opinion, that God spends his time leisurely in heaven, and attends not to human affairs. This is the reason why the Prophet is so indignant against those who said, that anything could be done without the command of God.

Let us now see how God commands what is wrongly and foolishly done by men. Surely he does not command the ungodly to do what is wicked, for he would thus render them excusable; for where God's authority interposes, there no blame can be. But God is said to command whatever he has decreed, according to his hidden counsel. There are, then, two kinds of commands; one belongs to doctrine, and the other to the hidden judgments of God. The command of doctrine, so to speak, is an evident approbation which acquits men; for when one obeys God, it is enough that he has God as his authority, though he were condemned by a hundred worlds. Let us, then, learn to be attentive to the commands of doctrine, by which we ought to regulate our life, for they make up the only true rule, from which it is not right to depart. But God is said to command according to his secret decrees what he does not approve, as far as men are concerned. So Shimei had a command to curse, and yet he was not exempt from blame; for it was not his purpose to obey God; nay, he thought that he had offended God no less than David. (2 Samuel 16:5, 6.) Then this distinction ought to be understood, that some things are commanded by God, not that men may have it as a rule of action, but when God executes his secret judgments by ways unknown to us. Thus, then, ought this passage to be understood, even that nothing is carried on without God's command, that is, without his decree, and, as they say, without his ordination.

It hence appears, that those things which seem contingent, are yet ruled by the certain providence of God, so that nothing is done at random. And what philosophers call accident, or contingent, ({ἐνδεχόμενον}) is necessary as to God; for God decreed before the world was made whatever he was to do; so that there is nothing now done in the world which is not directed by his counsel. And true is that saying in the Psalms, that our God is in heaven, and doeth whatsoever he pleaseth, (Psalm 116:3;) but this would not be true, were not all things dependent on God's counsel. We hence see that nothing is contingent, for everything that takes place flows from the eternal and immutable counsel of God. It. is indeed true, that those things which take place in this or that manner, are properly and naturally called contingencies, but what is naturally contingent, is necessary, as far as it is directed by God; nay, what is carried on by the counsel and will of men is necessary. Philosophers think that all things are contingent ({ἐνδεχόμενα}) and why? because the will of man may turn either way. They then, conclude, that whatever men do is contingent, because he who wills may change his will. These things are true, when we consider the will of man in itself, and the exercise of it; but when we raise our eyes to the secret providence of God, who turns and directs the counsels of men according to his own will, it is certain that how much soever men may change in their purposes, yet God never changes.

Let us then hold this doctrine, that nothing is done except by God's command and

ordination, and, with the Holy Spirit, regard with abhorrence those profane men who imagine that God sits idly as it were on his watch-tower and takes no notice of what is done in the world, and that human affairs change at random, and that men turn and change independently on any higher power. Nothing is more diabolical than this delirious impiety; for as I have said, it extinguishes all the acts and duties of religion; for there will be no faith, no prayer, no patience, in short;, no religion, except we believe and know that God exercises such care over the world, of which he is the Creator, that nothing happens except through his certain and unchangeable decree.

Now they who object, and say that God is thus made the author of evils, may be easily refuted; for nothing is more preposterous than to measure the incomprehensible judgment of God by our contracted minds. The Scripture cries aloud that the judgments of God are a great deep; it exhorts us to reverence and sobriety, and Paul does not in vain exclaim that the ways of God are unsearchable. (Romans 11:33.) As, then, God's judgments in their height far surpass all our thoughts, we ought to beware of audacious presumption and curiosity; for the more audacious a man becomes, the farther God withdraws from him. This, then, is our wisdom, to embrace only what the Scripture teaches. Now, when it teaches us that nothing is done except through the will of God, it does not speak indiscriminately, as though God approved of murders, and thefts, and sorceries, and adulteries; what then? even that God by his just and righteous counsel so orders all things, that he still wills not iniquity and abhors all injustice. When, therefore, adulteries, and murders, and plunders are committed, God applies, as it were, a bridle to all those things, and how much soever the most; wicked may indulge themselves in their vices, he still rules them; this they themselves acknowledge; but for what end does he rule them? even that he may punish sins with sins, as Paul teaches us, for he says that; God gives up to a reprobate mind those who deserve such a punishment, that he gives them up to disgraceful lusts, that he blinds more and more the despisers of his word. (Romans 1:28; 2 Thessalonians 2:10.) And then God has various ways, and those innumerable and unknown to us.

Let us then learn not to subject; God to our judgment, but adore his judgments, though they surpass our comprehension; and since the cause of them is hid from us, our highest wisdom is modesty and sobriety.

Thus we see that God is not the author of evils, though nothing happens but by his nod and through his will, --- for far different is his design from that of wicked men. Then absurd would it be to implicate him as all associate ill the same crime, when a murderer, or a thief, or an adulterer is condemned, --- and why? because God has no participation in thefts and adulteries; but the vices of men are in a way wonderful and incomprehensible as his judgments. In a word, as far as the heavens are from the earth, so great is the difference between the works of God and the deeds of men, for the ends, as I have said, are altogether different. [552]

[552] "The construction of these two verses is variously given. The verb rendered, "It was, or, "It came to pass," if in the third person, is feminine, while it is usually and probably always masculine, when it has this meaning. It may be taken to be here in the second person. The literal rendering of the verse then would be, — Who-he-saying (i.e., Who is he who says,) That thou art Lord, ordering not, (i.e., who dost not order, or command.) Then the following verse contains a continuation of what the objector said, — From the mouth of the Highest Cometh

The Prophet says that from the mouth of the most High proceed good and evil By ``mouth'' he means his decree. God indeed does not always declare that he is a judge; he has often executed punishment on the wicked, as it were, in silence; for there were no prophets among the heathens to proclaim the judgments he brought on them. But though God does not always speak when he punishes the wickedness of men, it is yet said that good and evil proceed from his mouth; because he allots to men their punishment as it seems good to him; and then he spares others or bears with them for a time. It follows, ---

Lamentations 3:39

39. Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?

39. Cur molestia se afficit homo vivens? Vir super peccato suo?

Some explain the verb {יתאונן}, itaunen, by giving it the sense of lying, ``Why should man lie?'' others, ``Why should man murmur?'' But I see not what sense there can be in rendering it lying or murmuring. Others translate thus, ``Why should man harden himself?'' but it is a mere conjecture. Now, this verb sometimes means to weary one's self, in Hithpael. So in the eleventh chapter of Numbers, ``The people murmured,'' as some render the words; but I think differently; nor is there a doubt but that Moses meant that the people were wearied, so that they in a manner pined away; and this meaning is the most suitable here. For the Prophet had before rebuked those who imagined that God, having relinquished the care of the world, led an inactive and easy life in heaven; but now, in order to rouse the minds of all, he points out the remedy for this madness, even that men should not willingly weary themselves in their sins, but acknowledge that their wickedness is shewn to them whenever any adversity comes upon them. And surely men would not be so infatuated as to exclude God from the government of the world, were they to know themselves and seriously to call to mind their own deeds and words; for God would soon exhibit to them sure and notorious examples of his judgment. Whence then comes it, that we are so dull and stupid in considering the works of God? nay, that we think that God is like a spectre or an idol? even because we rot in our sins and contract a voluntary dullness; for we champ the bit, according to the old proverb.

We now, then, perceive why the Prophet joins this sentence, Why does a living man weary himself? [553] and a man in his sins? for as long as men thus remain in their own dregs, they will never acknowledge God as the judge of the world, and thus they always go astray through their own perverse imaginations. If, then, we wish to dissipate all the mists which prevent us from seeing God's providence, (that is, by the eyes of faith,) let every one be his own witness and the judge of his own life, and carefully examine himself; it will then immediately occur to us, that God is not without reason angry with us, and that we are afflicted with so many adver-

not the evil and the good. The answer of the Prophet is in Lamentations 3:39, in which he intimates that God orders evil as a punishment for sin. The objector's declaration, that God as a Lord or Sovereign does not command or order events, and for this reason, because both evil and good cannot come from him, is a proof that not to see in Lamentations 3:36, is not to regard or notice the affairs of men. — Ed.

[553] "Murmur" is the Sept. and the Vulg. The word only occurs here and in Numbers 11:1; and "complain" is the most suitable rendering in both places, — 39. Why complain should man, Any man alive, for his sin? That is, on account of suffering for his sin. Thus God is justified in ordaining or commanding evil as well as good, that is, the evil of punishment. — Ed.

sities, because our sins will come forth before us. We here see the cause of that madness which makes men to exclude God's providence from human affairs, even because they look not on themselves, but torment themselves without any benefit and become wearied in their sins, and do not raise up their eyes to God. The rest, connected with our subject, I must defer till to-morrow.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are at this day tossed here and there by so many troubles, and almost all things in the world are in confusion, so that wherever we turn our eyes, nothing but thick darkness meets us, --- O grant that we may learn to surmount all obstacles, and to raise our eyes by faith above the world, so that we may acknowledge that governed by thy wonderful counsel is everything that seems to us to happen by chance, in order that we may seek thee, and know that help will be ready for us through thy mercy whenever we humbly seek the pardon of our sins, through Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Twelfth

Lamentations 3:40

40. Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD.

40. Percontemur (scrutemur) vias nostras, et inquiramus, et convertamur ad Jehovam.

The Prophet now shews more clearly what the reproof meant which we shortly explained yesterday: he said that men act absurdly while they weary themselves in their sins; he now adds that they would do rightly if they inquired into their own life, and faithfully examined themselves.

For hence is trouble and weariness, when men feel and deplore their outward evils, but consider not the cause, that is, when they consider not that they are justly chastised by God's hand. Then the examination now mentioned is set in opposition to the torpor and weariness with which men in vain torment themselves, and in which they pine away, because they reflect not on their vices. Hence it is that they attain nothing but weariness --- and that is a sorrow to death, as Paul says; but sorrow to life proceeds from the self-examination to which the Prophet now invites and exhorts us.

He then says that the only true remedy in adversities is when men carefully examine themselves, and consider what they deserve. [554] He also mentions conversion; for they who are really touched with the fear of God do not stop at this examination, but rise higher; for as God calls them back to the right way, when they acknowledge that they have departed from him, they flee to his mercy, loathe themselves on account of their vices, and seek after newness of life. Thus our Prophet prescribes to us a certain order, --- that we are to examine our whole life, and that, being influenced by the fear of God, we are to return to him; for while he treats us with severity, he still kindly invites us by ever offering to sinners a free pardon. He afterwards adds, ---

Lamentations 3:41

[554] The words literally rendered are very expressive, — Let us uncover our ways, and search. The cover was first to be stripped off, and then was a search to be made as to the character of their ways. — Ed.

41. Let us lift our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens.

41. Tollamus corda nostra cum manibus ad Deum in coelis.

To conversion he joins prayer; for we cannot be reconciled to God except he buries our sins; nor can repentance and faith be separated. Moreover, to taste of God's mercy opens to us the door of prayer. And this ought to be carefully noticed, because the unbelieving seem at times to be very busy in seeking to return to God's favor, but they only attend to the outward change of life; and at the same time they are not anxious about pardon, but go boldly before God, as though they were not exposed to his judgment.

And we see under the Papacy that while they make long sermons on repentance, they hardly ever make any account of faith, as though repentance without faith were a restoration from death to life.

Hence I said that we ought to notice the mode of teaching which our Prophet adopts: he begins with self-examination, then he requires conversion; but he does not separate it from faith. For when he exhorts us to pray, it is the same thing as though he had set before us the judgment of God, and had also taught us that we cannot escape death except God be propitious to us. How then is pardon to be obtained? by prayer: and prayer, as it is well known, must be always founded on faith.

By telling us to raise up our hearts to God together with our hands, he bids us to banish all hypocrisy from our prayers. For all without a difference raise up their hands to God; and nature itself, when we are pressed down with evils, leads us to seek God. But the greater part stifle this feeling of nature. When affliction comes, it is a common thing with all to raise up their hands to heaven, though no one should bid them to do so; but still their hearts remain fixed on the earth, and they come not to God. And the greater part of men are included in that class mentioned by Isaiah,

``This people come to me with their tongue,
but their heart is far away.'' (Isaiah 29:13.)

As, then, men deal thus formally with God, and present a naked ceremony, as though God had changed and suffered his eyes to be covered, the Prophet bids all dissimulation to cease from prayer; Let us raise up hands, he says, to God, and also hearts. Joel speaks somewhat differently, when he says,

``Rend your hearts and not your garments,'' (Joel 2:13;)

for he seems to exclude the outward rite, because men, wishing to shew that they were guilty before God, rent their garments. Joel says that this was superfluous and useless; and doubtless the rite itself was not so very necessary. But as prayers, when they are earnest, move the hands, our Prophet refers to that practice as useful. At the same time he teaches us that the chief thing ought not to be omitted, even to raise up the hearts to God: Let us, then, he says, raise up our hearts together with our hands to God; and he adds, to God who is in heaven: for it is necessary that men should rise up above the world, and to go out of themselves, so to speak, in order to come to God.

We now then understand the meaning of the Prophet, --- that those who repent from the heart ought not to go before God, as though they were not guilty before his

tribunal, but that on the contrary they ought to be penitent and humble, so that they may obtain pardon. He afterwards shews that the right way of praying is, when we not only perform the outward ceremonies, but when we open our hearts and raise them up as it were to heaven itself. It is, then, the right way of praying, when the inward feeling corresponds with the external posture. It follows, ---

Lamentations 3:42

42. We have trangressed and we have rebelled: thou hast not pardoned.

42. Nos peccavimus et rebelles fuimus; tu non pepercisti.

The faithful do not here expostulate with God, but on the contrary acknowledge that God's severity was just. That God then had dealt with them severely, they ascribe to their own sins, This is the substance of what is said.

We hence learn that an ingenuous confession ever accompanies repentance, as also Paul teaches us, (2 Corinthians 7:11.) For when a sinner is either secure or tries to cover his wickedness, and flatters himself, as we see but a few who willingly humble themselves before God, he contracts the hardness of obstinacy. For this reason the Prophet requires confession; nay, he suggests here the words suitable to be used, when we desire to obtain pardon from God. We have done wickedly, he says, and have been rebellious The pronoun, we, is here emphatical, as though the faithful had taken on themselves the blame of all the evils, which the greater part ever sought to disown. [555]

Here then the Prophet shews that there is no other way of being reconciled to God, than by confessing ourselves to be the authors of all our evils; and he also teaches us, that it is an evidence of true repentance, when we do not allege vain pretences as it is commonly done, nor flatter ourselves, but confess that we are guilty. He now shows that guilt ought by no means to be extenuated, so that our confession may be real and complete: but in this respect the world trifle with God. The most wicked are, indeed, ashamed to deny that they are sinners; but as they are forced to make some kind of confession, this they do lightly; and it seems an extorted confession, and is therefore jejune, or at least not complete. But the Prophet here shews that they who seek to be reconciled to God, ought not only in words to acknowledge and confess their guilt, but also ingenuously to open their hearts. Hence he connects perverseness with sin: as though he had said, ``We have not sinned simply or in one way, but we have exasperated God himself; and by sinning in many ways and constantly, we have provoked him against us.'' He says, in short, that there is then an access open to us to obtain favor, when we do not murmur against God nor contend with him as though he had dealt severely with us, but when we confess that he has been hard and rigid with us, because he had a reason to be so on account of our sins and wickedness. He adds, ---

Lamentations 3:43

43. Thou hast covered with anger, and persecuted us: thou hast slain, thou hast not pitied.

43. Obtexisti in ira et persequutus es nos; occidisti et non pepercisti.

[555] To give the proper emphasis to the pronoun, the version ought to be as follows, — We, transgressed have we rebelled. — Ed

At the first view, this complaint may seem to proceed from a bitter heart; for here the faithful complain that they had been slain, and then that God had executed his judgment as it were in darkness, without any indulgence; and the next verse confirms the same thing. But it is a simple acknowledgment of God's righteous vengeance for in their extreme calamities the faithful could not declare that God dealt mercifully with them, for they had been subjected to extreme rigor, as we have before seen. Had they said that they had been leniently chastised, it would have been very strange, for the temple had been burnt, the city had been demolished, the kingdom had been overthrown, the people for the most part had been driven into exile, the remainder had been scattered, the covenant of God had been in a manner abolished; for it could not have been thought otherwise according to the judgment of the flesh. Had, then, the exiles in Chaldea said that God had smitten them leniently, would not such an extenuation have appeared very strange? and had also the Prophet spoken in the same strain? For the causes of sorrow were almost innumerable: every one had been robbed of his goods; then there were many widows, many orphans; but the chief causes of sorrow were the burning of the temple and the ruin of the kingdom. No wonder, then, that the faithful set forth here their aggravated evils: but yet they seek out no other cause than their own sins.

Hence they say now, that God had covered them over in wrath It is a most suitable metaphor; as though he had said, that God had executed his vengeance in thick darkness. For an object presented to the eye produces sympathy, and we are easily inclined to mercy when a sad spectacle is presented to us. Hence it is, that even the most savage enemies are sometimes softened, for they are led by their eyes to acts of humanity. The Prophet, then, in order to set forth the horrible vengeance of God, says that there had been a covering introduced, so that God had punished the wicked people in an implacable manner. But as I have said, he does not charge God with cruelty, though he says that he had covered them over in wrath. [556]

He then says, Thou hast pursued us and killed us, and hast not spared They intimate, in short, that God had been a severe judge; but they at the same time turned to themselves and sought there the cause, even that they might not, by their own hardness, provoke God against themselves, as hypocrites are wont to do. And the consciousness of evil leads us also to repentance; for whence is it that men grow torpid in their sins, except that they flatter themselves? When, therefore, God suspends his judgments, or when he moderates them, and does not punish men as they deserve, then, if there be any repentance, it is yet frigid, and soon vanishes. This, then, is the reason why God inflicts deadly strokes, because we feel not his hand except the stroke be as it were deadly. As, then, simple chastisement is not sufficient to lead us to repentance, the Prophet introduces the faithful as speaking thus, ``Behold, thou hast in wrath covered us over, so as not to look on us,'' so that there might be no opportunity for mercy, that is, that they might be the judges of

[556] To “cover” is the idea given to the verb by the Sept., the Vulg, the Syr., and the Targ.; but Blayney and some others take it in the sense of fencing in, enclosing, in allusion to the practice of hunters; and the next verb, which means to pursue, to chase, favors this meaning, — Thou hast in wrath enclosed and chased us, Thou hast slain and not spared. Then the same verb begins the next verse, — Thou hast enclosed thyself in a cloud, That prayer might not pass through. — Ed

themselves, and conclude from the atrocity of their punishment how grievously they must have provoked the wrath of God. It follows in the same sense, ---

Lamentations 3:44

44. Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that our prayer should not pass through.

44. Obtexisti in nube tibi, ne transiret precatio.

The Prophet confirms the same thing, but the words are different. He again repeats the word to cover; but, that the metaphor might be clearer and more fully explained, he says, with a cloud. He simply intimates, that a cloud interposed, that God might more unrestrainedly punish the Jews, as they had deserved. Isaiah speaks somewhat otherwise, but for the same purpose:

``The hand of God,'' he says, ``is not shortened, nor are his ears more deaf; but your sins have interposed a distance between you and God.'' (Isaiah 59:1, 2.)

There is no doubt but that Isaiah meant the same thing as our Prophet, even that God's nature never changes; and, therefore, that when he seems to rage against his people, the cause ought to be ascribed to their sins, because God ever remains like himself. We know what is said in the Psalms,

``Thou art God who hearest prayer.'' (Psalm 65:3.)

God, then, is always ready to hear his people, and he also possesses power sufficient to help them; but the distance arises from our sins. And so the Prophet now says that a cloud interposed.

Nearly the same sentence is found in the third chapter, as we have seen; for there the Prophet said, in the name of the whole people, that they had become separated from God, but that it was a separation, not because God had changed his purpose, but because the people had, in a manner, rejected his favor. Thou hast, then, he says, covered thyself with a cloud, that is, thou hast made for thyself a covering, that prayer may not pass through. This seems, indeed, very strange, because God advances to meet all the miserable, and promises to hear their prayers: what, then, can this mean, that a cloud interposed that prayer might not go through to him? even that the Jews did not pray aright, and that they had closed up against themselves every access by which God could admit them. In short, the faithful do not here contend with God, as though they had been deceived by his promises, but confess that they were unworthy to pray to God, and they also acknowledge that they did not pray aright. [557] And according to this sense they say, that they were hindered, as though a cloud interposed, so that their prayer could not ascend to God. It follows, ---

Lamentations 3:45

45. Thou hast made us as the offscouring and refuse in the midst of the people.

45. Quisquilias et rejectionem posuiti nos in medio populorum.

They say here that they were exposed to reproach, so as to become, as it were, the sweepings of the world. Some render {סחי}, sachi, ``refuse;'' some by other words; and some ``filth:'' But the word properly means sweepings or scraping's,

[557] There are circumstances, no doubt, according to God's word, under which God does not hear prayer: and this seems to have been an instance of this kind. — Ed.

called by the Greeks {περιψήματα}. Paul says, that he and his associates were the offscouring ({περιψήματα}) of the world. (1 Corinthians 4:13.) He means that they were despised as offscourings or scrapings. The word is derived from sweeping. Whatever, then, is cleaned off by sweeping or scouring, that is, the filth of the house or the floor, is called {סחי}, sachi. What the Prophet had in view is not obscure; for he means that the degradation of the people was not hidden, but open Go all nations, as though God had erected a theater in Judea, and there exhibited a remarkable and an unusual example of his vengeance. To the same purpose is what he adds, ---

Lamentations 3:46

46. All our enemies have opened their mouths against us.

46. Aperuerunt super nos os suum omnes inimici nostri.

He repeats what he had said, that the people were an offscouring, or scrapings, or sweepings, and also a refuse. The last word is, indeed, in the infinitive mood, {מאוס}, maus, but it is to be taken as a noun. They had become all this, because they had as many enemies as neighbors; for we know that the Jews were hated by all the neighboring nations. They had become, then, a refuse and filth among all people, for with an open mouth they spoke furiously against them. For the open mouth means that they spoke insolently, and took the liberty of cursing them all, as it has been stated elsewhere. Now it was the bitterest thing to the miserable people, when they found that the reproaches and taunts of enemies were added to their calamities: for we know how grievously does reproach wound those who are already afflicted.

Lamentations 3:47

47. Fear and a snare is come upon us, desolation and destruction.

47. Pavor et fovea fuit nobis, destructio (alii vertunt, deceptio,) et contritio.

The Prophet largely dwells on the grievousness of the calamity which had happened. He compares here the anxieties into which the people had been brought, to a pitfall and dread. There is a striking alliteration in the words {פחד} and {פחת}, pechet and peched. But the meaning is, that the people had been reduced to such straits, that there was no outlet for them; as the case is with us, when we are filled with dread, and look here and there, and see nothing but pitfalls on every side; then we are at our wits' end. Such then was the state of the people, as Jeremiah shews: filled with dread, they sought refuge, but saw pitfalls on every side.

He afterwards mentions desolation or destruction, and sorrow. It is probably a mistake in Jerome's version, where the first; word is rendered ``prophesying.'' Some think that he was led astray by the letter {ש}, shin, which he seems to have read with a point on the left side; and he took the word as coming from {נשא} nusha. But another conjecture seems more correct, that the transcribers have committed a mistake; for what I have said is most appropriate to the passage, even that the people were overwhelmed with all kinds of evils, because there was nothing to be seen but desolation and sorrow, or bruising, or breach, {שבר}, shaber. It now follows, ---

Lamentations 3:48

48. Mine eye runneth down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter

of my people.

48. Rivi (hoc est, tanquam rivi) aquarum descendit oculus meus super contrione (vel, afflictione, est idem nomen {שבר}) filii populi mei.

Interpreters give different explanations of the beginning of this verse: some render it thus, ``My eye comes down unto rivers of waters;'' others, ``My eye flows down unto rivers of waters,'' or, ``rivers of waters flow down.'' But as I have explained elsewhere, the Prophet rather means, that his eye came down like rivers; and to come down, or to descend, is a metaphor for flowing down; for water, as it is well known, descends when it flows. And there is a change of number when he says, ``My eye descends;'' there is also raider-stood the particle of comparison, {כ}, caph [558] The meaning is, that his eyes descended or flowed down as rivers. The last: word properly signifies divisions, but; he means that many streams flowed down, as though they were so many rivers.

For the bruising, or the breach, of my people: the Prophet speaks here in his own person, though there is no doubt but that he exhorts all others to join him in his sorrow. For the faithful would not have prayed to God with sufficient ardor, had they not been dreadfully broken and confounded; had not the calamity deeply affected them, as it ought to have done, there would have been no serious attention to prayer. This is the reason why the Prophet here mentions his own weepings, and groanings, and tears, even that he might rouse himself to prayer, and lead others also. It follows, ---

Lamentations 3:49

49. Mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission.

49. Oculus meus defluxit, et non quievit a non intermissionibus (hoc est, ut non sint intermissiones, vel ut nulla sit requies.)

He repeats the same in other words, --- that his eyes flowed down with tears. He still retains the singular number, but this is common in Hebrew. He then says, that his eye without end flowed down, so that there was no rest But it afterwards follows ---

Lamentations 3:50

50. Till the LORD look down, and behold from heaven.

50. Donec aspiciat et videat Jehova e coelis.

The Prophet here makes a distinction between his weeping and that blind sorrow by which the unbelieving are affected and violently agitated: they have no regard to God. Then the Prophet says here that he not only wept, but that he also prayed and waited for God to put an end to evils. As I have already said, the unbelieving grieve abundantly in adversities, nay, they abandon themselves to sorrow; but they turn away wholly from God, and are like wild beasts. Then the Prophet points out the right way to mourn: our eyes must flow down to weariness and without rest, but at the same time we must wait until God be propitious to us. Therefore this verse connects well with the former, [559] until Jehovah look down and see from heaven; for

[558] Let the verb have a causative sense, to cause to descend, to bring down, and there will be no difficulty in the clause; so the Sept. and the Vulg., — Streams of water does mine eyes bring down For the breach of the daughter of my people, — Ed

[559] The connection of this verse with the preceding will be more evident from the following

otherwise tears would draw us to despair, and despair would become the cause of fury; for we see that the ungodly murmur against God.

Thus, then, ought we to weep, in order that we may at the same time cherish hope while we wait for God to look down on us and to see our miseries from heaven. The word heaven, is not added uselessly, because men in their evils, when they seek God, are filled with terror, for they do not think that they can ascend to him: hence, then, it is, that they despond, for they imagine that God is too remote from them. The Prophet therefore anticipates here this false notion, and says that we ought nevertheless to wait until God looks down from heaven; which corresponds with what is said in the Psalms: that God is high and yet has respect to low things. (Psalm 113:4-6.) Though, then, the majesty of God is elevated above all the heavens, yet this does not prevent him familiarly to regard what is low and despised in the world. At length it follows, ---

Lamentations 3:51

51. Mine eye affecteth mine heart because of all the daughters of my city.

51. Oculus meus dolore afficit animam meam propter omes filias urbis meae (vel pro omnibus filiabus urbis meae.)

He had said, that his eye flowed down, and then, that it was like a fountain, from which many streams or rivers flowed: he now adopts another mode of speaking, that his eyes grieved his soul; and it is a sign of the greatest sorrow when he who weeps seeks some relief, and is at the same time overpowered by that external feeling. For many indulge in grief and inflame themselves; then the soul of man is like a fan to rouse the burning. But when we weep and our eyes shed tears, and when the mind in a manner exhausts itself, it is a proof of the greatest grief. And this great. grief Jeremiah wished to express by saying, that his eye troubled or grieved his soul

The latter part is explained in two ways: sonic render thus, ``Because of all the daughters of my city.'' But though this meaning is generally taken, I yet prefer the opinion of those who render the words thus, ``More than all the daughters of my city,'' for {מן}, men, denotes a comparison, as it is also a causative. He says, then, that he was given to grief more than all the young women. As the female sex, as it is well known, are more tender and softer than men, the Prophet amplifies his lamentation by this comparison, that in weeping he exceeded all the young women of the city, so that he had almost forgotten his manhood. Had he said, the daughters of the people, it might be explained as before, as referring either to the cities, or to the whole people, that is, the whole community. But when he mentions all the daughters of his city, I cannot otherwise take the passage but as setting forth a comparison, that is, that he could not moderate his grief, but was so seized with it as women are, and also young girls, whose hearts, as it has been already said, are still more tender. [560] The rest to-morrow.

version, — 49. Mine eye hath poured down, and it will not cease, With any intermissions, 50. Until Jehovah look down And see from heaven. To “see” here, as in Lamentations 3:36, means to regard, so as to interfere in the affairs of men. “with any,” etc., literally, “With no,” etc. But the English language not admit of the two negatives, though the Welsh will. — Ed.

[560] The versions and the Targ. give the first meaning, “because of the daughters of my city;” and the last words, “of my city,” seem to favor it; for had women as a sex been intended, they would not have been thus designated. — Ed.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou hast hitherto spared us, we may not grow torpid in our vices, and that since thou hast already begun to deal more severely with thy Church, we may be awakened by thy chastisements, and so humble ourselves under thy mighty hand, as yet not to doubt but that thou wilt be propitions to us, and that we may so loathe ourselves on account of our sins, as still to be fully persuaded that, provided we wait for thee, thou wilt at length be merciful to us, so as to afford us new reasons for joy and gratitude, through Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture thirteenth

Lamentations 3:52

52. Mine enemies chased me sore, like a bird, without cause.

52. Venando venati sunt tanquam passerem (vel, avem) inimici mei sine causa.

We shall see to the end of the chapter the various complaints, by which the Prophet deplored the miseries of his own nation, that he might at length obtain the mercy of God. He takes here the comparison of a bird or a sparrow. He says that the Chaldeans had been like fowlers, and the Jews like sparrows: and we know that there is neither prudence nor courage in birds. He, then, means that the Jews had been destitute of all help, having been exposed as a prey to their enemies, who were like fowlers.

And he seems to allude to the words of Solomon, when he says, that without a cause is the net spread for birds (Proverbs 1:17;) and he means that innocent men are circumvented by the wicked, when they spread for them their snares as it were on every side, while they are like the birds, who have no prudence to avoid them.

We now, then, understand the drift of what the Prophet says: he amplifies the indignity of their calamity by this comparison, --- that the Chaldeans at their pleasure plundered the miserable people, who were not able to resist them, who were indeed without any power to defend themselves. [561] It follows, ---

Lamentations 3:53

53. They have cut off my life in the dungeon, and cast a stone upon me.

53. Succiderunt (vel potius, constrinxerunt) in puteo vitam meam, et projecerunt lapidem super me.

He now employs other comparisons. Some improperly confine this to Jeremiah himself, as though he explained here before God the wrongs done to himself: but there is no doubt but that he undertakes the cause of the whole people; and his object was to encourage by his own example the faithful to lament their state so that they might obtain pardon from God.

He then compares himself to a man half-dead, cast into a pit, and there left for lost. Then some improperly interpret the words, ``they cast stones;'' for stoning was not in the mind of the Prophet; but having said that he was fast bound in a pit or dungeon, he adds that a stone was laid over him, that lie might not come forth, as we know was the case with Daniel. (Daniel 6:16, 17.) Daniel was cast into the den of lions, and then a stone was put on the mouth of the den. So also the Prophet says,

[561] The words literally are, — Hunting hunted me like a bird have mine enemies without a cause. — Ed

that he was bound fast in the pit, and not only that, but that a stone was laid over him, that there might be no hope of coming out; and thus the pit was like a grave. Here, then, he means that lie was reduced to the last extremity, because he had not only been taken by his enemies, but had also been cast into a pit. And, as it is well known, it is a metaphorical expression or a similitude. He adds, ---

Lamentations 3:54

54. Waters flowed over mine head; then I said, I am cut off.

54. Inundaverunt (ad verbum, alii, ascenderunt) aquae super caput meum; dixi, succisus sum.

He now adds a third comparison, --- that he had been overwhelmed, as it were, with a flood of evils. This similitude occurs often in Scripture, especially in the Psalms; for when David wished to set forth his despair, lie said that he was sunk in deep waters. (Psalm 69:15, 16.) So also in this place the Prophet complains, that waters had flowed over his head, so that he thought himself lost. Though, indeed, this was the saying of a man in a hopeless state, it is yet evident from the context that the Prophet was firm in the hope of God's mercy. But he speaks according to the judgment of the flesh; and we know that the faithful are as it were divided; for as they have not put off the flesh, they must necessarily be acquainted with adversities, be stormed by fear and feel anxieties; in short, when death hangs over them, they must in a manner be exposed to fear. In the meantime, faith in their hearts obtains the victory, so that they do not succumb under terrors, or cares, or anxieties.

When, therefore, the Prophet says that in his own judgment he was lost, he does not mean that his faith was so extinguished that he ceased to pray to God; for in the next verse he shews that he persevered in prayer. How, then, did he say or believe that he was lost? even, as I have already said, according to human judgment. And we often see that the faithful complain that they are forsaken, that God is asleep in heaven, that he has turned away from them. All these things are to be referred to the perception of the flesh. While, then, the faithful cast their eyes on dangers, when death comes, they not only tremble, but fear greatly and faint also. In the meantime, as I have said, they struggle by faith against all these temptations. So, then, is this passage to be understood, --- that the Prophet believed that he was lost, that is, as far as he could judge by the aspect of things at that time, for no hope appeared then to the Church. But we yet see that the Prophet did not indulge himself in this despair; for he immediately adds, ---

Lamentations 3:55

55. I called upon thy name, O LORD, out of the low dungeon.

55. Invocavi nomen tuum, Jehova, e puteo profunditatum.

We certainly see that the Prophet had an inward conflict, which also all the faithful experience, for the spirit fights against the flesh, as Paul teaches us. (Galatians 5:17.) Though, then, he on the one hand apprehended death, he yet ceased not to flee to God; for faith strengthened his mind so that he did not succumb, but on the contrary he firmly rejected the temptation presented to him. Though, then, he was, according to the flesh, persuaded as to his own ruin, he on the other hand, called on the name of God; for the faithful do not measure the power and grace of God by

their own thoughts, but give glory to God by recumbing on him even in the greatest extremities.

And this passage ought to be carefully noticed; for when Satan cannot in any other way turn us aside from prayer, he alleges our weakness; ``What meanest thou, miserable being? will God hear thee? for what canst thou do? thou tremblest, thou art anxious, nay, thou despairest; and yet thou thinkest that God will be propitious to thee.'' Whenever, therefore, Satan tries to shut the door against us so as to prevent us to pray, let this example of the Prophet come to our minds; for he, though he thought himself lost, did not yet cast aside the confidence he entertained as to God's help and aid. For whence arose his perseverance, except that he in a manner rebuked himself when he found himself so overwhelmed, and as it were dead. These two states of mind are seen in this short prayer of David,

``My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?''
(Psalm 22:1.)

For when he addressed God, and called him his God, we see his rare and extraordinary faith; and when he complains that he was forsaken, we see how, through the infirmity of the flesh, he thought that it was all over with him as to his salvation. Such a conflict, then, is described here; but faith overcame and gained the victory, for the Prophet ceased not to cry to God, even from the pit of depths --- from the pit, that is, from death itself.

And this also ought to be carefully observed; for when God bears us on his wings, or when he carries us in his bosom, it is easy to pray; but when we seem to be cast into the deepest gulfs, if we thence cry to him, it is a real and certain proof of faith and hope. As such passages often occur in the Psalms, they may be compared together; but I touch but slightly on the subject, for it is not my object to heap together all the quotations which are appropriate; it is enough to present the real meaning of the Prophet. It follows, ---

Lamentations 3:56

56. Thou hast heard my voice: hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.

56. Vocem meam audisti; ne occultes (vel, occludas) aurem tuam ad respirationem meam (vertunt, ad clamorem meum) et ad precationem meam (sed prius nomen accipio potius pro gemitu, vel clamore.)

When the Prophet says that God heard, it is the same as though he said, that he had so prayed that God became a witness of his earnestness and solicitude; for many boast in high terms of their earnestness and fervor and constancy in prayer, but their boastings are all empty and vain. But the Prophet summons God as a witness of his crying, as though he had said that he was not so overwhelmed by his adversity, but that he always fled to God.

He then says, Close not, etc.; it is properly, ``hide not;'' but as this is not quite suitable to ears, I am disposed to give this version, Close not thine ear to my cry. The verb {רוח} ruch, means to dilate, to respire; hence almost all render the noun here, ``breathing;'' but what follows cannot admit of this sense, to my prayer or cry. I have no doubt but that these two words mean crying; for in groaning the spirit of man dilates itself, and the soul, compressed by grief, expands. But when we cast

our cares and troubles into the bosom of God, then the spirit forcibly emerges. This, then, is what the Prophet means, when he asks God not to close his ear to his dilation or groaning, and to his cry. [562] It follows, ---

Lamentations 3:57

57. Thou drewest near in the day that I called upon thee: thou saidst, Fear not.

57. Appropinquasti in die in quo clamavi ad te (vel, invocavi te,) dixisti, Ne timeas.

Here the Prophet tells us that he had experienced the goodness of God, because he had not suffered a repulse when he prayed. And this doctrine is especially useful to us, that is, to call to mind that we had not in time past prayed in vain. For we may hence feel assured, that as God ever continues like himself, he will be ever ready to help us when- ever we implore his protection. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet declares here that he had experienced the readiness of God to hear prayer: Thou didst come nigh, he says, in the day when I called on thee; thou didst say, Fear not And this approach or coming nigh refers to what was real or actually done, that God had stretched forth his hand and helped his servants. Since, then, they had been confirmed by such evidences, they had the privilege of ever fleeing to God. God, indeed, supplies us with reasons for hope, when he once and again aids us; and it is the same as though he testified that he will ever be the same as we have once and again found him to be.

He then adds an explanation, Thou didst say, Fear not He does not mean that God had spoken; but, as I have said, he thus sets forth the fact, that he had not sought God in vain, for he had relieved him. Though God may not speak, yet when we find that our prayers are heard by him, it is the same as though he raised us up and removed from us every fear. The sum of what is said is, that God had been propitious to his servants whenever they cried to him. It now follows, ---

Lamentations 3:58

58. O Lord, thou hast pleaded the causes of my soul; thou hast redeemed my life.

58. Disceptasti, Domine, disceptationes animae meae, redemisti vitam meam.

For the same purpose he now says, that God had been his judge to undertake his cause, and not only once, for he had contended for him as though he had been his perpetual advocate. The meaning is, that the Prophet (who yet speaks in the name of all the faithful) had found God a defender and a helper, not only in one instance, but whenever he had been in trouble; for he uses the plural number, and says, Thou hast pleaded the pleadings of my soul

He adds, Thou hast redeemed my life. It is the way of God's pleading when he delivers us as it were from death. Friends do, indeed, sometimes anxiously exert themselves, interposing for our defense, but they do not always succeed. But God is such a pleader of our cause, that he is also a deliverer, for our safety is in his hand. It follows, ---

Lamentations 3:59

[562] Materially correct, no doubt, is this explanation. We may give this version, — My voice hast thou heard, deafen not thy ear To my sighing, to my cry. The verb {{עלם means to veil, and hence to hide. To veil the eye is, not to look at what is set before it; and to veil the ear is, to render it deaf to what is said. The Prophet says that God had heard his voice, for he had prayed; but he further asks God not to turn a deaf ear to his sighing, or sobbing, as given by the Vulg, and to his cry. --- Ed

59. O LORD, thou hast seen my wrong: judge thou my cause.

59. Vidisti, Jehova, oppressionem (subversionem, alii vertunt, iniquitatem) meam; judica judicium meum.

The word {עותתי}, outti, is rendered by some ``iniquity,'' but in an ironical sense, as though the Prophet had said, ``Thou, God, knowest whether I have offended.'' But the word is to be taken passively; the verb {עות}, out, means, to subvert, as we have elsewhere seen, even in this chapter. Then, by his subversion, he means oppression, even when his adversaries unworthily trod him under their feet. And hence he asks God at the same time to judge his judgment, that is, to undertake his cause, and to appear as his defender, as he had formerly done; for he saw his subversion, that is, he saw that he was unjustly cast down and laid prostrate by the wicked. It follows, ---

Lamentations 3:60

60. Thou hast seen all their vengeance and all their imaginations against me.

60. Vidisti omnes ultiones ipsorum, omnes cogitationes contra me.

This mode of speaking was often used by the saints, because God, when it pleased him to look on their miseries, was ever ready to bring them help. Nor were they words without meaning, when the faithful said, O Lord, thou hast seen; for they said this for their own sake, that they might shake off all unbelief. For as soon as any trial assails us, we imagine that God is turned away from us; and thus our flesh tempts us to despair. It is hence necessary that the faithful should in this respect struggle with themselves and feel assured that God has seen them. Though, then, human reason may say, that God does not see, but neglect and disregard his people, yet on the other hand, this doctrine ought to sustain them, it being certain that God does see them. This is the reason why David so often uses this mode of expression.

Thou, Jehovah, he says, hast seen all their vengeances By vengeances here he means acts of violence, according to what we find in Psalm 8:2, where God is said ``to put to flight the enemy and the avenger.'' By the avenger there he simply means, not such as retaliate wrongs, but cruel and violent men. So also, in this place, by vengeances, he means all kinds of cruelty, as also by thoughts he means wicked counsels, by which the ungodly sought to oppress the miserable and the innocent. He again repeats the same thing, ---

Lamentations 3:61

61. Thou hast heard their reproach, O LORD, and all their imaginations against me;

61. Audivisti probra ipsorum, Jehova, omnes cogitationes eorum contra me.

We see that this is a repetition, but for vengeances he now mentions reproaches And in this way he sought again to turn God to mercy; for when he brings no aid, he seems to close his eyes and to render his ears deaf; but when he attends to our evils, he then soon brings help. The Prophet, then, having said that God saw, now refers to hearing: he had heard their reproaches. Adopting a language not strictly proper, he adds, that he had heard their thoughts; though he speaks not only of their secret counsels, but also of all the wicked conspiracies by which his enemies had contrived

to ruin him. [563] He adds, ---

Lamentations 3:62

62. The lips of those that rose up against me, and their device against me all the day.

62. Labia (vel sermones, aut, linguas) insurgebtium contra me, et sermones eorum contra me tota die (vel, quotidie.)

Instead of thoughts, he now mentions lips, or words. The verb {הגה}, ege means to meditate, when no voice is uttered; but as the noun is connected here with lips, there is no doubt but that the Prophet refers to words, rather than to hidden meditations. [564] He then says, that such were the conspiracies, that they did not conceal what they had in their hearts, but publicly avowed their wicked purposes. Now this insolence must have moved God to aid his people, so unjustly oppressed.

He adds, every day, or daily. This circumstance also must have availed to obtain favor, so that God might the sooner aid his people. For had the ungodly made violent assaults, and soon given over, it would have been easy to persevere in so short a trial, as when a storm soon passes by; but when they went on perseveringly in their machinations, it was very hard to bear the trial. And hence we derive a ground of hope, supplied to us by what the Holy Spirit suggests to us here, that God will be merciful to us on seeing the pertinacity of our enemies. He then adds, ---

Lamentations 3:63

63. Behold their sitting down, and their rising up; I am their musick.

63. Sessionem eorum et surrectionem eorum aspice; ego canticum eorum (vel, pulsatio, ut alii vertunt

The Prophet repeats still the same thing, only in other words. He had spoken of the lyings in wait, and the conspiracies and the speeches of his enemies; he now adds, that nothing was hid from God. By sitting and rising, he means all the actions of life, as when David says,

``Thou knowest my sitting and my rising,'' (Psalm 139:2;)

that is, whether I rest or walk, all my actions are known to thee. By rising, then, the Prophet denotes here, as David did, all the movements or doings of men; and by sitting, he means their quiet counsels; for men either deliberate and prepare for work while they sit, or rise, and thus move and act.

He means, in short, that whether his enemies consulted silently and quietly, or attempted to do this or that, nothing was unknown to God. Now, as God takes such notice of the counsels and all the actions of men, it cannot be but that he restrains and checks the wicked; for God's knowledge is always connected with his office as a judge. We hence see how the Prophet strengthens himself, as we have lately stated, and thus gathers a reason for confidence; for the wicked counsels of his enemies and their works were not hid from God.

[563] There is no necessity, as some have supposed, of making {{לי in the former verse, and {עלי} in this verse, the same. The difference is occasioned by the verbs ``thou hast seen,'' and, ``thou hast heard.'' God had seen the thoughts or purposes effected ``against'' him; and he had heard the purposes formed ``concerning'' him. He refers first to the purposes carried into effect, and then, as it is common in the prophets, he refers to the purposes previously formed respecting him. --- Ed

[564] The best word is muttering, — The lips of my adversaries, And their muttering concerning me all the day. It isn't here, as in the previous verse, "concerning me," not "against me." — Ed.

He adds, I am become a song He again sets before God his reproach, east upon him by the ungodly. For that indignity also availed much to lead God not to suffer his people to be unworthily treated. It now follows, ---

Lamentations 3:64

64. Render unto them a recompence, O LORD, according to the work of their hands.

64. Repende illis mercedem, Jehova, secundum opus manuum suarum

He adds here a conclusion; for he has hitherto been relating, as I have said, the evils which he suffered, and also the reproaches and unjust oppressions, in order that; he might have God propitious to him; for this is the way of conciliating favor when we are wrongfully dealt with; for it cannot be but that God will sustain our cause. He indeed testifies that he is ready to help the miserable; it is his own peculiar work to deliver captives from prison, to illuminate the blind, to succor the miserable and the oppressed. This is the reason, then, why the Prophet now confidently asks God to render to his enemies their reward, according to the work of their hands

Were any one to object, and say, that another rule is prescribed to us, even to pray for our enemies, even when they oppress us; the answer is this, that the faithful, when they prayed thus, did not bring any violent feelings of their own, but pure zeal, and rightly formed; for the Prophet here did not pray for evil indiscriminately on all, but on the reprobate, who were perpetually the enemies of God and of his Church. He might then with sincerity of heart have asked God to render to them their just reward. And whenever the saints broke forth thus against their enemies, and asked God to become an avenger, this principle must be ever borne in mind, that they did not indulge their own wishes, but were so guided by the Holy Spirit --- that moderation was connected with that fervid zeal to which I have referred. The Prophet, then, as he speaks here of the Chaldeans, confidently asked God to destroy them, as we shall again presently see. We find also in the Psalms the same imprecations, especially on Babylon, --- ``Happy he who shall render to thee what thou hast brought on us, who shall dash thy children against a stone.'' (Psalm 137:8, 9.) It follows, ---

Lamentations 3:65

65. Give them sorrow of heart, thy curse unto them.

65. Des illis impedimentum cordis (alii, obstinationem,) maledictionem tuam illis (vel maledictio tua illis.)

He expresses what the vengeance was to be, even that God would give them up to a reprobate mind; for by {לב}-{מגנת}, meganet-leb, he no doubt meant the blindness of the heart, and at the same time included stupidity, as though he had said, ``O Lord, so oppress them with evils, that they may become stupified.'' For it is an extremity of evil, when we are so overpowered as not to be as it were ourselves, and when our evils do not drive us to prayer. [565]

We now then perceive what the Prophet meant by asking God to give to his enemies the impediment of heart, even that he might take away a sound mind, and smite them with blindness and madness, as it is said elsewhere. --- I run on quickly,

[565] The word meant "covering, as rendered by the Sept.; the Syr. Has "sorrow," and the Vulg. "shield," which has no meaning. What is no doubt meant is hardness or blindness — Give them blindness of heart: Thy curse be to them. — Ed

that I may finish, lest the hour should prevent us. The last verse of this triple alphabet follows, ---

Lamentations 3:66

66. Persecute and destroy them in anger from under the heavens of the LORD.

66. Persequere in ira et perde eos e sub coelis Jehovae (quidam in vocativo casu legunt, Jehova; sed quia non ponitur {שמים}, sed in constructione {שמי}, ideo retineo proprietatem.)

He first asks God to persecute them in wrath, that is, to be implacable to them; for persecution is, when God not only chastises the wicked for a short time, but when he adds evils to evils, and accumulates them until they perish. He then adds, and prays God to destroy them from under the heavens of Jehovah This phrase is emphatical; and they extenuate the weightiness of the sentence, who thus render it, ``that God himself would destroy the ungodly from the earth.'' For the Prophet does not without a design mention the heavens of Jehovah, as though he had said, that though God is hidden from us while we sojourn in the world, he yet dwells in heaven, for heaven is often called the throne of God, ---

``The heaven is my throne.'' (Isaiah 66:1.)

``O God, who dwellest in the sanctuary.''
(Psalm 22:4; Psalm 77:14.)

By God's sanctuary is often meant heaven. For this reason, then, the Prophet asked here that the ungodly should be destroyed from under the heaven of Jehovah, that is, that their destruction might testify that he sits in heaven, and is the judge of the world, and that things are not in such a confusion, but that the ungodly must at length render an account before the celestial judge, whom they have yet long neglected. This is the end of the chapter.

PRAYER.

Grant, Almighty God, that as at this day ungodly men and wholly reprobate so arrogantly rise up against thy Church, we may learn to flee to thee, and to hide ourselves under the shadow of thy wings, and fully to hope for thy salvation; and that however disturbed the state of things may be, we may yet never doubt but that thou wilt be propitious to us, since we have so often found thee to be our deliverer; and that we may thus persevere in confidence of thy grace and mercy, and be also roused by this incentive to pray to thee, until having gone through all our miseries, we shall at length enjoy that blessed rest which thou hast promised to us through Christ Jesus our Lord. --- Amen.

Lamentations 4

CHAPTER 4

Lecture Fourteenth

Lamentations 4:1

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.

1. Quomodo obscuratum est aurum! Mutatum est aurum bonum! Effusi sunt (vel, projecti) lapides sanctuarii in capite omnium platearum.

Here Jeremiah, following the order of the alphabet the fourth time, [566] deplores the ruin of the city, and the destruction of the priesthood and of the kingdom. For they are mistaken who think that the death of Josiah is here lamented; for there are here many things, which we shall see as we proceed, which do not suit that event. There is no doubt but that this mournful song refers to the destruction of the Temple and city; but when Josiah was killed, the enemy had not come to the city, and the stones of the Temple were not then east forth into the streets and the public roads. There are also other things which we shall see, which did not then happen. It follows then that here is described the terrible vengeance of God, which we have had already to consider.

He begins by expressing his astonishment, How obscured is the gold! and the precious gold! for {כתם}, catam, is properly the best gold, though the word good,{הטוב} ethub, is added to it. We may hence conclude that it generally denotes gold only. He mentions, then, gold twice, but they are two different words in Hebrew, {זהב}, zaeb, and {כתם} catam. [567] Now he speaks figuratively in the former part of the verse; but there is no doubt but that by the gold, and the finest gold, as it is rendered, he

[566] Here, as in the two first chapters, the verses only begin alphabetically, but instead of having three or six lines, they have only two or four. — Ed.

[567] This chapter, like the two first chapters, begins with the word {איכה}, ``How this!'' and the verbs are in the future tense, used for the present. --- How is this! tarnished is gold, Changed is fine gold, the best: Cast forth are the sacred stones At the head of every street. --- Ed

means the splendor of the Temple; for God had designed the Temple to be built, as it is well known, in a very magnificent manner. Hence he calls what was ornamental in the Temple gold.

He then speaks without a figure, and says, that the stones were thrown here and there in all directions. Some, indeed, think that these words refer to the sacred vessels, of which there was a large quantity, we know, in the Temple. But this opinion is not probable, for the Prophet does not complain that the gold was taken away, but that it was obscured, and changed. It is then, no doubt, a metaphorical expression. But he afterwards explains himself when he says that the stones of the sanctuary were cast forth here and there along all the streets. It was indeed a sad spectacle; for God had consecrated that temple to himself, that he might dwell in it. When therefore the stones of the sanctuary were thus disgracefully scattered, it must have grievously wounded the minds of all the godly; for they saw that God's name was thus exposed to reproaches. Nor is there a doubt but that the Chaldeans vomited forth many reproaches against God when they thus scattered the stones of the temple. It hence appears, that the Prophet did not without reason exclaim, How has this happened! for such a sight must have justly astonished all the godly, seeing as they did the degradation of the temple connected with a reproach to God himself. It follows, ---

Lamentations 4:2

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!

2. Filii Sion pretiosi (alii vertunt, inclytos) comparatiauro (alii vertunt, amicti auro, quod mihi magis placet,) quomodo reputati sunt in lagenas testaceas (testae, ad verbum) opus manuum figuli?

The Prophet comes now to the people, though he does not include the whole people, but brings forward those who were renowned, and excelled in honor and dignity. He then says, that they were become like earthen vessels and the work of the potter's hands, which is very fitly added. Then by the sons of Sion, whom he calls precious or glorious, he means the chief men and the king's counselors and those who were most eminent. And he seems to allude to that prophecy which we before explained' for he had said that the people were like earthen vessels; and he went into the house of the potter, that he might see what was made there. When the potter made a vessel which did not please him, he remodeled it, and then it assumed another form; then God declared that the people were in his hand and at his will, as the clay was in the hand of the potter. (Jeremiah 18:2; 19:11.) When he now says, that the chief men were stripped of all dignity, and reduced to another form, so as to become like earthen vessels, he no doubt sets forth by this change the judgment of God, which the Jews had for a time disregarded.

And we must bear in mind the Prophet's object: he described the ruin of the Temple and city, that he might remind the people of the punishment which had at length been inflicted; for we know that the people had not only been deaf, but had also scoffed at and derided all prophecies and threatenings. As, then, they had not believed the doctrine of Jeremiah, he now shews that what he had predicted was

really fulfilled, and that the people were finding to their cost that God did not trifle with them when he had so often threatened what at length happened. And hence we may conclude, that there was then a superfluous splendor in garments, for we read that they had been clad or clothed in gold; surely it was a display too sumptuous. There is, however, no wonder, for we know that Orientals are far too much given to such trumperies.

Now, if the other reading, that the sons of Sion had been before compared to gold, [568] be more approved, the passage must be extended to all their dignity and to all those gifts by which they had been favored and had become illustrious. I have already reminded you, that the work of the potter's hands is here to be taken for the vessels or the earthen flagons; but it was the Prophet's object to enlarge on that reproach, which]lad been before incredible. It follows ---

Lamentations 4:3

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.

3. Etiam serpentes educunt mammam, lactant catulos suos; filia populi mei ad crudelem tanquam ululm (vel, struthiones) in deserto.

This verse is harshly explained by many, for they think that the daughter of the people is called cruel, because she acted towards her children as serpents do to their young ones. But this meaning is not suitable, for the word {בת}, beth, is well known to be feminine. He says that the daughter of the people had come to a savage or cruel one, the latter word is masculine. Then the Prophet seems to mean that the whelps (such is the word) of serpents are more kindly dealt with than the Jews. Serpents are void of all humanity, yet they nourish their brood and give them the breast,. Hence the Prophet by this comparison amplifies the miseries of the people, that their condition was worse than that of serpents, for the tender brood are nourished by their mothers; but the people were without any help, so that they in vain implored the protection of their mother and of others. 'We now see the real meaning of the Prophet.

The particle {גם}, gam, is emphatical; for had he spoken of animals, such as are careful to nourish their young, it would not have been so wonderful; but so great seems to be the savageness and barbarity of serpents, that they might be expected to east away their brood. Now he says that even serpents draw out the breast The Jews say that the breasts of serpents are covered with scales, as though they were hidden; but this is one of their figments. It is a common phrase, taken from t common practice; for a woman draws out the breast when she gives suck to her infant; so serpents are said to draw out the breast when they give suck to their whelps; for {גורים}, gurim, are the whelps of lions or of bears; but in this place the word is applied to serpents. The daughter, then, of my people has come to the cruel one, for the people had to do with nothing but cruelty, there being no one to bring them

[568] The value, and not the appearance, is evidently meant: the “sons of Sion” were “precious,” as here expressly stated. In this respect they had been of the same estimate with gold; but now they were as worthless as potter’s vessels: they were so esteemed and treated, — The sons of Sion were precious, Of worth equal to pure gold; How is this! they have been deemed as earthen vessels, The work of the hands of the potter. — Ed.

help or to succor them in their miseries. He, then, does not accuse the people of cruelty, that they did not nourish their children, but on the contrary he means that they were given up to cruel enemies. [569]

As the ostriches, or the owls, he says, in the wilderness. If we understand the ostrich to be intended, we know that bird to be very stupid; for as soon as she lays an egg, she forgets and leaves it. The comparison, then, would be suitable, were the daughter of the people said to be cruel, because she neglected her children; but the Prophet, as I think, means, on the contrary, that the Jews were so destitute of every help, as though they were banished into solitary places beyond the sight of men; for birds in solitude in vain seek the help of others. As, then, the ostrich Or the owl has in the desert no one to bring it help, and is without its own mother, so the Prophet intimates that there was no one to stretch forth a hand to the distressed people to relieve their extreme miseries. It follows, ---

Lamentations 4:4

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.

4. Adhaesit lingua lactantis ad palatum ejus in siti; parvuli petierunt panem, dividens nemo illis (hoc est, nemo est qui illis dividat, id est, porrigat.)

He says that sucking children were so thirsty, that the tongue was as it were fixed to the palate; and it was a dreadful thing; for mothers would willingly pour forth their own blood to feed their infants. When, therefore, the tongue of a child clave to his mouth, it seemed to be in a manner beyond nature. Among other calamities, then, the Prophet names this, that infants pined away with thirst, and also that children sought bread in vain. He speaks not in the latter instance of sucklings, but. of children three or four years old. Then he says that they sought or asked for bread, but that there was no one to give. [570]

He describes here the famine of the city, of which he had predicted, when he declared that it would be better with the slain than with the people remaining alive, for a harder conflict with famine and want would await the living. But this was not believed. Now, then, the Prophet upbraids the Jews with their former perverseness. He afterwards adds, ---

Lamentations 4:5

5. They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets: they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills.

5. Qui comedebant ad delicias (hoc est, in deliciis, ad verbum, {למעדנים},) perierunt in plateis; qui educati fuerant in coccino (ad coccinum,) amplexi sunt stercora.

Here he goes on farther, and says, that they had perished with famine who had

[569] The reference here is to the conduct of mothers, called here "the daughter of my people," as it appears evident from the following verse, — Even dragons have drawn out the breast, They have suckled their young ones: The daughter of my people has been for cruelty Like the ostriches in the desert. It is said that the ostrich lays her eggs and forsakes them. See Job 39:15. The verb, to be, is understood, as the case often is, but it must ever be in the same tense as the verb or verbs connected with the sentence. — Ed.

[570] The verbs here are in the past tense, and not in the present, as in our version, — Cleave did the tongue of the suckling To his palate through thirst; Children asked bread, A breaker, none was to them. — Ed

been accustomed to the most delicate food. He had said generally that infants found nothing in their mothers' breasts, but pined away with thirst, and also that children died through want of bread. But he now amplifies this calamity by saying, that this not only happened to the children of the common people, but also to those who had been brought up delicately, and had been clothed in scarlet and purple.

Then he says that they perished in the streets, and also that they embraced the dunghills, because they had no place to lie down, or because they sought food, as famished men do, on dunghills. [571] It seems to be a hyperbolical expression; but if we consider what the Prophet has already narrated and will again repeat, it ought not to appear incredible, that those who had been accustomed to delicacies embraced dunghills; for mothers cooked their own children and devoured them as beef or mutton. There is no doubt but that the siege, of which we have before read, drove the people to acts too degrading to be spoken of, especially when they had become blinded through so great a pertinacity, and had altogether hardened themselves in their madness against God. It follows, ---

Lamentations 4:6

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.

6. Et major fuit poena filiae populi mei poena Sodomae (ad verbum est, iniquitas filiae populi mei peccato vel scelere Sodomae; sed statim, dicam cur de poena exponam potius quam de ipso scelere,) quae eversa fuit tanquam momento; non manserunt in ea plagae (alii vertunt, et non castrametatae sunt manus; sed postea etiam dicam cur mihi magis placeat illa versio.)

The Prophet says first,, that the punishment of his people was heavier than that of Sodom. If any one prefers the other version, I will not contend, for it is not unsuitable; and hence also a most useful doctrine may be drawn, that we are to judge of the grievousness of our sins by the greatness of our punishment for God never exceeds what is just when he takes vengeance on the sins of men. Then his severity shews how grievously men have sinned. Thus, Jeremiah may have reasoned from the effect to the cause, and declared that the people had been more wicked than the Sodomitites. Nor is this unreasonable; for if the Jews had not fallen into that great wickedness of which the Sodomites were guilty, yet the Prophets everywhere charged them as men who not only equaled but also surpassed the Sodomites, especially Ezekiel, (Ezekiel 16:46, 47.) Isaiah also called them the people of Gomorrha, and the king's counselors and judges, the princes of Sodom, (Isaiah 1:9, 10.) This mode of speaking is then common in the Prophets, and the meaning is not unsuitable.

But as he dwells only on the grievousness of their punishment, the other explanation seems more simple; for I regard not what is plausible, but accept the true

[571] The dunghills were collections of cow-dung and other things heaped together for fuel instead of wood. They had been brought up “on scarlet,” i.e., on scarlet couches, they were now glad to lie down anywhere, even on dunghills, and hence they are said to have embraced them, as though they had a love for them, — They who had fed on delicacies Perished in the streets; They who had been brought up on scarlet Embraced the dunghills. — Ed

meaning. Let us then repeat the Prophet's words: greater is the punishment of my people, etc. The word {עון}, oun, means punishment as well as iniquity; this is certain, beyond dispute. Now {חטאת}, chethat, means also both sin and punishment. It is hence applied to expiations; the sacrifice for sin is called {חטאת}, chethat. As to the words, then, they designate punishment as well as sin, the cause of it. But the reason which follows leads me to consider punishment as intended, for he says that Sodom was overthrown as in a moment. Here, doubtless, we see that the sins of the Jews are not compared to the sins of the Sodomites, but their destruction only: God had overthrown Sodom, as afterwards he overthrew Jerusalem; but the ruin of Sodom was milder, for it perished in a moment --- for when God had dreadfully thundered, the Sodomites and their neighboring citizens were immediately destroyed; and we know that the shorter the punishment, the more tolerable it is. As the Prophet here compares the momentary destruction of Sodom with the prolonged ruin of the city and slaughter of the people, we see that what is spoken of is not sin, but on the contrary God's judgment.

There is yet no doubt but that the Prophet summoned the Jews to God's tribunal, that they might know that they deserved such a vengeance, and that they might perceive that they were worse than the Sodomites. For it was not the Prophet's object to expostulate with God, or to charge him with having been too rigid in destroying the city of Jerusalem. As, then, the Prophet does not charge God either with injustice or with cruelty, it is certain that punishment is what is here set forth, in order that the people might know what they deserved. [572]

But the words declare nothing more than that God's vengeance had been severer towards the Jews than towards the Sodomites. How so? it is evident from this reason, because Sodom was consumed as in a moment; and then it is added, and strokes remained not on her. The word {יד}, id, as it is well known, means hand, a place, but sometimes, metaphorically, a stroke. Interpreters vary here, but I shall not recite the opinions of all, nor is it needful. Those who seem to come nearest to the words of the Prophet, render them thus, ``and hands (or forces) have not encamped against her.'' But this is a forced and far-fetched meaning. It would run better, ``have not remained.'' The verb {חול} chul, means sometimes to encamp and sometimes to remain, to settle. Then the most appropriate meaning would be, that strokes settled not on the Sodomites, while the Jews pined away in their manifold evils. [573] For they did not immediately perish like the Sodomitites; but when God saw them so obstinate in their wickedness, he destroyed some by famine, some by pestilence, and some by the sword; and then the city was not immediately demolished altogether, as it often happens when enemies make a slaughter and kill men, women, and children; but this people were not so destroyed. Many of them were driven into exile, and some of the common people were left to inhabit the ruined cities, for there was dreadful desolation. The king himself, as it has before appeared, was removed to Babylon,

[572] The early versions and the Targ. render the words “iniquity,” and “sin;” but modern critics agree with Calvin. Penalty and punishment might be suitably adopted. — Ed.

[573] The clause might be rendered, — And not wearied against (or, over) her were hands. This is substantially the Sept. and the Syr. Grotius says that the meaning is, that Sodom was destroyed not by human means, that is, not by a siege, as Jerusalem had been. — Ed.

but his eyes had previously been pulled out, and his children slain in his presence.

We hence see that the destruction of the city was like a slow consumption: and that thus strokes remained there as it were fixed, which did not happen to Sodom; for Sodom suddenly perished when God thundered against it; but the hand of God did not depart from the Jews, and the strokes or smitings, as I have said, were fixed on them and continued. It follows, ---

Lamentations 4:7-8

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:

7. Candidiores Nazaraei ejus nive, (vel, puriores,) candidiores laete, rubicundi fuerunt corpore suo (neque enim hoc potest accipi de ossibus) supra lapillos preciosos, sapphirus excisio ipsorum:

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.

8. Obtenebrata est prae caligine forma ipsorum, non agniti in plateis; adhaesit cutis eorum ossi ipsorum, (hoc est, ossibus;) exaruit, fuit tanquam lignum.

Here the Prophet speaks of Nazarites, by whom we know the worship of God was honored; for they, who were not content with the common observance of the Law, consecrated themselves to God, that by their example they might stimulate others. It was then a singular zeal in a few to consecrate themselves, so as to become Nazarites, or separated. What this custom was may be known from the sixth chapter of Numbers. For God, who has always repudiated all fictitious forms of worship, prescribed to the Nazarites what he approved in every particular. Hence Moses carefully men-honed all those things which were to be observed by the Nazarites.

As to the present passage, it is enough to say, that the Nazarites were peculiarly devoted to God's service during the time of their separation, for it was only a temporary service.

Then the Prophet brings them forward, that it might hence be evident how sad was the change, which he never could have made the Jews to believe. He says that the Nazarites were purer than snow, and whiter that milk, and also ruddier than precious stones, so that they might be corn-pared to sapphire; for, by saying sapphire was their cutting, he means that they were like sapphires well polished. Now we know that the Nazarites abstained from wine and strong drink: hence abstinence might have lessened somewhat of their ruddiness. For he who is accustomed to drink wine, if he abstains for a time, is apt to grow pale; lie will then lose almost all his color, at least he will not be so ruddy; nor will there appear in his face and in his members so much rigor as when he took his ordinary support. Jeremiah, in short, teaches us flint the blessing of God was conspicuous in the Nazarites, for he wonderfully supported them while they were for a time abstinence.

Now, on the contrary, he says that the Nazarites were become withered, that their skin clave to their bones, that, in short, they were so deformed that they could not be known, not only in obscure corners, but even in the open street, hi the middle of the market-place. We hence learn that as the favor of God had before appeared as to the Nazarites, so now also his vengeance might be certainly known, because they

had fallen off from their vigor, and were reduced to a degrading deformity. [574]

The Prophet at the same time shews that worship according to the law had in a manner deteriorated on account of the vices of the people; and this is the design of the whole, as I reminded you at the beginning. For there is no doubt but that he wished to rouse the Jews, that they might at length raise up their eyes to God; for they had long grown torpid in their vices, and had been even inflated with diabolical pride; hence was their inveterate obstinacy. As long as the Temple stood, they thought that they satisfied God by the sacrifices they offered. When the Prophet now tells them that the stones of the Temple were thrown down, it hence follows that the Temple was profaned' whence this profanation? from the wickedness of the people. The Chaldeans, indeed, thought that they brought a great reproach on God when they demolished the Temple; but, as long pollution had preceded, our Prophet now represents to the Jews their sins as in a mirror or a living form; for they had polluted the Temple before the Chaldeans. So also he shews that the worship according to the law was no longer pleasing to God, for they had mocked him with empty specters; for it was only a vain display when there was no integrity within. The Prophet then shews to them what, he could before by no means have persuaded them to believe, that God was in no way pleased with the external worship of the Jews, while they were audaciously violating the whole law. It afterwards follows, ---

Lamentations 4:9

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.

9. Meliores fuerunt occisi gladio quam occisi fame; fluxerunt transrossi a fructibus agri.

The beginning of the verse is without any difficulty; for the Prophet says that it happened better to those who immediately perished by the sword than to others who had to struggle with famine, according to what he had lately said, that the punishment of Sodom was more tolerable, because it was suddenly executed. Sudden death is the easiest And the Prophet, when complaining that the ungodly prospered, so that the faithful sometimes envied them, says that they die as it were in a moment, and are taken away from the world; but he says that the faithful are held, as it were, captive by the snares of death, and protract life in perpetual languor. For this reason the Prophet now says that the punishment of death would have been light to the Jews. And yet we know that. a violent death is regarded by us with horror. For he who dies on his bed is said to yield to his fate, as he seems to pay what he

[574] As to these two verses there is much disagreement in the early versions and the Targ.; that of the Sept. comes nearest to the original. They may be thus rendered, — 7. Clearer were her Nazarites than snow, They were whiter than milk; Ruddier were they in body than rubies, Sapphire was their polish (or smoothness:) 8. Darker than the dusk became their appearance, They were not known in the streets: Cleave did their skin to their bones, Dried up, it became like a stick. “Rubies,” rendered “pearls,” by Bochart; “load stones,” or magnets, by Parkhurst; “red corals,” by Gesenius. They were no doubt precious stones of reddish appearance. The “sapphire” is mentioned for its smoothness, as it appears from the contrast at the end of the eighth verse, where it is said that their skin had become like a dried “stick,” whose rind is shriveled. “Dusk” is rendered “soot” by the Sept., and “coals” by the Vulg. and the Syr. {{שחור is the dusk, or the dawn: but the river Nile is also thus called on account of its muddy and dusky waters. See Jeremiah 2:18. This being the case, may it not be so taken here.; The character of the passage favors this, ``snow,'' ``milk,'' etc. Then the line would be, --- Darker than Sihor (or, the Nile) became their appearance. --- Ed

owes to nature; but, he who is slain by the sword is violently snatched away, and, as it were, contrary to nature. Violent death, then, is always horrible. But the comparison used by the Prophet amplifies the atrocity of their punishment, because it would have been more desirable to have been killed at once than to remain alive to struggle with famine.

And he expresses himself more clearly by saying that they pined away, having been pierced through by the fruits of the earth There is here some obscurity, but by the fruits of the earth, we are no doubt to understand all kinds of food. Some consider that ``defect,'' or failure, is to be understood. But the Prophet speaks much more emphatically, even that all the productions of the earth took vengeance on this wicked people, by refusing the usual supply. The earth is the servant of God's bounty and kindness; for it is the same as though he with his hand extended food to us, when the earth opens its bowels; so also the productions of the earth are evidences of God's paternal love towards us. Now, when the fruits of the earth withdraw themselves from us, they are as it were the weapons to execute God's vengeance. So, then, the Prophet means that the Jews had been pierced through by the fruits of the earth, and thus had pined away; as though he had said, that they had not been pierced by the sword, but had been wounded by famine, for the productions of the earth became, as it were, swords, while yet they sustain, as we have said, the life of men. [575]

PRAYER.

Grant. Almighty God, that as thou shewest by thy Prophet that, after having long borne with thine ancient people, thy wrath at length did so far burn as to render final judgment above all others remarkable, --- O grant that we may not at this day, by our obstinacy or by our sloth, provoke thy wrath, but be attentive to thy threatenings, yea, and obey thy paternal invitations, and so willingly devote ourselves to thy service, that as thou hast hitherto favored us with thy blessings, so thou mayest perpetuate them, until we shall at length enjoy the fullness of all good things in thy celestial kingdom, through Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Fifteenth

Lamentations 4:10

10. The hands of the pitiful women have sodden their own children: they were their meat in the destruction of the daughter of my people.

10. Manus mulierum misericordium coxerunt foetus suos, fuerunt in alimenta ipis in contritione filiae populi mei.

Here Jeremiah refers to that disgraceful and abominable deed mentioned yesterday; for it was not only a barbarity, but a beastly savageness, when mothers boiled their own children. That it was done is evident from other writers; but the Prophet is to us a sufficient witness, who had seen it with his own eyes. He then says that the mothers were merciful, that no one might think that they were divested of every natural feeling; but he meant thus to set forth the blindness which proceeds from

[575] Houbigant and Blayney have given the following version of this clause, which has been approved by Horsley, — For those (the former) departed, having been cut off Before the fruits of the field. That is, they bad been cut off before the fruits of the field failed, which occasioned the famine. This rendering is more satisfactory than our version or that of Calvin. — Ed.

God's dreadful vengeance. He does not, then, praise the mothers for their clemency, as though they felt as they ought to have done for their offspring; but. he intimates that though they would have been otherwise humane, they were yet seized with unusual madness, so that they boiled their own children, even their own bowels. We now, then, perceive the meaning of the word merciful, as applied to the mothers by the Prophet. It is not then to be deemed as a praise to them, as though they had a maternal love for their children; but his object was to set forth that monstrous act, which would not have sufficiently touched their minds, had he not testified that the mothers of whom he speaks were not so brutal as not to have gladly given food to their children; but that they were supernaturally blinded by furious madness. It follows ---

Lamentations 4:11

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.

11. Complevit (vel, perfecit) Jehova iracundiam suam, effudit excandescentiam irae suae et accendit ignem in Sion, qui voravit fundamenta ejus.

He at length concludes that nothing was wanting to complete the extreme vengeance of God; for had the Jews been chastised in an ordinary way, they would have still extenuated their sins, as we know that they were not easily led to repentance. Hence the Prophet, to shew that their offenses had not been slight, but that they had been extremely wicked before God, says that the whole of God's wrath had been executed: Jehovah has completed his wrath The expression is indeed harsh to Latin ears; but the meaning is, that he had executed his extreme judgment.

He afterwards adds, He has poured forth the indignation of his wrath. God is indeed content with moderate punishment, provided men be awakened from their torpor; but when he pours forth his wrath, there is no hope of repentance. It is then a sign of final despair when God's vengeance overflows like a deluge. But when Jeremiah thus speaks, he does not contend with God, but rather reminds the Jews of what they deserved, as it was stated yesterday. There is, then, no doubt but that he argues, from the grievousness of their punishment, that there was no reason for the Jews to flatter themselves any longer, since God had dealt so severely with them.

He then, in other words, points out the same thing, that God had kindled a fire which devoured or consumed the very foundations. Fire is wont rather to take hold on the roofs of houses, or, when it creeps farther, it does not proceed beyond the surface. It is a very rare thing for it to penetrate into the foundations. Let us at the same time know that the Prophet speaks metaphorically of the destruction of the city, for it was such as left nothing remaining. For when some ruins remain, there is some intimation of a future restoration at least the minds of beholders are inclined to hope that what has fallen is to be restored; but when the buildings are not only pulled down, but also demolished from their foundations, then the destruction seems to be without any hope of restoration. And this is what the Prophet means when he says, that the fire had consumed, not only what was above ground, but the very foundations of Jerusalem. It follows, ---

Lamentations 4:12

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.

12. Non crediderunt (vel, non credidissent) reges terrae, neque omnes incolae orbis, quod ingressus esset adversarius et inimicus in portas Jerusalem.

He confirms the same thing; for when a thing incredible happens, either we are extremely stupid, or we must be moved and affected. The Prophet, then, now says that the destruction of the city of Jerusalem had been incredible, because God had defended it by his power; it was also so fortified that no one believed that it could be taken, and the grandeur of the city was known everywhere.

He then says that Jerusalem had been taken and overthrown, which no one of the heathens, neither their kings nor their people, had thought possible. It then follows that the city had been destroyed by God's hand rather than by the power of enemies. Nebuchadnezzar had indeed brought a strong army, but the city was so well fortified that they thought that all attempts would be in vain. That the city, then, was taken and demolished, could not have been ascribed to human forces, but to a power hidden from the eyes of men. It then follows that it was God's work, and indeed singular. We now, then, understand the design of the Prophet in saying that it was not believed by kings nor people that enemies could storm Jerusalem. And in continuation he adds, ---

Lamentations 4:13

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,

13. Propter peccatum prophetarum ejus, iniquitatem sacerdotum ejus, qui fuderunt in medio ejus sanguinem justorum.

The Prophet, as in a matter fully proved, rebukes the Jews, that he might, as it was necessary, bring down their pride. Had he at first condemned the wickedness of the prophets and the priests, no credit would have been given to his word. But after he had set before them what we have observed, and especially after he had shewn that the ruin of the city was a kind of prodigy, what he now adds must have been certainly inferred, even that the Jews had in so many ways and with such pertinacity provoked God, that it became necessary that they should be wholly destroyed, as it happened.

But he points out here the sins by which God's wrath hart been kindled against. the people. He then says that the fountain or the origin was ill the prophets and priests. Now, we have elsewhere explained that the fault was not removed from the people when the prophets and the priests were thus condemned. Indeed, the common people readily exonerate themselves when they can plead ignorance, or say that they have been deceived by their teachers and leaders. But when Jeremiah imputes the chief part of the evils to the prophets and priests, he does not, as I have said, devolve on them the fault of the people, but intimates that their physicians had been as it were impostors. For when the people corrupted themselves, the prophets were sent for this end, to apply a remedy to their evils, and so also were

the priests; for we know that it was a duty enjoined on them to retain the people in true religion and in the worship of God. In short, Jeremiah shows that the people had been ruined, because corruption had begun with the prophets and the priests; or, which is the same thing, that die sins of the people had proved fatal, because their heads or chiefs were diseased; because, he says, of the sin of the prophets, and the iniquity of the priests, etc.

He mentions one kind of sins, that they shed the blood of the righteous in the midst of Jerusalem They had no doubt led the people astray in other things, for they flattered their vices, and gave loose reins to licentiousness; but the Prophet here fixed on one particular sin, the most grievous; for they had not only, by their errors and false doctrines and flatteries, led away the people from the fear of God, but had also obstinately defended their impiety, and by force and cruelty repressed their faithful teachers, and put to death the witnesses of God; for by the righteous or just he no doubt means the prophets. For what Jerome and others say, that blood had been shed because false teachers draw souls to perdition, is frivolous and wholly foreign to what Jeremiah had in view; for the word righteous cannot be applied to those miserable men who were ensnared to their own ruin. Then Jeremiah, after having denounced the sin of the prophets and the iniquity of the priests, mentions the savage cruelty, which was as it were the summit of all their riches. Though, then, they had in various ways provoked God, yet this was their extreme wickedness, that they exercised so great a cruelty against God's servants, that they constrained as it were the Holy Spirit to be silent. For when the despisers of God went so far as to give themselves up to shed innocent blood, it was a proof of a diabolical obstinacy. We now, then, understand what the Prophet had here in view.

Now this passage teaches us, that Satan has from the beginning polluted the sanctuary of God by means even of sacred names: for the prophetic office was honorable --- so also was the sacerdotal. God had established among his people the priesthood, which was as it were a living image of Christ: there was then nothing more excellent than the priesthood under the Law, if we regard the institution of God. It was also a singular blessing that God promised that his people should never be without prophets. As, then, prophets and priests were two eyes as it were in the Church, the devil turned them to every kind of profanation. This example then reminds us how much we ought to watch, lest empty titles deceive us, which are nothing but masks or specters. When we hear the name of Church and of pastors, we ought reverently to regard the office as well as the order which has proceeded from God, provided we are not content with naked titles, but examine whether the reality also corresponds. Thus we see that the whole world has for many ages degenerated from true religion; under what pretext? even this, --- that those who led astray miserable souls, boasted that they were the vicars of Christ, the successors of the apostles, so that they still arrogantly boast of these titles, and are inflated with them. But we see what happened in the time of Jeremiah.

We have had before similar passages; but this ought to be carefully noticed, for it says, that prophets and priests had destroyed the very Church of God. It was, indeed, a very grievous trial, and therefore a powerful instrument, as it were, for

subverting the faith of the simple, when they saw that the very prophets and priests were the cause of ruin; but it behooved the faithful constantly to persevere in their obedience to the law. And we ought at the same time to remember what I have said, that the Prophet enhances the wickedness of the people, because the priests and the prophets themselves had been infected with impiety and contempt of God, and not only so, but they had exercised tyrannical cruelty towards the servants of God. It follows, ---

Lamentations 4:14

14. They have wandered as blind men in the streets, they have polluted themselves with blood, so that men could not touch their garments.

14. Errarunt caeci (subaudienda est nota similitudinis, sicut) in plateis, polluti sunt in sanguine, quia non potuerunt quin contingerent vestes ipsorum (ita lego, nec sine ratione, quia alioe versiones nullo modo conveniunt, ut nun videbimus.)

They who simply read, that the blind had wandered, deduce this meaning, that the blind were polluted in the streets, even because there was filth everywhere. They, indeed, come near to the meaning of the Prophet, but they do not clearly explain what he intended. I regard it therefore beyond dispute, that the people are here compared to the blind, but it does not yet appear for what purpose. But my opinion is this, that the whole city was so full of defilement's, that they could not avoid uncleanness; for a blind man would touch a carcass, he would touch an unclean beast, he would touch a man infected with some disease; how so? because he could not see to distinguish between a dead and a living man, between the clean and unclean. Our Prophet now compares the people to the blind, and why? because wherever they went, uncleanness met them, so that their eyes were in a manner dazzled by thick darkness. For when pestilence does not spread everywhere, we can avoid an unclean place; but when there is no corner where there is not a dead corpse or some sickness, we must pass on anyhow, having no choice to make, --- and why? because uncleanness surrounds us everywhere. So, then, the Prophet says that the citizens of Jerusalem were everywhere polluted, as though they were blind.

Now follows the reason, which has not been understood by interpreters, They were polluted, he says, with blood, because they could not but touch their garments. They all give this version, ``They could not touch their garments,'' and as there is much obscurity and almost absurdity in this rendering, they say that the meaning is that they were to avoid to touch their garments, because the law forbade them to touch the unclean. But the Prophet meant another thing. The words are literally thus, ``They could not, they will touch their garments, that is, they will inevitably touch their garments. But the particle which I have mentioned is to be understood, and the passage will read thus, They could not but touch their garments; and we know that the language will bear this. And as this is consistent with the subject which the Prophet handles, every one, judging rightly, will readily receive what I have stated. The meaning then is, that they wandered as the blind, and were polluted in all the streets of the city, because they could not escape uncleanness, which met them everywhere; that is, because the city, as I have said, was full of so many pollutions,

that they could not turn either here or there and avoid uncleanness. [576]

As to the words, polluted with blood, they refer to the ceremonial law. There were indeed various kinds of pollutions, but this was the chief. He accommodates his expressions to his own age, and follows what was prescribed by the law. He, however, alludes to the sins designated by blood. We, in short, see that the whole of Jerusalem was so polluted with defilements, that no one could go forth without falling on some uncleanness. A confirmation follows, which also interpreters have not understood, ---

Lamentations 4:15

15. 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

15. Discedite, pollutus, clamavit illis; discedite, discedite, ne accedatis: quia evolarunt (aut, festinarunt,) etiam errarunt, dixerant in gentibus, Non adjicient ad Labitandum

The Prophet confirms the former verse, as I have said, even that no part of the city was free from filth, because they cried everywhere, ``Depart, depart --- unclean!'' That what is said may be more evident to us, we must notice that the Prophet alludes (which also has not been perceived) to Leviticus 13:45. For it is said there of the lepers, whose disease was incurable, that they were to go with rent garments, with a bare head, with covered lips, and cry, ``Unclean, unclean, {יקרא} {טמא} {טמא} thema, thema, ikora. God, then, would have the leprous to be driven from the assembly; and hence came into use the exclamation, Unclean, unclean, {טמא} {טמא}, thema, thema. But here the Prophet says, ``Depart, depart --- unclean {סורו} {סורו} {טמא}, suru suru thema; which is substantially the same as commanded in the law. Now the Prophet speaks metaphorically when he says, that the city was infected with uncleanness, as though lepers were everywhere. We hence see how all these things agree together, ``They cried, Depart ye --- unclean; depart ye, depart;'' that is, no one can move a foot from his house, or go forth in public, but some uncleanness will appear to him, so that it might be rightly exclaimed, Unclean, depart ye, depart The Prophet, after having thus spoken, Depart ye, come not nigh says, they have fled. It is a striking allusion to the exile of the people, as though he had said, that they

[576] This clause has been variously explained. The whole passage from Lamentations 4:12-16 inclusive, ought to be considered. The taking of Jerusalem is said to have been incredible, even to heathens. Then the Prophet, in Lamentations 4:13, tells the cause — "the sins of the prophets and the iniquities of the priests;" and in Lamentations 4:14, 15, and 16, he describes their shame and their punishment at the siege, when the people found out by experience that they had be deceived by them, — 13. For the sins of her prophets, For the iniquities of her priests, Who had shed in the midst of her The blood of the righteous, — 14. They wandered frantic in the streets, They were (or, had been) polluted with blood: Inasmuch as they could not But touch their garments, 15. "Depart ye, uncleanness," they cried to them, "Depart, depart, touch not:" When they fled, yea, became fugitives, They said among the heathens, "They shall no more dwell there"; 16. The face of Jehovah, their portion, Shall no more look on them; The face of their priests they regard not, To their elders they shew no favor." The last five lines contain what the heathens said, when they observed that the prophets and the priests were pronounced unclean by the people, and were ordered to depart. They had shed blood, and were thus polluted, or in their frenzy they touched the slain and became thus polluted. Their retribution was just, and rendered to them by their own people, whom they had led astray: for instead of attending to the true prophets, they killed them, and flattered the people with falsehoods, and encouraged them in their idolatry and vices; and thus brought on the ruin of a city deemed impregnable. — Ed.

were driven afar off by their defilements. As then they were removed to a distant land, he says that this happened through their own fault; how so? because they could no longer endure these defilement's of their sins; they had so contaminated the holy city, that it was foetid through their filth. As, then, the city Jerusalem was so polluted, the citizens, he says, at length fled away: and thus exile proceeded from themselves, that is, the cause of exile was their filth, because they contaminated the city. They have fled, he says, and have also wandered; that is, so great was their haste, that they kept not the right way, but turned here and there, as they usually do who hasten with trembling. For when any one travels, and his mind composed, he attends to the road that he may not go astray; but he who trembles, or is filled with fear, forgets the way, and wanders from the right course. So, then, our Prophet now says, that the Jews fled and also wandered; for he uses the particle {גם}, gam, also; they also wandered, he says, even through that trepidation by which they were smitten.

They have said among the nations, They shall not return to dwell; that is, they are scattered and driven among various nations without hope of returning.

We now see what the Prophet meant to show, even that the Jews had no reason to complain of their exile, because they had so infected the holy city with their vices, that they were hence driven by their own filth; this is one thing: and, then, that so great was the mass of their evils, that they were seized with fear; and thus they did not keep on the right way, but turned into devious paths and met darkness; and, in the last place, he adds, as a continuation of what he had said, that there was no hope of a return.

Lamentations 4:16

16. 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.

16. Facies Jehovae divisit (vel, dissipavit) eos; non adjiciet ad respiciendum eos; faciem sacerdotum non reveriti sunt (vel honore persequuti,) et senum non fuerunt miserti.

He explains himself by saying, that they had been scattered from the face of Jehovah. He had said, that they had fled into foreign lands, and that they believed their exile to be perpetual; he now assigns the reason that God had thus banished them. But he had promised by Moses, that though they were dispersed through the four quarters of the world, he would yet be propitious to them, so as to gather them when dispersed, as it is said in the Psalms, ``He will gather the dispersed of Israel.'' (Deuteronomy 30:4; Psalm 147:2.) And we know that the time of exile had been prefixed; for the Prophet had often testified that God would at length become a deliverer to his people, so as to stretch forth again his hand, and draw them forth from Chaldea as he did from Egypt: how then does he say, that they had been scattered from the face of Jehovah, and then, that they had been so rejected, that he would not favor them hereafter with his paternal countenance? the obvious answer is this, that the Prophet here regards only the extremely dispersed state of the people. For though the promise of God as to their return was certain and clear, yet, when any one cast his eyes on the state of things at that time, he could have hoped no

such thing; for the desolation, the ground of despair, was immense: no name had remained for the people, the priesthood had been extinguished, the royal dignity had been degraded, the city also and the Temple had been completely overthrown. As, then, there was nothing remaining as to the nation and the place, and also as to God's worship, how could they do otherwise than despond?

Then the Prophet, viewing the desolation, says, that nothing else could be concluded, but that the Jews would be perpetually exiles, and that all the ways were closed up, to prevent them to return to their country, and also that the eyes of God were shut, so as never to look on them. We now, then, perceive what he means by saying, that they were scattered from the face of Jehovah, so that he should no longer look on them. And this mode of speaking is often found in Scripture; for, on the one hand, it; sets before us the wrath of God, which brings death; and then on the other, it sustains us, or when we are fallen it raises us up, by setting before us the favor of God even in death itself.

The Prophet, then, considers now no other thing than the dreadful calamity which was sufficient to sink the minds of all into the lowest abyss of despair.

He then adds, that they respected not the face of the priests, and shewed no pity to the elders. Some think that the reason is given why God had so severely punished the people, even because they had despised the aged and the priests; but this is a forced view. I, then, have no doubt but that the Prophet here intimates, that the Jews had been treated reproachfully, so that there had been no account made of the aged, and no respect shewn to the priests. It is, indeed, true, that Daniel was held in great repute; but he speaks here of the priests who had impiously despised all sound doctrine; and he speaks of the aged who were in authority when the kingdom was yet standing. He then says that they had been, as it were, trodden under feet. He hence concludes, that, all hope of restoration was taken away from the Jews, if they only considered their extreme calamity. He afterwards adds, ---

Lamentations 4:17

17. 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

17. Adhue nobis (hoc est quum adhue staremus; sic intrepretor; quidam exponunt, nobis expectantibus, sed male, meo judicio; quum ergo adhuc staremus,) defecerunt oculi nostri ad auxilium nostrum vanum; in expectatione nostra expectavimus (vel, in speculatione nostra respeximus) ad gentem quae non servaret.

Here the Prophet charges the people with another crime, that neglecting God, and even despising his favor, they had always attached themselves to vain and false hopes. And this was a sacrilege not to be endured, because they thus robbed God of his rights: and what does he demand more than that we should depend on him, and that our minds should acquiesce in him alone? When, therefore, salvation is expected from others rather than from God alone, he is, in a manner, reduced to nothing. The Prophet, then, accuses the Jews of this great, sacrilege, that they never betook themselves to God, nor had any hope in him, but on the contrary wandered here and there for help.

As yet for us, he says, that, is, while we were yet standing. [577] And this circumstance deserves to be noticed; for after the Jews had been overthrown, they at length began to know how they had been previously deceived, when they placed confidence in the Egyptians. Prosperity inebriates men, so that they take delight ill their own vanities: and while we seem to ourselves to stand, or while we remain alive, God is disregarded, and we seek help here and there, and think our safety beyond all danger. The Prophet then says, that the Jews had been inebriated with false confidence, so that they disregarded God, and in the meantime fled to the Egyptians. When, he says, we were standing, our eyes failed, etc. We have before seen what this phrase means: the eyes are said to fail, when with unwearied perseverance we pursue a hope to the last, as it is said in the Psalms,

``Our eyes have failed for the living God,'' (Psalm 69:3;)

that is, We have persevered, and though many trials may have wearied us, yet we have been constant in our hope in God. So now the Prophet says, that the eyes of the people had failed; but he adds, for a vain help, or a help of vanity, by which term he designates the Egyptians: and there is an implied contrast between empty and fallacious help and the help of God, which the people rejected when they preferred the Egyptians. Our eyes, he says, failed, that is, we were unwearied in hoping vainly, for we always thought that the Egyptians would be a sufficient, defense to us. This is one thing.

He afterwards adds, In our looking out, we looked out to a nation which could not save us. He. repeats the same thing in other words. Some consider a relative to be understood, ``In our expectation with which we have expected,'' etc.; but it seems not necessary. I, then, so connect the words of the Prophet, that the meaning is, that the Jews always turned their eyes to Egypt, as long as they stood as a state and kingdom and thus they willfully deceived themselves, because they took delight in their own vanity. The other clause which follows has the same meaning, In our expectation we expected a nation, etc.; and this clause is added as an explanation; for the Prophet explains how their eyes failed for a vain hope, or for a vain help, even because the people did not look to God, but only to the Egyptians.

Now the words, to look out and looking out, are not unsuitable, for they refer to those vain imaginations to which the unbelieving give heed; for God called them, but turning away from him they transferred their hope to the Egyptians. It was, then, their own looking out or speculation, when, through a foolish conceit, they imagined that safety would be secured to them by the Egyptians.

He says that they were a nation which could not save; and there is no doubt but that the Prophet here puts them in mind of the many warnings which had not been received by the Jews, for God had tried to call them back from that ruinous confidence, but without any success; for we know how much the Prophets labored in this respect, but they were never believed until at length experience proved how vain was the help of Egypt, as God had testified by his servants.

[577] The true reading is no doubt {;{עדינו and Blayney thinks that there is a {ו} wanting before the next verb, as it is in other in other instances; 1 Kings 1:14, 22; Job 1:16, 17, 18. It is supplied in the Sept., Syr., and Vulg. Yet we were, and fail did our eyes As to our assistance; In vain by looking out did we look out To a nation that could not save. The Syr. connect ``in vain,'' more properly, with the third line. --- Ed.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as we are beset on every side with so many allurements, and as Satan ceases not to draw us here and there by vain flatteries, --- O grant that we may recumb on thee alone, even on thy power, and, in short, on thy word, nor doubt but thou wilt be our deliverer, whatever may happen, and that we may always so seek thee in our straits, and so acquiesce in the faithfulness of thy promises, that we may calmly sustain all the assaults of afflictions, until thou at length gatherest us into that blessed rest which is prepared for us in heaven by Christ our Lord. --- Amen.

Lecture Sixteenth

Lamentations 4:18

18. They hunt our steps, that we cannot go in our streets: our end is near, our days are fulfilled; for our end is come.

18. Venati sunt gressus nostros ne ambularemus in compitis nostris; appropinquavit finis noster, impleti sunt dies nostri, certe venit finis noster

Many apply this verse to the Egyptians, that they insidiously enticed the Jews to flee to them in their difficulties. It is indeed, true, that the Jews had been deceived by their false promises; and, as a harlot draws to herself young men by wicked arts, so also the Jews had been captivated by the enticements of the Egyptians. But the meaning of the Prophet seems to be different, even this, --- that the Chaldeans followed the Jews as hunters, so that they observed their footsteps; and I connect together the two verses, for it immediately follows, ---

Lamentations 4:19

19. Our persecutors are swifter than the eagles of the heaven: they pursued us upon the mountains, they laid wait for us in the wilderness.

19. Velociores fucrunt persequutores nostri aquilis coelorum; super montes insequuti sunt nos, in deserto insidiati sunt nobis

Here, then, the Prophet means, that the Jews were so straitened, that there was no escape for them, because their steps were observed by their enemies, and also because the Chaldeans had recourse to the greatest celerity, that they might take them.

He then, says, first, that their enemies were like hunters, for the Jews could not go even through the streets of their own city. We know that they were reduced to the greatest straits; but how hard the siege was is better expressed by this similitude, even that they dared not walk through the city; for there is an implied comparison, as though he had said, ``We had no liberty in the very city, much less were we allowed to go out and ramble through the open fields.'' he, in the second place, adds what corresponds with the first clause, Approach did our end, fulfilled were our days; surely come did our end [578] He concludes, that no hope remained since their enemies were thus oppressing them. He, then, infers that the end was at hand, by which he means final ruin or destruction; and he adds, that the days were fulfilled, where, he seems

[578] He describes throughout what had taken place. Our version is not right in giving the verbs in the present tense. "For" is better than "surely" before "come." They hunted our footsteps, That we could not walk in our streets: Near was our end; fulfilled were our days, For come had our end. Then he describes what happened when the city was taken. — Ed.

to compare the state of Jerusalem with the life of man; for he is said to have fulfilled his day who leaves the world --- for a certain time for cur sojourn has been prefixed. God, when it pleases him, calls us to himself. Hence, our time is then fulfilled, as our course is said to be finished; for, as the life of man is compared in Scripture to a race, so death is like the goal. So now, speaking of the city, the Prophet says that its time was fulfilled, for it was not God's will that it should remain any longer. In the third place, he says, that the end had come. He said before, that it was nigh, but he says now, that it had come. he, in short, shows that God, having long spared the Jews, when he saw that they made no end of sinning, at length had recourse to rigor, for they had shamefully abused his forbearance; for he had long suspended his judgment, and had often tried whether they were healable. The Prophet, then, reproves now their obstinacy, when he says that their end had come, and that their time was fulfilled.

He afterwards, for the same purpose, adds, that swifter than eagles had been their persecutors or pursuers. The Prophet, no doubt;, continues the same subject. As, then, he had made the Chaldeans to be like hunters, so he says now, that in flying they exceeded the eagles. It is, indeed. a hyperbolical expression, but the Prophet could not otherwise express the incredible celerity with which the Chaldeans hastened in pursuing the Jews. Nor is there a doubt but that he indirectly derided the security of the foolish people; for we know, that whenever the prophets threatened them, this false opinion ever prevailed, that the Chaldeans would not come, because they were far away, the journey was long and difficult, time were many hinderances. The Prophet, then, now taunts them for this confidence, by which they had been deceived, when he says, that swifter titan the eagles of the heavens were their enemies.

He mentions the ways they adopted, Through the mountains they pursued, and laid in wait in the desert. He means that every way of escape was closed up. For when enemies come, many hide themselves on mountains and thus escape; and others, betaking themselves to the desert, find there some hiding-places. But the Prophet says that such was the velocity of the Chaldeans, that the Jews in vain looked to the mountains or to deserts, for snares were everywhere prepared, and they were present everywhere to pursue them. Thus he confirms what he had said, that the time was fulfilled, for the Lord kept them shut up on every side.

Now, though the Prophet speaks here of the ruin of the city, yet we may gather a useful doctrine: When the hand of God is against us, we in vain look around in all directions, for there will be no safety for us on mountains, nor will solitude protect us in the desert. As, then, we see that the Jews were closed up by God's hand, so when we contend with him, we in vain turn our eyes here and there; for, however we may for a time entertain good hopes, yet God will surely at last disappoint us. It follows, ---

Lamentations 4:20

20. 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.

20. Spritus narium nostrarum Christus Jehovae captus est laqueis ipsorum; de

quo diximus, In umbra ejus vivemus inter gentes.

This verse, as I have said elsewhere, has been ignorantly applied to Josiah, who fell in battle long before the fall of the city. The royal dignity continued after his death; he was himself buried in the grave of his fathers; and though the enemy was victorious, yet he did not conic to the city. It is then absurd to apply to that king what is here properly said of Zedekiah, the last king; for though he was wholly unlike Josiah, yet he was one of David's posterity, and a type of Christ.

As it was, then, God's will that the posterity of David should represent Christ, Zedekiah is here rightly called the Christ of Jehovah, by which term Scripture designates all kings, and even Saul; and though his kingdom was temporary, and soon decayed, yet he is called ``the Anointed of Jehovah;'' and doubtless the anointing, which he received by the hand of Samuel, was not altogether in vain. But David is properly called the Anointed of Jehovah, together with his posterity. Hence he often used these words, ``Look on thy Christ.'' (Psalm 84:10.) And when Hannah in her song spoke of the Christ of Jehovah, she had no doubt a regard to this idea. (1 Samuel 2:10.) And, at length, our Lord was called the Christ of the Lord, for so Simeon called him. (Luke 2:26.)

Now, then, we perceive that this passage cannot be understood except of king Zedekiah. It ought at the same time to be added, that he is called the Christ of Jehovah, because his crown was not as yet cast down, but he still bore that diadem by which he had been adorned by God. As, then, the throne of David still remained, Zedekiah, however unworthy he was of that honor, was yet the Christ of Jehovah, as Manasseh was, and others who were wholly degenerated.

The Prophet, however, seems to ascribe to Zedekiah far more than he deserved, when he calls the life of the people. But this difficulty may be easily removed; the man himself is not regarded according to his merits, but as he was called by God, and endued with that high and singular honor; for we know that what is here said extended to all the posterity of David, ---

``I have made him the first-begotten among all the kings
of the earth.'' (Psalm 89:27.)

For though the kings of the earth obtained not their authority, except as they were established by God's decree, yet the king from David's posterity was first-begotten among them all. In short, it was a sacerdotal, and even a sacred kingdom, because God had peculiarly dedicated that throne to himself. This peculiarity ought then to be borne in mind, that we may not look on the individual in himself.

Then the passage runs consistently, when he says, that the Messiah, or the anointed of Jehovah, had been taken it snares; for we know that he was taken; and this is consistent with history. He had fled by a hidden way into the desert, and he thought that lie had escaped from the hands of his enemies; but he was soon seized, and brought to king Nebuchadnezzar. As, then, he had unexpectedly fallen into the hands of his enemies, rightly does the Prophet say metaphorically, that he was taken in their snares.

He calls him the spirit of the nostrils of the people, because the people without their king was like a mutilated and an imperfect body. For God made David king, and

also his posterity, for this end, that the life of the people might in a manner reside in him. As far, then, as David was the head of the people, and so constituted by God, he was even their life. The same was the case with all his posterity, as long as the succession continued; for the favor of God was not extinguished until all liberty vanished, when the city was destroyed, and even the name of the people was as it were abolished. [579]

But we must observe what we have before said, that these high terms in which the posterity of David were spoken of, properly belong to Christ only; for David was not the life of the people, except as he was the type of Christ, and represented his person. Then what is said was not really found in the posterity of David, but only typically. Hence the truth, the reality, is to be sought in no other but in Christ And we hence learn that the Church is dead, and is like a maimed body, when separated from its head. If, then, we desire to live before God, we must come to Christ, who is really the spirit or the breath of our nostrils; for as man that is dead does no longer breathe, so also we are said to be dead when separated from Christ. On the other hand, as long as there is between him and us a sacred union, though our life is hid, and we die, yet we live in him, and though we are dead to the world, yet our life is in heaven, as also Paul and Peter call us thither. (Colossians 3:3, 4; 2 Peter 3:16.) In short, Jeremiah means that the favor of God was as it were extinguished when the king was taken away, because the happiness of the people depended on the king, and the royal dignity was as it were a sure pledge of the grace and favor of God; hence the blessing of God ceased, when the king was taken away from the Jews.

It follows at length, Of whom we have said, Under thy shadow we shall live among the nations. The Prophet shews that the Jews in vain hoped for anything any more as to their restoration; for the origin of all blessing was from the king. God had bereaved them of their king; it then follows that they were in a hopeless state. But the Prophet that he might more clearly express this, says, that the people thought that they would be safe, provided the kingdom remained, --- We shall live, they said, even among the nations under the shadow of our king; that is, ``Though we may be driven to foreign nations, yet the king will be able to gather us, and his shadow will extend far and wide to keep us safe.'' So the Jews believed, but falsely, because by their defection they had cast away the yoke of Christ and of God, as it is said in Psalm 2:3. As then they had shaken off the heavenly yoke, they in vain trusted in the shadow of an earthly king, and were wholly unworthy of the guardianship and protection of God. [580] It afterwards follows, ---

Lamentations 4:21

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 shalt make thyself naked.

21. Guade et laetare, filia Edom quae habitas in terra Uts ({עץ}, ad verbum;)

[579] A kingdom cannot exist without a king. Hence the king may be said to be the breath or the life of the body politic. — Ed.

[580] The last clause ought to be thus rendered, — Under whose shadow, we said, We shall live among the nations. The Syr. in some measure imitates the original, but neither the Sept. nor the Vulg. The {{אשר is not governed by ``we said.'' It can be rendered literally in Welsh. --- Ed

etiam super te transibit calix, inebriaberis et nudaberis.

The Prophet in this verse intimates that the Jews were exposed to the reproaches and taunts of all their enemies, but he immediately moderates their sorrow, by adding a consolation; and it was a sorrow that in itself must have been very bitter; for we know that nothing' is harder to bear, in a state of misery, than the petulant insults of enemies; these wound us more than all other evils which we may suffer. The Prophet then intimates, that the Jews had been so reduced, that all the ungodly and malevolent were able, with impunity, to exult over them, and to taunt them with their troubles. This is done in the former clause but its it was a prophecy, or rather a denunciation, extremely bitter, he mitigates the atrocity of the evil, when he says that their enemies would have soon in their turn to undergo punishment.

Some explain the whole verse as spoken ironically, as though the Prophet had said tauntingly, --- ``Go now, ye Idumeans, and rejoice; but your joy shall be evanescent.'' [581] But I rather think that he refers to the very summit of extreme misery, because the Jews had been thus exposed to the taunts of their enemies; but he afterwards adds some alleviation, because all their enemies would at length be punished. There is, in Micah 7:8, a similar mode of speaking, though there is no mention made there of Edom; for there the Prophet speaks generally to all those who envied the people, and were their adversaries: he compares the people, according' to what was usual, to a woman; and we know that in that sex there is much more jealousy than in men; and then, when there is a grudge, they fiercely urge their pleas, that they may have an occasion to speak evil of others. Therefore the Church, after having acknowledged that she had been deservedly chastised, adds, ``Rejoice not over me, mine enemy.'' But I have already fully explained the Prophet's meaning, --- that the Church calls all her enemies an enemy, or an inimical woman, as though there had been some quarrel or jealousy between women. Hence she says,

``Though I have fallen, yet rejoice thou not, my enemy; though I lie in darkness, yet the Lord will be my light --- though then my enemy has rejoiced, yet my eyes shall see when she shall be trodden down.'' (Micah 7:8, 10.)

The Prophet no doubt meant there to mitigate the sorrow of the godly, who saw that they were insolently taunted by all their neighbors. He then shews the necessity of a patient endurance for a time; for God would at length stretch out his hand, and render to enemies the reward of their barbarity.

But why in this place mention is made of Edom, rather than of other nations, is not evident. The Jews were, indeed, surrounded on every side with enemies, for they had as many enemies as neighbors. But the Idumeans, above others, had manifested hostility to the chosen people. And the indignity was the greater, because they had descended from the same father, for Isaac was their common father; and they derived their origin from two brothers, Esau and Jacob. As, then, the Idumeans were related to the Jews, their cruelty was less tolerable; for they thus forgot their own race, and raged against their brethren and relatives. Hence it is said in Psalm 137:7,

``Remember, O Lord, the children of Edom, who said, in the day of Jerusalem,

[581] This is the sense that is commonly taken: Gataker, Lowth, Scott, and Blayney, regard the expression as ironical. — Ed.

Down with it, down with it, to the very foundation.''

The Prophet, then, after having imprecated God's vengeance on all the ungodly, mentioned especially the Idumeans; and why? because they indulged their cruelty above all others; for they were standard-bearers, as it were, to enemies, and were like falls, by which the fire was more kindled; for this address was no doubt made to the Chaldeans,

``Make bare, make bare; spare not;
let not a stone remain on a stone.'' (Psalm 137:7.)

As, then, the Idumeans had behaved most cruelly towards their own relatives, the Prophet complains of them, and asks God to render to them what they deserved.

So now in this place our Prophet says, Be glad and rejoice, thou daughter of Edom, who dwellest in the land of Uz By this clause, as I have already said, Jeremiah intimates that the Jews were exposed to the taunts of their enemies, because the Idumeans could now insult them with security. But he immediately adds, also: here he begins a new subject, and this is intimated by the particle {גם} gam, To thee also shall pass the cup He employs a common metaphor; for adversity is denoted in Scripture by the word cup; for God, according to his will, gives to drink to each as much as he pleases. As when a master of a family distributes drink to his children and servants; so also God, in a manner, extends his cup to every one whom he chastises; nor does he allow any one either to reject the cup offered, or to throw away the wine, but he constrains him to drink and to exhaust to the very dregs as much as he gives to each to drink. Hence it is for this reason that the Prophet says now that the cup would pass over to the Idumeans; for we know that, shortly after, they were subdued by the Chaldeans, with whom they had before been united. But when they had by their perfidy fallen off from their treaty, they were in their turn punished. As, then, the agreement they had made with the Chaldeans did not continue, the Prophet says, that to them also the cup would pass over.

He adds, Thou shalt be inebriated and made naked God is wont thus to distinguish between his own children and aliens or the reprobate; for he indeed gives a bitter potion to his own children to drink, but it is as much as they are able to drink; but he altogether chokes others, because lie constrains them, as it has been already said, to drink to the very dregs. So, then, the Prophet now compares the extreme miseries which the Idumeans suffered to drunkenness; and to the same purpose are the words which follow, Thou shalt be made naked For he thus intimates, that they would be so confounded with the atrocity of their evils, as to have no care for decency, and to be dead to all shame: as a drunken man, who is overpowered by wine, disregards himself, and falls and exposes himself as Noah did; so also the Prophet says, that so great would be the calamities of Edom, that the people, exposed to every reproach, would afford occasion to all around them for taunts. As when a sot lies down in the mire, casts away his garments, and makes an exposure of himself, it is a spectacle both sad and shameful; so the Prophet says, that the Idumeans would be like the drunken, because they would lie down in their reproach. It follows, ---

Lamentations 4:22

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.

22. Completa est iniquitas tua, filia Sion; non adjiciet ad te in exilium trahendam; visitavit iniquitatem filiae Edom, et discooperuit super peccatum tuum (hoc est, nudavit peccatum tuum.)

This verse, in my judgment, is incorrectly explained; and the Jews have toiled much, for there seems to be a kind of inconsistency, since it is certain that they were afterwards scattered into exile, not only once, but several times. Hence they interpret this place of the second dispersion by Titus, under the authority of his father Vespasian. They then say that the iniquity of the people was then completed, for after that exile no change has followed. Otherwise they do not think that this prediction of the Prophet accords with the reality or the event; for, as I have said, they have been driven into all lands. They had been, indeed, before fugitives, as Moses had declared concerning them. For we know that Jews dwelt in Greece and in Macedonia; we know that many of the cities of Italy were full of this people, until by the edict of Claudius Caesar they were expelled from Italy; for he thought that Italy was infected by them, and he drove them afar off, as though they were contagious. But the Jews lay hold on these refinements to no purpose for the Prophet simply meant to say, that such would be, the punishment of the people, that it would not be necessary then to repeat it.

When, therefore, he says that their iniquity, or the punishment of their iniquity, was completed, he intimates that God had dealt so severely with them, that there was nothing short of extreme rigor: and this mode of speaking occurs elsewhere. To the same purpose is what immediately follows: The enemy, or God, which is the same, will no more add to draw thee into exile, --- why? for what need was there of a second exile when the whole land had been reduced to solitude? since also the poor who had been left in the land had at length gone into Egypt, whence they were brought again into Chaldea; but they were, at the time, fugitives from the Holy Land. Then the Prophet means, that God's judgment was, in all its parts, completed, that nothing short of extreme calamity had happened to the Jews.

It afterwards follows in the second clause, He will visit, which is, indeed, in the past tense, he hath visited, but he speaks of what was future. According to the usual manner of the prophets, in order to confirm the prediction, he speaks of the event as already past, He has visited the iniquity of the daughter of Edom; so that thy wickedness has been uncovered. The meaning will be clearer if we add the particles of comparison, ``As thy punishment, daughter of Sion, has been completed; so thine iniquity, daughter of Edom, shall be visited;'' or if we render the words thus, by way of concession, ``The punishment of thine iniquity, daughter of Sion, has indeed been completed; but thy sin, daughter of Edom, shall be uncovered.'' [582]

[582] The word “iniquity” is used in this verse in two senses. This we discover by the two verbs which are used. To complete “iniquity” can here mean no other thing than to complete the punishment due to it; and that punishment was exile, as the following words shew. But to “visit” iniquity clearly means to punish it. — Completed has been thine iniquity, daughter of Sion; He will not again remove thee: He has visited thine iniquity, daughter of Edom; Having been removed for thy sins, or, — He has removed thee for thy sins. Though all the early versions and the Targ. agree in rendering the last verb in the sense of discovering or uncovering, yet the

We, in short, see that the reason is explained why the Prophet, in the last verse, alleviated, with comfort, the sorrow of the people, that though the Jews were very miserable, it would yet be nothing better with Edom, when the time of visitation came. And in saying that the punishment of iniquity was completed, he refers not to their sin, but says that they had been thus chastised, as it seemed good to God to execute all his rigor towards them; and nearly the same manner of speaking is found in the fortieth chapter of Isaiah. Then the Prophet does not deny but that the Jews might at a future time become exiles; but he says that their transmigration now was complete, so that it was not necessary that Nebuchadnezzar should again denude the land of its inhabitants: this had been done, as it were, by a sudden whirlwind; for by one sweep they had been snatched away. The land, indeed, was before made desolate, but when Nebuchadnezzar took possession of the city, he only left behind the dregs of the people. And he did this on purpose that he might have there some people as tributaries. Then that transmigration was complete.

But the Prophet means not here, that God would not afterwards banish and scatter the Jews as they deserved. There is then no inconsistency, that the Jews afterwards became fugitives and wanderers through the whole world, and that yet the enemy would not again draw them into captivity, for he speaks here only of the Chaldeans: and this was said, because Jeremiah wished to compare the Jews with the Idumeans, and to shew, that though the Idumeans insolently exulted over them, yet their own calamity was nigh, which would wholly overwhelm them, as the case had previously been with the Jews. There is no time now to begin with the prayer of Jeremiah: I must therefore defer it till the next Lecture.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou seest that at this day the mouths not only of our enemies, but of thine also, are open to speak evil, --- O grant, that no occasion may be given them, especially as their slanders are cast on thy holy name; but restrain thou their insolence, and so spare us, that though we deserve to be chastised, thou mayest yet have regard for thine own glory, and thus gather us under Christ our head, and restore thy scattered Church, until we shall at length be all gathered into that celestial kingdom, which thine only-begotten Son our Lord has procured for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

other meaning, which it often has, and even in the second line of this verse, is more suitable to this place. Removal or migration had been the punishment of the Jews: the same was to be the punishment of Edom. In this sense is the word rendered by Blayney and Henderson. The past time in the latter clause is evidently used for the future, according to the usual manner of the Prophets, “He will visit,” etc., “he will remove, etc. — Ed.

Lamentations 5

CHAPTER 5

Lecture Seventeeth

Lamentations 5:1

1. Remember, O LORD, what is come upon us: consider, and behold our reproach.

1. Memento (recordare,) Jehova, quid sit nobis (hoc est, quomodo nobiscum agatur.) aspice et vide opprobrium nostrum.

This prayer ought to be read as unconnected with the Lamentations, for the initial letters of the verses are not written according to the order of the Alphabet; yet it is a complaint rather than a prayer; for Jeremiah mentions those things which had happened to the people in their extreme calamity in order to turn God to compassion and mercy.

He says first, Remember what has happened to us; and then in the second part he explains himself, Look and see our reproach Now the words, though brief and concise, yet contain a useful doctrine --- that God is pleased to bring help to the miserable when their evils come to an account before him, especially when they are unjustly oppressed. It is, indeed, certain that nothing is unknown to God, but this mode of speaking is according to the perceptions of men; for we think that God disregards our miseries, or we imagine that his back is turned to us when he does not immediately succor us. But as I have said, he is simply to be asked to look on our evils, for we know what he testifies of himself; so that as he claims to himself the office of helping the miserable and the unjustly oppressed, we ought to acquiesce in this consolation, that as soon as he is pleased to look on the evils we suffer, aid is at the same time prepared for us.

There is mention especially made of reproach, that the indignity might move God the more: for it was for this end that he took the people under his protection, that they might be for his glory and honor, as Moses says. As, then, it was God's will that the riches of his glory should appear in that people, nothing could have been more

inconsistent that that instead of glory they should have nothing but disgrace and reproach. This, then, is the reason why the Prophet makes a special mention of the reproach of the people. It follows, ---

Lamentations 5:2

2. Our inheritance is turned to strangers, our houses to aliens.

2. Haereditas nostra devoluta est ad exteros, domus nostrae ad alienos.

A catalogue of many calamities is now given by the Prophet, and as I have reminded you, for this end, that he may obtain God's favor for himself and for the whole people. It was by no means a reasonable thing, that the inheritance of the elect people should be given to aliens; for we know that the land had been promised to Abraham four hundred years before his children possessed it; we know that this promise had been often repeated, ``This land shall be to you for an inheritance.'' For though God sustained all nations, yet he was pleased to take a peculiar care of his people. In short, no land has ever been given to men in so singular a way as the land of Canaan to the posterity of Abraham. As, then, this inheritance had been for so many ages possessed by the chosen people, Jeremiah does not without reason complain that it was turned over to aliens.

In the second clause he repeats the same thing; but he shews that the Jews had not only been robbed of their fields, but had been cast out of their houses, a more grievous and disgraceful thing. For it sometimes happens, that when one loses his farm, his fields, and vineyards, his house remains to him untouched; but the Prophet here amplifies the misery of his own nation, that they were not only deprived of their fields and possessions, but that they were also ejected from their own houses, and others had possession of them. For it is a sight deemed affecting even among heathens, when one unworthy of any honor succeeds in the place of another eminent in wealth and dignity. Well known are these words, ---

O house of Aucus! How ruled by an unequal master! [583]

As Tarquinius had succeeded and taken possession of the kingdom, the heathen poet upbraidingly said that the house of Ancus had passed over to those who were at first exiles and fugitives, but afterwards became proud and cruel tyrants. So also in this place Jeremiah says that aliens dwelt in the houses of the people. It follows, ---

Lamentations 5:3

3. We are orphans and fatherless, our mothers are as widows.

3. Pupilli fuimus patre (non patre,) matres nostrae tanquam viduae.

Here the Prophet not only speaks in the person of the whole people, but utters also the groans and complaints of each; for this could not have been suitable to the whole Church, as he speaks of fathers and mothers. We hence see that this verse does not apply to the whole body, but to individual members, though every one of the people might have said that widows and orphans were everywhere seen.

Now, this usually happens when a nation is consumed either by pestilence or by war; for in one battle all do not so fall that a whole country becomes full of orphans. But the Prophet sets forth here the orphanage and widowhood occasioned through

[583] O domus Anci! Quam dispari domino dominaris!

the continued vengeance of God, for he had not ceased to afflict the people until by degrees they were exhausted. It was, indeed, a sad spectacle to see among the chosen people so many widows, and also so many children deprived of their fathers. It follows, ---

Lamentations 5:4

4. We have drunken our water for money; our wood is sold unto us.

4. Aquas nostras pecunia bibimus, ligna nostra pretio veniunt (non veneunt, nam intelligit ligna afferri, aut venire in illorum manus non sine pretio.)

The Prophet here relates, that the people were denuded, that they labored under the want of water and of wood. He does not say that they were only deprived of corn and wine, he does not complain that any of their luxuries were lessened; but he mentions water and wood, the common things of life; for the use of water, as it is said, is common to all; no one is so poor, if he dwells not in a land wholly dry, but that he has water enough to drink. For if there be no fountains, there are at least rivers, there are wells; nor do men perish through thirst, except in deserts and in places uninhabitable. As, then, water might be had everywhere, the Prophet here sets forth the extreme misery of the people, for water was even sold to them. In stony and high places water is sold; but this is a very rare thing. The Prophet here means that the people were not only deprived of their wealth, but reduced to such a state of want that they had no water without buying it.

At the same time he seems to express something worse when he says, Our water we drink for money, and our wood is brought to us for a price. It is not strange that wood should be bought; but the Prophet means that water was sold to the Jews which had been their own, and that they were also compelled to buy wood which had been their own. Thus the possessive pronouns are to be considered as emphatical. Then he says, ``Our own waters we drink,'' etc. [584] He calls them the waters of the people, which by right they might have claimed as their own; and he also calls the wood The same; it was that to which the people had a legitimate right. He then says that all things had been so taken away by their enemies, that they were forced to buy, not only the wine which had been taken from their cellars, and the corn which had been taken from their granaries, but also the water and the wood.

But were any one disposed to take the words more simply, the complaint would not be unsuitable, --- that the people, who before had abundance of wine and all other things, were constrained to buy everything, even water and wood. For it is a grievous change when any one, who could once cut wood of his own, and gather his own wine and corn, is not able to get even a drop of water without buying it. This is a sad change. So this passage may be understood. It follows, ---

Lamentations 5:5

5. Our necks are under persecution: we labour, and have no rest.

5. Super colla nostra (vel, cervicibus nostris) persecutionem passi sumus; laboravimus non requies nobis.

[584] To express this meaning, which is probably the true one, the words ought to be thus rendered, — 4. Our own water, for money have we drunk it; Our own wood, for a price it comes to us. Grotius says that in the land of Canaan the forests were free to all to get wood from. When in exile the Jews had to buy wood. — Ed.

Here he says that the people were oppressed with a grievous bondage. It is, indeed, a metaphorical expression when he says, that people suffered persecution on their necks. Enemies may sometimes be troublesome to us, either before our face, or behind our backs, or by our sides; but when they so domineer as to ride on our necks, in this kind of insult there is extreme degradation. Hence the Prophet here complains of the servile and even disgraceful oppression of the people when he says, that the Jews suffered persecution on their necks.

The meaning is, that the enemies so domineered at the, it pleasure, that the Jews dared not to raise up their heads. They were, indeed, worthy of this reward --- for we know that they had an iron neck; for when God would have them to bear his yoke, they were wholly unbending; nay, they were like untameable wild beasts. As, then, their hardness had been so great, God rendered to them a just reward for their pride and obstinacy, when their enemies laid such a burden on their necks. [585]

But the Prophet sets forth here this indignity, that he might turn God to mercy; that is, that the Chaldeans thus oppressed as they pleased the chosen people.

He adds, that they labored and had no rest. He intimates by these words that there were no limits nor end to their miseries and troubles; for the phrase in Hebrew is, We have labored and there was no rest. It often happens that when one is pressed down with evils for a short time, a relaxation comes. But the Prophet. says that there was no end to the miseries of the people. Then to labor without rest is the same as to be pressed down with incessant afflictions, from which there is no outlet. Their obstinacy was worthy also of this reward, for they had fought against God, not for a few months or years only, but for many years. We know how long the Prophet called them without any success. Here, however, he seeks favor with God, by saying that the people were miserable without limits or end.

Lamentations 5:6

6. We have given the hand to the Egyptians, and to the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.

6. AEgyptiis dedimus manum Assyriis, ut saturemur panibus.

He speaks here of the mendicity of the people, that they sought bread from every quarter. To give the hand, is explained in three ways: some say that it means humbly to ask; others, to make an agreement; and others, to extend it in token of misery, as he who cannot ask for help, intimates his wants by extending his hand. But the Prophet seems simply to mean that the people were so distressed by want, that they begged bread. I then take the expression, to give the hand, as meaning that they asked bread, as beggars usually do.

He now says that they gave or extended the hand both to the Egyptians and to the Assyrians, which was a most unworthy and disgraceful thing; for the Egyptians had been their most troublesome enemies, and the Assyrians afterwards followed

[585] Not one of the versions or the Targ., though they all differ, gives a satisfactory rendering of this clause. Some take, "on our neck we have been pursued," as meaning, We have been closely pursued. So Gataker. Others, as Lowth and Henderson, regarding {{על a noun, signifying a yoke, give a construction of this kind, ``With the yoke on our neck we have been pursued'' or persecuted, according to the words of Moses in Deuteronomy 28:48. The former seems the best, --- On our neck (closely) have we been pursued, We labored and had no rest. Then comes in what they did when thus pursued by their enemies, --- To Egypt gave we the hand, To Assyria, to be satisfied with bread. To give the hand, in this case, was to put it forth as suppliants to ask help. This seems to refer to a, time previous to their exile. --- Ed.

their example. At that time, indeed, the Egyptians pretended to be the friends of the chosen people, and made a treaty with them; but the Jews were held in contempt by them as they deserved, for they had prostituted as it were themselves like harlots. As, then, they had been despised by the Egyptians, it was a disgrace and reproach the most bitter, when they were compelled to beg bread in Egypt, and then in Assyria; for this might have been turned to the bitterest taunts.

We now, then, perceive the meaning of the Prophet; even this reward also God justly rendered to them. He had promised them a fruitful land, in which he was ready to support them to the full. How often is mention made by Moses of corn, wine, and oil; and why? in order that God might shew that that land exceeded every other in fertility. It was, then, an evidence of an extreme curse when the people were compelled to beg bread here and there, while yet the abundance of all things ought to have been sufficient to supply even aliens,

``Thou shalt lend to others, but thou shalt not borrow.'' (Deuteronomy 15:6.)

They then who ought to have fed others by their plenty, were so reduced that their want forced them to undergo this disgrace, to beg bread of the Egyptians and Assyrians. It follows, ---

Lamentations 5:7

7. Our fathers have sinned, and are not; and we have borne their iniquities.

7. Patres nostri peccarunt, non sunt (non ipsi, ad verbum,) nos vero iniquitatem eorum portavimus.

The Prophet seems here to contend with God, and to utter that blasphemy mentioned by Ezekiel. For when God severely chastised the people, that proverb was commonly used by them,

``Our fathers did eat a sour grape, and our teeth are blunted.'' (Ezekiel 18:2.)

Thus they intimated that they were unjustly and cruelly treated, because they suffered the punishment of others, when they themselves were innocent. So the Prophet seems to quarrel with God when he says that the fathers who sinned were no more; but as we shall presently see, the Prophet confesses also the sins of those who were yet alive. As, then, an ingenuous confession is made by the Prophet, he no doubt abstained here from that blasphemy which is so severely reproved by Ezekiel. Jeremiah had nothing farther from his purpose than to free the people from all blame, as though God had dealt cruelly with them, according to what is said by a heathen poet, ---

``For the sins of the fathers thou undeservedly sufferest, O Roman!'' [586]

Another says, ---

``Enough already by our blood
Have we suffered for the perjuries of Laomedonian Troy.'' [587]

They mean that the people of their age were wholly innocent, and seek in Asia and beyond the sea the cause of evils, as though they never had a sin at Rome. But the meaning of Jeremiah was not this, but he simply intended to say that the people who had been long rebellious against God were already dead, and that it

[586] Horace, Od. 6:1, — "Delicta majorum immeritus lues, Romane."

[587] Virgil, Georg., lib. 1, — "Satis jampridem sanguine nostro Laomedonteae luimus perjuria Troiae."

was therefore a suitable time for God to regard the miseries of their posterity. The faithful, then, do not allege here their own innocency before God, as though they were blameless; but only mention that their fathers underwent a just punishment, for that whole generation had perished. Daniel speaks more fully when he says,

``We have sinned, and our fathers, and our kings.''
(Daniel 9:8.)

He involved in the same condemnation both the fathers and their children.

But our Prophet's object was different, even to turn God to mercy, as it has been stated; and to attain this object he says, ``O Lord, thou indeed hast hitherto executed just punishment, because our fathers had very long abused thy goodness and forbearance; but now the time is come for thee to try and prove whether we are like our fathers: as, then, they have perished as they deserved, receive us now into favor.'' We hence see that thus no quarrel or contention is carried on with God, but only that the miserable exiles ask God to look on them, since their fathers who had provoked God and had experienced his dreadful vengeance, were already dead. [588]

And when he says that the sons bore the iniquity of the fathers, though it be a strong expression, yet its meaning is not as though God had without reason punished their children and not their fathers; for unalterable is that declaration,

``The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor the father the iniquity of the son; but the soul that sinneth it shall die.''
(Ezekiel 18:20.)

It may yet be said that children are loaded with the sins of their fathers, because God, as he declares by Moses, extends his vengeance to the third and fourth generation. (Exodus 20:5.) And he says also in another place,

``I will return into the bosom of children the iniquity of their fathers.''
(Jeremiah 32:18.)

God then continued his vengeance to their posterity. But yet there is no doubt but that the children who had been so severely punished, bore also the punishment of their own iniquity, for they deserved a hundred deaths. But these two things well agree together, that God returns the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children, and yet that the children are chastised for their own sins.

Lamentations 5:8

8. Servants have ruled over us: there is none that doth deliver us out of their hand.

8. Servi dominati sunt nobis; eripiens nemo ex manibus ipsorum (hoc est, nemo est qui nos eripiat e manibus ipsorum.)

Another circumstance aggravated the calamity of the people, that they came under the power of servants, which is more degrading than when the rich and the eminent in wealth and power make us their servants. For it is no shame to serve a king, or at, least a man who possesses some eminence; for that servitude which is not apparently degrading is deemed tolerable. But when we become the servants of servants, it is a most afflicting degradation, and most grievously wounds our minds.

[588] The words may be thus rendered, — Our fathers, they sinned and are not; We, their iniquities have we borne. To bear iniquities, is here evidently to bear their penalty. So when Christ is said to bear our sins, the same thing is meant. — Ed.

It is, then, for this indignity that Jeremiah now expostulates, and says that servants ruled over them. There is, indeed, no doubt but that they were driven into exile by some of the lowest; for the Chaldeans thought it right to exercise towards them every kind of cruelty. But it was yet a very mournful thing for God's children to be the slaves of servants; for they were before a sacerdotal kingdom, and God had so taken them under his protection, that their condition was better and more desirable than that of any other kingdom. As, then, they had been robbed of their liberty, and not only so, but also made subject to servants, the change was sad in the extreme. [589] Therefore the Prophet sought another occasion to plead for mercy, when he said that they were ruled by servants. It now follows, ---

Lamentations 5:9

9. We gat our bread with the peril of our lives because of the sword of the wilderness.

9. In anima nostra (alii vertunt, in periculo vitae nostrae, vel, cum periculo) adduximus ad panem nostrum ob siccitatem deserti (alii vertunt, a facie gladii, in deserto.)

The word {חרב}, chereb, means drought as well as sword. As the Prophet is speaking of famine and the desert,, I have no doubt but that dryness or drought is sword the word means here; and I wonder that the word sword had occurred to any; they could not have regarded the context.

He then says that the people sought bread with the soul, that is, at the hazard of their own life. If danger be preferred, I do not object. But as he simply says, with the soul, he seems to express this, that for food they hazarded their own life. Food, indeed, is the support of life, for why is bread sought but for sustaining life? But the hungry so rush headlong to procure food, that they expose themselves to thousand dangers, and they also weary themselves with many labors; and this is to seek bread with their soul, that is, when men not only anxiously labor to procure food, but pour forth as it were their own blood, as when one undertakes a long journey to get some support, lie is almost lifeless when he reaches the distant hospital. As, then, the Jews nowhere found food, the Prophet says that they sought bread with their life, that is, at the hazard of life. This is the view I prefer.

He then adds, For the dryness of the wilderness. What has the sword to do with wilderness? We see that this is wholly unsuitable; there was then no reason why interpreters should pervert this word. But what he calls the dryness of the wilderness was the want by which the people were distressed, as though they were in the wilderness. This is said by way of comparison, --- that on account of the dryness of the desert, that is, on account of sterility, they were under the necessity of exposing their life to death, only that they might anywhere find bread. [590]

It may also be, that the Prophet meant, that they were fugitives, and thus went in hunger through woods and forest, when they dared not to go forth into the open country lest the enemy should meet them. But what I have said is most suitable,

[589] See Nehemiah 5:15. — Ed.

[590] The versions and the Targ. render the word, "sword;" and so do Gataker, Blayney, and Henderson. And by "the sword of the desert" are to be understood freebooters who carried swords and made incursions from desert places. At the risk of our life we got our bread, On account of the sword of the desert — Ed.

that is, that they were so famished as though they were in a vast desert, and far away from every hospital, so that bread could nowhere be found. We now, then, perceive the meaning of the Prophet. He adds, ---

Lamentations 5:10

10. Our skin was black like an oven because of the terrible famine.

10. Pelles nostrae quasi clibanus nigredinem contraxerunt ob exustiones famis.

Some read, ``for tremors;'' literally, ``from the face of tremors.'' Jerome renders it, ``tempests,'' but the word ``burnings'' is the most suitable; for he says that their skins were darkened, and he compares them to an oven. This metaphor often occurs in Scripture,

``Though ye have been as among pots in the smoke, and deformed by blackness, yet your wings shall shine.'' (Psalm 68:14.)

God says that his people had contracted blackness, as though they had touched smoky pots, because they had been burnt as it were by many afflictions; for when we pine away in our evils, filthiness itself deforms us. But here he compares to an oven (which is the same thing) their skins or skin. He then says that the skin of every one was so wrinkled and darkened by blackness, that it was like an oven which is black through constant fire and smoke. The Prophet or whoever was the author of the 119th Psalm, uses another comparison, that he was like a bottle or a bladder, contracted by the smoke, and had wrinkles together with blackness. [591]

The meaning is, that there was a degrading deformity in the people, for they were so famished that no moisture remained in them; and when moisture fails, then paleness and decay follow; and then from paleness a greater deformity and blackness, of which the Prophet now speaks. Hence I have said, that the word ``burnings'' is the most proper. For, if we say tempests or storms, a tempest does not certainly darken the skin; and if we render it tremors or tremblings, this would be far remote; but if we adopt the word burnings, the whole passage will appear consistent; and we know, that as food as it were irrigates the life of man, so famine burns it up, as Scripture speaks also elsewhere. It follows, ---

Lamentations 5:11

11. They ravished the women in Zion, and the maids in the cities of Judah.

11. Mulieres in Sion afflictae fuerunt virgines in urbibus Juhudah

He mentions here another kind of reproach, that women had been ravished in Jerusalem, and in other cities. [592] God had commanded chastity to be observed among his people. When, therefore, virgins and women were thus defiled, it was a thing extremely disgraceful. But the Prophet mentioned this also, in order that God might at length show himself propitious to his people after having been entreated. (Deuteronomy 22:21-24.)

[591] The word {זלעפות,} occurs in Psalm 11:6, and in the singular number in Psalm 119: 53. The versions and the Targ. render it differently in the three places, for it is not found anywhere else. In Psalm 119:53, it is rendered ``horror'' in our version, and this meaning suits the passage in Psalm 11:6, and also this passage, --- Our skins, like an oven they became black, Because of the horrors of famine (or, horrible famine.) The word for ``skins'' is in the plural number according to several copies, and the verb requires it to be so. --- Ed.

[592] There is here a delicate word for a disgraceful act. The words literally are, — Women in Sion they humbled (or, were humbled,) And virgins in the cities of Judah. It is humbled by the Sept. and Vulg. “And” before “virgins” is supplied by the Vulg. and Syr. — Ed.

And he mentioned Sion rather than Jerusalem, --- it was indeed to state a part for the whole; but that place, we know, had been chosen by God that his name might be there worshipped. Sion, then, was a holy place above any other; it was, in a word, the earthly dwelling of God. As, then, God had there his palace, that he might dwell in the midst of his people, it was a disgraceful sight in the extreme to see women ravished there, for the temple of God was thus violated. It was not only a thing disgraceful to the people, that women were thus ravished, but it was a filthy profanation of God's worship, and therefore sacrilegious. We now see the design of the Prophet. He mentions also the cities of Judah, but with reference to the same thing. It follows ---

Lamentations 5:12

12. Princes are hanged up by their hand: the faces of elders were not honoured

12. Principes manu sua fuerunt suspensi, facies senum non fuerunt in honore (non fuerunt honoratae, ad verbum)

The beginning of the verse may be explained in two ways. All render thus, ``The princes have been slain by their hand,'' that is, of their enemies. But I wonder how it never occurred to them, that it was far more grievous, that they were slain by their own hand. I certainly do not doubt but that the Prophet says here, that some of the princes had laid violent hands on themselves. For it would be a frigid expression, that the princes were hung by the hand of enemies; but if we read, that the princes were hung by their own hand, this would be far more atrocious, as we have before seen that even women, excelling in humanity, devoured their own offspring. So he says now that princes were hung, not by enemies, for it was a common thing for the conquered to be slain by their enemies, and be also hung by way of reproach; but the Prophet, as it appears to me, meant to express something more atrocious, even that the miserable princes were constrained to lay violent hands on themselves. [593]

He adds, that the faces of the aged were not honored; which is also a thing not natural; for we know that some honor is always rendered to old age, and that time of life is commonly regarded with reverence. When, therefore, no respect is shown to the aged, the greatest barbarity must necessarily prevail. It is the same, then, as though the Prophet had said that the people had been so disgracefully treated, that their enemies had not even spared the aged. We also now understand why he adds this, for it would have otherwise appeared incredible, that the princes hung themselves by their own hand. But he here intimates that there was no escape for them, except they in despair sought death for themselves, because all humanity had disappeared. It follows, ---

Lamentations 5:13

13. They took the young men to grind, and the children fell under the wood.

13. Adolescentes ad molam sumpserunt, et pueri in ligno ceciderunt (vel, impegerunt)

[593] The most obvious meaning of the words is, that princes were hung or suspended by the hand, and not by the neck. Such a punishment is not recorded as having been then practiced; but it may have been a barbarity resorted to by the Chaldeans. This seems to be the meaning conveyed by the versions and the Targ., — Princes were by their hand hung up, The persons of the aged were not honored. — Ed.

I cannot proceed farther now.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that since thou hast once stretched forth thy hand to consecrate us a people to thyself, --- O grant, that thy paternal favor may perpetually shine on us, and that we may, on the other hand, strive always to glorify thy name, so that having once embraced us thou mayest continue thy goodness, until we shall at length enjoy the fullness of all blessings in thy celestial kingdom, which has been obtained for us by the blood of thine only-begotten Son. --- Amen.

Lecture Eighteenth

The Prophet now says, that young men, had been delivered to the mill, or to the grinding-house; and we know that of all servile works this was the lowest; for as they used asses to grind, so also they used slaves. The meaning is, that the Jews were shamefully treated, and were reduced to the most abject condition. I know not how came Jerome to give this version, that they were basely used for lust; for {וטחנ}, thechen, means to grind or to tear. He thought that it means here something base, which could not be named, as though the enemies had shamefully abused the young men; but we may gather from the second clause of the verse that such an idea does not accord with the passage.

He then says, that young men were compelled to grind, and that boys stumbled under the wood. He means that boys were loaded with wood, as drudges were wont to be; and it was a vile work. As, then, he said previously, that the young men were employed in grinding, so now he says that boys succumbed under the wood, because they carried burdens on their shoulders too heavy for them, which they were not able to bear. We now, then, apprehend what the Prophet means. It follows, ---

Lamentations 5:14

14. The elders have ceased from the gate, the young men from their musick.

14. Senes cessarunt e porta adolescentes a pulsatione sua (vel, canticis musicis.)

Here the Prophet briefly shews that the city was reduced to ruins, so that nothing but desolation could be seen there. For when cities are inhabited, judges sit at the gate and young men exercise themselves in lawful pursuits; but he says that there were no judgments; for at that time, as it is well known, they were wont to administer justice and to hold assemblies at the gates of cities. It was then the same as though all civil order had been abolished.

Then he adds, the young men had ceased from their own beating or musical songs. The meaning is, that there was so great a desolation in the city, that, it was no more a city. For men cannot dwell together without laws and without courts of justice. Where courts of justice are closed up, where laws are mute, where no equity is administered, there barbarity prevails, which is worse than solitude; and where there are no assemblies for legitimate amusements, life becomes brutal, for we know that man is a sociable being. By these words, then, the Prophet shews that a dreadful desolation appeared in the city after the people had gone into exile. And among the Chaldeans, and in Assyria, they had not their own judges nor any form of government, for they were dispersed and scattered, and that designedly, that they might not unite together any more; for it was the purpose of the Chaldeans to

obliterate by degrees the very name of the people; and hence they were not there formed into a community. So justly does the Prophet deplore their desolation even in exile. It follows, ---

Lamentations 5:15

15. The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning.

15. Cessavit gandium cordis nortri, versus est luctum chorus noster (sic enium vertunt {מחלנו} {לאבל}

He pursues the same subject, but he seems more clearly to explain what he had briefly stated in the preceding verse, when he says that all joy of the heart had ceased, and that all the dances were turned into mourning [594] We know that life is more bitter than death when men are in constant mourning; and truly where there is no hilarity, that state of life is worse than death. And this is what the Prophet now means by saying that all joy had ceased, and that all dances were converted into mourning.

Lamentations 5:16

16. The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us, that we have sinned!

16. Cecidit corona capitis nostri; vae nunc nobis, quia peccavimus.

By the crown of the head he no doubt understands all those ornaments by which that people had been adorned. They had a kingdom and a priesthood, which were like two luminaries or two precious jewels; they had also other things by which the Lord had adorned them. As, then, they were endued with such excellent things, they are said to have borne a crown on their head But a crown was not only taken for a diadem, --- it was also a symbol of joy and of honor; for not only kings then wore crowns, but men were crowned at weddings and feasts, at games also, and theatres. The Prophet, in a word, complains, that though many ornaments did belong to the people, yet now they were denuded of them all: The crown, he says, has fallen from our head [595]

He then exclaims, Woe to us now, for we have sinned! Here he sets forth an extreme misery, and at the same time shews that all hope of restoration was taken away. He, however, mentions the cause, because they had done wickedly By saying this he did not intend to exasperate their sorrow, so that they who were thus afflicted might murmur against God; but, on the contrary, his object was to humble the afflicted, so that they might perceive that they were justly punished. It is the same as though he had summoned them as guilty before the tribunal of God, and pronounced in one word that they justly suffered or sustained so grievous a punishment; for a just God is an avenger of wickedness.

We hence conclude, that when he said yesterday that the fathers who had sinned were dead, and their iniquity was borne by their children, he did not so speak as to exempt the living from all blame; for here he condemns them and includes himself in the number. But I explained yesterday the meaning of that verse; and here the

[594] The words ought rather to be thus rendered, — Turned into mourning was our piping. The word does not mean dancing, but playing on some fistular instrument. — Ed.

[595] The words are, — Fallen has the crown of our head. Then the "woe" in the next line is only declarative, — Woe is now to us, because we have sinned. The particle "now" is omitted in our version. — Ed.

Prophet ingenuously confesses that the people were justly punished, because they had by their sins provoked the wrath of God. And this doctrine ought to be carefully observed; because when we are pressed down by adversities, Satan will excite us to sorrow, and at the same time hurry us on to rage, except this doctrine comes to our minds, that we have to do with God, who is a righteous Judge. For the knowledge of our sins will tame our pride and also check all those clamorous complaints, which the unbelieving are wont to utter when they rise up against God. Our evils, then, ought to lead us to consider God's judgment and to confess our sins; and this was the end which our Prophet had in view. It follows, ---

Lamentations 5:17

17. For this our heart is faint; for these things our eyes are dim.

17. Propterea debile est cor nostrum; super hoc (id est, propter hane causem) obtenebrati sunt oculi nostri.

He connects sorrow here with the acknowledgment of sin, that the people under the pressure and agony of sorrow might apply their minds so as to consider their own sins. At the same time the Prophet, no doubt, includes here all that we have already observed, as though he had said that the people were not without reason wearied with sorrow, for they had ample and manifold reasons for their grief.

For this reason, he says, that is, we do not exceed a due measure in our sorrow, for our afflictions are not ordinary, so that our grief cannot be moderate; but as we are come to an extremity, it cannot then be but our minds should be overwhelmed with sorrow. As, then, the curse of God appeared everywhere, he says that this was the cause of the fainting heart; and he says also, Therefore were our eyes darkened. This is a common metaphor, that the eyes become dim through sorrow; for the senses through sorrow are blunted. Hence it is that the sight of the eyes is injured; and David especially makes use of this mode of speaking. Our Prophet then says that the eyes were darkened, because their grief was, as it were, deadly. It follows ---

Lamentations 5:18

18. Because of the mountain of Zion, which is desolate, the foxes walk upon it.

18. Propter montem Sion qui in vastitatem redactus est, vulpes incedunt in eo.

Though he had in general included all kinds of evils, he yet mentions now the principal cause of sorrow, that mount Sion had lost its beauty and its excellency. For that place had been chosen by God, as though he had descended there from heaven, that he might dwell there; and we know also that its beauty is spoken of in high terms. For there the face of God shone forth, as Moses and the Prophets often speak. It was then an extremely sad change, that as God had dwelt in mount Sion, foxes should lodge there as in a deserted cave. For on mount Sion was the tabernacle or the sanctuary; and God says that it was the tabernacle of meeting, {מועד}, moud, because there he wished to hold intercourse with his people. As, then, that place included God and his Church, it was, as I have said, a dreadful and monstrous thing, that it had become so desolate, that foxes succeeded in the place of God and the faithful. It was not, then, without reason that Jeremiah, after having spoken of so many and so bitter calamities, mentioned this as the chief, that mount

Sion was reduced to desolation, so that foxes ran there hither and thither [596]

For as it is the principal thing, and as it were the chief of all blessings, to be counted God's people, and to have a familiar access to him, so in adversities nothing is so sad as to be deprived of God's presence. When David testified his gratitude to God, because he had been enriched by every kind of blessing, he added this,

``I shall dwell in the house of God.'' (Psalm 23:6.)

For though he had spoken of wealth and riches and of the abundance of all things, yet he saw that his chief happiness was to call on God together with the faithful, and to be deemed one of his people. So, also, on the other hand, the Prophet here shews that nothing can be sadder to the godly than when God leaves his dwelling and makes it desolate, in order to terrify all who may see it.

This had been predicted to them by Jeremiah himself, as we have seen in the seventh chapter of his prophecies, ``Go ye to Shiloh,'' he said, where the ark of the covenant had long been; though that place had been a long time the habitation of God, yet it was afterwards rejected with great disdain. Jeremiah then declared to the Jews, while they were yet in safety, that such would be the condition of Jerusalem; but his prophecy was not believed. He now, then, confirms, by the event, what he had predicted by God's command, when he says that mount Sion was become the den of foxes. It follows, ---

Lamentations 5:19

19. Thou, O LORD, remainest for ever; thy throne from generation to generation.

19. Tu Jehova perpetuo sedebis, solium tuum in aetatem et aetatem (id est, omnibus seculis.)

The Prophet here raises up his eyes to God, and, by his example, he encourages all the godly, that they might not cease, notwithstanding their extreme calamities, to look to God, as we find in the hundred and second Psalm, where the Psalmist speaks of the destruction of the city of Jerusalem. Indeed the subject of that psalm is similar to that of this chapter; nor is there a doubt but that it was composed when the people, as it clearly appears, were in exile in Babylon. There the Psalmist, after having spoken of the ruin of the city, and calamities of the people, says, that the heavens were growing old and wasting as it were with rottenness, together with the whole world; but he afterwards adds,

``But thou, O Lord, remainest perpetually.''
(Psalm 102:26-28.)

At the same time he speaks more clearly than Jeremiah, for he applies his doctrine to the consolation of the Church, ``Children's children,'' he says, ``shall inhabit it.'' Hence, from the perpetuity and immutability of God, he infers the perpetuity of the Church. This is not done by Jeremiah, though it is implied; and for this reason, no

[596] Some connect this verse with the foregoing, as a special reason why their eyes were darkened, — 17. For this become faint did our heart; For these things darkened were our eyes, 18. Yea, for mount Sion, which is desolate; Foxes have walked through it. “This” was the “woe” which sin had brought; and “these things” were the various things which he had previously stated, but the desolation of mount Sion was the chief cause of sorrow. Others take this verse by itself, as it is done by the Sept., where {על} is rendered ``on,'' and {ש} for ,{אשר} is translated ``because,'' --- On mount Sion, because it has become desolate, Foxes have walked in (or through) it. If {על} be rendered concerning, or, as to, or, with regard to, the best construction would be the following, --- As to mount Sion, which has become desolate, Foxes have walked in it (or, traversed it.) --- Ed

doubt, he exclaims, that God dwells for ever, and that his throne remains fixed in all ages, or through all ages.

For when we fix our eyes on present things, we must necessarily vacillate, as there is nothing permanent hi the world; and when adversities bring a cloud over our eyes, then faith in a manner vanishes, at least we are troubled and stand amazed. Now the remedy is, to raise up our eyes to God, for however confounded things may be in the world, yet he remains always the same. His truth may indeed be hidden from us, yet it remains in him. In short, were the world to change and perish a hundred times, nothing could ever affect the immutability of God. There is, then, no doubt but that the Prophet wished to take courage and to raise himself up to a firm hope, when he exclaimed, ``Thou, O God, remainest for ever.'' By the word sitting or remaining, he doubtless meant that the world is governed by God. We know that God has no body, but the word sitting is to be taken metaphorically, for He is no God except he be the judge of the world.

This, also, he expresses more clearly, when he says, that God's throne remains through all ages. The throne of God designates the government of the world. But if God be the judge of the world, then he doeth nothing,, or suffereth nothing to be done, but according to his supreme wisdom and justice. [597] We hence see, that inasmuch as the state of present things, as thick darkness, took away all distinction, the Prophet raises up his eyes to God and acknowledges him as remaining the same perpetually, though things in the world continually change. Then the throne of God is set in opposition to chance or uncertain changes which ungodly men dream of; for when they see things in great confusion in the world, they say that it is the wheel of fortune, they say that all things happen through blind fate. Then the Prophet, that he might not be cast down with the unbelieving, refers to the throne of God, and strengthens himself in this doctrine of true religion, --- that God nevertheless sits on this throne, though things are thus confounded, though all things fluctuate; yea, even though storms and tempests mingle as it were heaven and earth together, yet God sits on his throne amidst all such disturbances. However turbulent, then, all the elements may be, this derogates nothing from the righteous and perpetual judgment of God. This is the meaning of the words; and hence fruit and benefit may be easily gathered. It. follows, ---

Lamentations 5:20

20. Wherefore dost thou forget us for ever, and forsake us so long time?

20. Ut quid in perpetuum oblivisceris nostri, deseres nos in protractionem (vel, longitudinem) dierum?

He seems, indeed, here to expostulate with God; but the faithful, even when they patiently bear their evils, and submit to God's scourges, do yet familiarly deposit their complaints in his bosom, and thus unburden themselves. We see that David prayed, and no doubt by the real impulse of the Spirit, and at the same time expostulated,

``Why dost thou forget me perpetually?'' (Psalm 13:1.)

Nor is there a doubt but that the Prophet took this complaint from David. Let us,

[597] The words literally are, — Thou Jehovah for ever sittest, Thy throne is from generation to generation. Sitting is the posture of a judge, and the reference here is to Jehovah, not as to his essence or existence, but as to his judicial office. — Ed.

then, know, that though the faithful sometimes take this liberty of expostulating with God, they yet do not put off reverence, modesty, submission, or humility. For when the Prophet thus inquired why God should for ever forget his people and forsake them, he no doubt relied on his own prophecies, which he knew had proceeded from God, and thus he deferred his hope until the end of the seventy years, for that time had been prefixed by God. But it was according to human judgment that he complained in his own person, and in that of the faithful, that the affliction was long; nor is there a doubt but that he dictated this form of prayer to the faithful, that k might be retained after his death. He, then, formed this prayer, not only according to his own feeling, and for the direction to those of his own age; but his purpose was to supply the faithful with a prayer after his own death, so that they might flee to the mercy of God.

We now, then, perceive how complaints of this kind ought to be understood, when the prophets asked, ``How long?'' as though they stimulated God to hasten the time; for it cannot be, when we are pressed down by many evils, but that we wish help to be accelerated; for faith does not wholly strip us of all cares and anxieties. But when we thus pray, let us remember that our times are at the will and in the hand of God, and that we ought not to hasten too much. It is, then, lawful for us on the one hand to ask God to hasten; but, on the other hand, we ought to check our impatience and wait until the suitable time comes. Both these things the Prophet no doubt joined together when he said, Why shouldest thou, perpetually forget us and forsake us? [598]

We yet see that he judged according to the evils then endured; and doubtless he believed that God had not forsaken his own people nor forgotten them, as no oblivion can happen to him. But, as I have already said, the Prophet mentioned these complaints through human infirmity, not that men might indulge themselves in their own thoughts, but that they might ascend by degrees to God and overcome all these temptations. It follows, ---

Lamentations 5:21

21. Turn thou us unto tee, O LORD, and we shall be turned; renew our days as of old.

21. Converte nos, Jehova ad te et convertimur: innova (vel, instaura) dies nostros sicuti olim (vel, ab initio.)

The Prophet shews, in this verse, that the remedy is in God's hand whenever he is pleased to succor his people. He, then, exalts here the power of God, as though he had said, that God is not without power, but that he can, whenever he pleases, help his people. This is not, indeed, a sufficient ground for confidence, yet it is the beginning of hope; for whence is it that despair weakens us, so that we cannot call on God? because we think that it is all over with us; and whence is this? because we impiously confine the power of God; nay, we in a manner, through our unbelief,

[598] Why shouldest thou to the end forget us — Forsake us for the length of our days? "To the end," or perpetually, and "the length of our days," are the same. The length of days, as it appears from Psalm 23:6, means the extent of the present life; the phrase is there used as synonymous with all the days of one's life. Might not the Prophet here refer to the life of those then living? As to restoration after seventy years, he could have had no doubt. He seems to have pleaded for the restoration of the generation then living. — Ed.

repel his power, which would otherwise be exerted in our behalf. As, then, we thus close the door against God, when we extenuate his power, and think that our evils will prevail; it is, therefore, as I have said, the beginning of hope to believe that all the issues of death are in God's hand, and that were we a hundred times swallowed up, yet he, by stretching forth his hand to us, can become the author of salvation to us at any moment.

This is now the argument which the Prophet handles, when he says, Turn us, O Jehovah, and we shall be turned; that is, ``If thou, O Jehovah, be pleased to gather us, salvation is already certain to us.'' And he does not speak here of repentance. There is, indeed, a twofold turning or conversion of men to God, and a twofold turning of God to men. There is all inward turning when God regenerates us by his own Spirit; and turning with respect to us is said to be the feeling of true religion, when, after having been alienated from him, we return to the right way and to a fight mind. There is also all exterior turning as to God, that is, when he so receives men into favor, that his paternal favor becomes apparent; but the interior turning of men to God takes place when they recover life and joy.

Of this second turning, then, does the Prophet now speak, Turn us, O Jehovah, and we shall be turned; that is, If thou, Jehovah, lookest on us, our condition will immediately become prosperous, for in thy hand there is a sure salvation for us.'' As, then, the Jews were at that time like the dead, the Prophet says, that if it pleased God to gather them, they could in a moment, as they say, have been restored, as it is said also in the Psalms,

``Thou takest away life, and all things change; send forth thy Spirit, and renew the face of the earth.'' (Psalm 104:29, 30.)

As, then, God renews the face of the earth and restores it by only looking at it, hence now the Prophet says, that the Jews, though they had been destroyed, could yet be immediately restored, if it were the will of God to receive them into favor. [599]

He adds, Renew our days as of old. This is an explanation of the former clause --- the renewing of days was restoration to their former state. God had been for many ages the deliverer of his people; under David had been their greatest happiness; under Solomon also they had greatly flourished; but from the time when God had redeemed his people, he had given, as we know, many and constant proofs of his favor and mercy. As, then, God's goodness had, by so many evidences been made conspicuous, the Prophet now says, Renew our days as formerly, that is, ``Restore us to that happiness, which was formerly a testimony of thy paternal favor towards thy people.'' We now then perceive the meaning of the Prophet.

But it ought to be noticed, that he grounds his hope on the ancient benefits of God; for as God had formerly redeemed his people, had often helped the miserable, had poured forth on them, posterity fullness of blessings, hence the Prophet encourages himself to entertain good hope, and suggests also to others the same ground of confidence. We see that this was done often by David; for whenever he mentions

[599] The meaning of this sentence is," says Grotius, "Restore us to thy favor, that we may be restored to our ancient state." This being evidently the meaning, the rendering ought to be this, — Restore us, O Jehovah, to thyself, that we may be restored. And as Calvin, as well as Grotius, says, the following line is a confirmation, — Renew our days as of old. — Ed.

ancient testimonies of God's favor towards his people, he hence gathered, that God would extend the same goodness and kindness to posterity. It follows, ---

Lamentations 5:22

22. But thou hast utterly rejected us; thou art very wroth against us.

22. Nisi (vel, sed, vel, quod si) rejiciendo rejecisti nos excanduisti contra nos valde.

The two words {אם} {כי}, ki am, are differently explained: some render them, ``but if,'' or ``certainly if,'' and thus separate the verse into two parts, ``Surely if thou hast rejected us, thou art very angry;'' but this is a forced meaning, not intended, as I think, by the Prophet. And these seem to have been compelled by necessity to pervert the Prophet's words; because it appears hard simply to declare that the people had been wholly rejected by God. As, then, this harshness offended them, they contrived this comment, ``If thou hast rejected us, thou art very angry.'' But as I have said, this exposition I do not approve of, because it is a very forced one; and the greater part of interpreters follow what I stated in the first place, for they take {אם} {כי}, ki am, adversatively. The two particles are often connected together, and rendered, ``though'' or although, --- ``Though thou hast rejected us:'' and hence the last verse has been repeated.

For the Jews labor under this superstition, that when a book ends with a hard and severe sentence, or one containing a dreadful threatening, grating to the ears, in order to avoid the sad omen, they repeat the last verse but one. So they do at the end of Isaiah, and at the end of Malachi. As Isaiah says, ``It shall be a horror (or abomination) to all flesh;'' they therefore repeat the previous verse. So in Malachi; as he says, ``Lest I come and smite the earth with a curse --- {חרם}, cherem,'' they think that as he pronounces there an anathema, it is a sort of charm that may absorb this curse, to have the previous verse repeated after it. There is, then, no doubt but that they took this passage in the same sense, ``Though thou hast rejected us,'' etc.

If this explanation be approved, we must hold that the Prophet here exceeded due limits, as also the faithful, in their prayers, do not always so restrain themselves, but that some heat bubbles up; for we see how David, in the Psalms, too often shewed this kind of feeling; and it is hence evident, that his mind was not always sufficiently calm. We must then say, that the Prophet was impelled by a turbulent feeling when he uttered these words.

But {אם} {כי}, ki am, may also be rendered, ``Unless,'' or except' and it is singular that no one has perceived this, though it be not an unsuitable meaning, ``Except it may be thou rejecting hast rejected us, and hast become very angry with us,'' or above measure angry; for {מאד} {עד}, od mad in Hebrew, means the same as above measure (supra modum) in Latin. Though the Prophet seems to speak doubtingly, by laying down t, his condition, there is vet no doubt but that he struggled against all unbelief, when he said, Except it may be; for he reasons from what is impossible, ``Turn thou us to thee and we shall be turned, renew our days as formerly; except it may be thou hast rejected us:'' but this was impossible. Then, as I have said, the Prophet here strengthens himself by setting up a shield against all the assaults of

temptations when he says, Except it may be thou hast rejected us [600]

But it cannot be that God will reject his people, and be so angry with them, as never to be reconciled. We hence see that the Prophet does not simply set down the condition, as though he said, ``O God, if thou art to be perpetually angry with us, and wilt never be reconciled, it is there all over with our salvation; but if thou wilt be reconciled to us, we shall then entertain good hope.'' No, the Prophet did not thus keep his own mind and the minds of others in suspense, but had a sure confidence as to God's favor; for it cannot be that God will ever forsake those whom he has chosen, as Paul also shews in the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

As it has so seemed good to the brethren, I will begin tomorrow the explanation of Ezekiel.

PRAYER

Grant, Almighty God, that as thou didst formerly execute judgments so severe on thy people, --- O grant, that these chastisements may at this day teach us to fear thy name, and also keep us in watchfulness and humility, and that we may so strive to pursue the course of our calling, that we may find that thou art always our leader, that thy hand is stretched forth to us, that thy aid is ever ready for us, until, being at length gathered into thy celestial kingdom, we shall enjoy that eternal life, which thine only-begotten Son has obtained for us by his own blood. --- Amen.

[600] The particles, {{כי ,{אם} seem to have the meaning of ``except,'' as in Genesis 32:26, ``except thou bless me.'' But the exposition is too refined. The usual meaning of the particles is, but in truth, for surely, when indeed. See 1 Samuel 21:5; Proverbs 23:18; Exodus 22:23. They are rendered here, ``for,'' by the Sept., Syr., and Arab; ``but,'' by the Vulg., and ``although,'' by the Targ. The version of Blayney and Henderson is, ``For surely.'' The Prophet assigns a reason for his petition in the preceding verse; as though he had said, ``I ask for restoration to thy favor and to our land, because thou hast clearly manifested thy rejection of us, and thy displeasure towards us.'' For surely rejecting thou hast rejected us, Thou hast been wroth with us exceedingly, or, more literally, Thou hast foamed against us exceedingly. The first line here corresponds with the latter part of the previous verse, ``Restore us to our land, and renew the ancient days,'' --- ``Thou hast wholly rejected us.'' He speaks of things as they were then. Then the last line in this verse bears a relation to the first part of the preceding verse, ``Restore us to thy favor,'' --- ``Thou hast been exceedingly displeased with us.'' Thus, for displeasure he asked favor, and for repudiation, a restoration. --- Ed.

Historical Scripture Translations

Translation: Jeremiah 20

CHAPTER 20

1 And Pashur the son of Immer the priest, (and he was a governor in the Temple of Jehovah,) heard Jeremiah prophesying these words:

2 And Pashur smote Jeremiah the Prophet, and put him in the prison which was in the higher gate of Benjamin, opposite the house of Jehovah.

3 And it happened the day after, that Pashur brought out Jeremiah from prison; and Jeremiah said to him, --- Not Pashur has Jehovah called thy name, But terror on every side:

4 For thus saith Jehovah, --- Behold, I will make thee a terror To thyself and to all thy friends; And fall shall they by the sword of thine enemies, While thine eyes are looking on; And all Judah will I deliver Into the hand of the king of Babylon; And he shall carry them into Babylon, And shall smite them with the sword:

5 And I will give up all the strength of this city, And all its labor and its every precious thing; And all the treasures of the kings of Judah Will I give up into the hands of their enemies; And they shall spoil them and take them away, And they shall lead them into Babylon.

6 And thou, Pashur, and all the inhabitants of thy house, Go shall ye into captivity; Thou shalt come to Babylon, and there die, And there shalt thou be buried and thy friends, To whom thou hast falsely prophesied.

7 Thou hast deceived me, Jehovah, and I was deceived; Thou hast constrained me and didst prevail; I am become a scorn all the day, All make a mock of me;

8 For from the time I have spoken, I cried aloud against violence, And devastation have I proclaimed: Because the word of Jehovah became to me A reproach and derision all the day,

9 Therefore I said, I will not mention him, Nor speak any more in his name: But it became in my heart as a burning fire, Closed up in my bones; And I was wearied with forbearing, And I did not prevail.

10 For I heard the slander of many, Terror on every side, ``Report ye, and we will report to him:'' All my friends watch for my haltings --- ``He may go astray, then we shall prevail against him, And take our revenge on him.''

11 But Jehovah is with me as a terrible giant; Therefore my persecutors shall fall and not prevail; They shall be greatly ashamed, for they shall not succeed; It will be a perpetual reproach Which shall not be forgotten.

12 But thou, Jehovah of hosts, Art he who provest the righteous, Who seest the reins and the heart; I shall see thy vengeance on them, For to thee have I opened my cause.

13 Sing ye to Jehovah, praise ye Jehovah, For he has rescued the soul of the distressed From the hand of the wicked.

14 Cursed be the day on which I was born; The day on which my mother bare me, Let it not be blessed:

15 Cursed be the man who told my father, Saying, ``Born to thee is a male child,'' Who with joy made him joyful;

16 And let that man be as the cities, Which Jehovah destroyed and repented not; And let him hear a cry in the morning, And a tumult at noontide.

17 Why hast thou not slain me from the womb? That my mother might be my grave, Or her womb a perpetual conception?

18 Why from the womb did I come forth, That I might see trouble and sorrow; That my days might be consumed in reproach!

Translation: Jeremiah 21

CHAPTER 21

1 The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, when king Zedekiah sent to him Pashur the son of Melchiah, and Zephaniah the son of Maaseiah the priest, saying,

2 Inquire now for us of Jehovah, for Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon makes war with us, if Jehovah will deal with us according to his wondrous works, that he may ascend from us.

3 And Jeremiah said to them, Thus shall ye say to Zedekiah, ---

4 Thus saith Jehovah, God of Israel, --- Behold, I prohibit all the warlike instruments Which are in your hands, with which ye fight Against the king of Babylon and the Chaldeans, Who besiege you without the walls; And I will gather them into the midst of this city:

5 And fight will I myself against you With an extended hand and with a strong arm, Yea, in wrath and fury and great indignation;

6 And I will smite the inhabitants of this city, Both man and beast; By a great pestilence shall they die.

7 And afterwards Jehovah said, --- I will deliver Zedekiah the king of Judah. His servants also and the people, Even those who shall remain in the city, From the pestilence, and the sword, and the famine, Into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, And into the hand of their enemies, And into the hand of those who seek their life; And he shall smite them with the edge of the sword; And he will not spare them, Nor forgive, nor shew mercy.

8 To this people also shalt thou say, --- Thus saith Jehovah, --- Behold, I set before you The way of life and the way of death:

9 He who abides in this city shall die By the sword, or by famine, or by pestilence; But he who goeth out and dwells With the Chaldeans who besiege you, Shall live, and his life shall be for a prey:

10 For I have set my face against this city, For evil and not for good, saith Jehovah;

Into the hand of the king of Babylon shall it be given, And he shall burn it with fire.

11 And as to the house of the king of Judah, Hear ye the word of Jehovah;

12 O house of David, thus saith Jehovah, --- In the morning execute ye judgment, And free the spoiled from the hand of the oppressor, Lest go forth as fire my indignation, And burn, and there be none to extinguish it, --- Because of the wickedness of their doings.

13 Behold, I am against thee, inhabitant of the valley --- The rock in the plain, saith Jehovah, Who say, ``Who shall descend to us? And who shall enter our habitations?''

14 I will even visit upon you The fruit of your doings, saith Jehovah; And I will kindle a fire in its forest, And it shall consume all around it.

Translation: Jeremiah 22

CHAPTER 22

1 Thus saith Jehovah, Go down to the house of the king of Judah, and speak there this word,

2 And say, --- Hear the word of Jehovah, king of Judah, Who sittest on the throne of David, Thou, and thy servants, and thy people, Who enter in through these gates:

3 Thus saith Jehovah, Do judgment and justice, And rescue the spoiled from the hand of the oppressor; The stranger, the orphan, and the widow, Defraud not; exercise no violence, Nor shed innocent blood in this place.

4 For if obeying ye obey this word, Then shall enter through the gates of this house Kings, sitting for David on his throne, Riding in chariots and on horses, --- He himself, and his servants, and his people:

5 But if ye will not obey these words, By myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah, That a waste shall this house become.

6 For thus saith Jehovah of the house of the king of Judah, Gilead to me art thou, the head of Lebanon; Surely I will make thee a desert, As cities which are not inhabited:

7 And I will prepare against thee destroyers, Every man and his instruments, And they shall cut down thy choice cedars, And cast them into the fire.

8 And pass shall many nations through this city, And say shall each to his friend, ``Why hath Jehovah done thus to this great city?''

9 And they shall say, ``Because they have forsaken The covenant of Jehovah their God, And bowed down before alien gods, and served them.''

10 Weep ye not for the dead, nor bewail him; Weeping, weep for him who migrates, For return shall he no more, That he may see the land of his nativity:

11 For thus saith Jehovah concerning Shallum The son of Josiah the king of Judah, Who reigns instead of Josiah his father, --- When he shall have gone forth from this place He shall not return here any more:

12 For in the land where they shall lead him away There shall he die, And this land shall he see no more.

13 Woe to him who builds not with justice his house, And not with judgment his chambers; Who makes his neighbor to serve him for nothing, And pays him not for his work;

14 Who says, ``I will build for myself A large house and wide chambers;'' And he perforates for himself windows, And covered it is with cedar, And painted with vermilion.

15 Shalt thou reign because thou inclosest thyself in cedar? Thy father, did he not eat and drink? When he did judgment and justice, It was then well with him:

16 He judged the cause of the poor and needy, It was then well with him; Was not this to know me? saith Jehovah:

17 For thy eye and thy heart are not Except on thy covetousness, And on shedding innocent blood, And on rapacity and oppression, to do them.

18 Therefore thus saith Jehovah, Of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah the king of Judea, They shall not bewail him, --- ``Ah, my brother! Ah, sister!'' They shall not bewail him, --- ``Ah, Lord! Ah, his glory!''

19 With the burial of an ass shall he be buried, Drawn out and cast forth Beyond the gates of Jerusalem.

20 Ascend into Lebanon and cry, And on Bashan lift up thy voice, And cry all around, For destroyed are all thy lovers.

21 I spake to thee in thy tranquillity, Thou saidst, ``I will not hear:'' It has been thy manner from thy youth That thou didst not hear my voice.

22 Thy pastors shall the wind consume, And thy lovers, into exile shall they go: Surely ashamed shalt thou then be, And blush for all thy wickedness.

23 Thou hast set thy seat on Lebanon, Thou hast made thy nest among the cedars: How gracious wilt thou be When come on thee shall sorrows, The pain as of one in travail!

24 Live do I, saith Jehovah; Were Coniah the son of Jehoiakim the king of Judah A sealing ring on my right hand, I would thence pluck thee off:

25 And I will deliver thee Into the hand of those who seek thy life, And into the hand of those whose face thou dreadest, Even into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar The king of Babylon, And into the hand of the Chaldeans:

26 And I will cast thee and thy mother who bare thee Into a foreign land where ye were not born, And there shall ye die;

27 And into the land they set their mind to return, Thither they shall not return.

28 Is this man Coniah a despised and broken statue? Is he a vessel in which there is no delight? Why are they east forth, he and his seed, And thrown to a land which they have not known?

29 Land! land! land! hear the word of Jehovah, ---

30 Thus saith Jehovah, Write ye this man childless, A man who shall not prosper in his days; Nay, none of his seed shall prosper, Sitting on the throne of David, And ruling any more in Judah.

Translation: Jeremiah 23

CHAPTER 23

1 Woe to the pastors who destroy and scatter The flock of my pastures! saith Jehovah;

2 Therefore thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Concerning the pastors who feed my people, --- Ye have scattered my flock and driven them away, And ye have not visited them; Behold, I will visit upon you The wickedness of your doings, saith Jehovah:

3 But I will gather the remnant of my sheep From all the lands to which I shall drive them, And cause them to return to their own folds, And they shall become fruitful and multiply;

4 And I will raise up over them pastors Who shall feed them; And they shall no more fear nor dread, Nor shall they fail, saith Jehovah.

5 Behold, the days are coming, saith Jehovah, That I will raise up to David a righteous branch, And reign shall a king, And prudently shall he act; He will do judgment and justice in the land.

6 In his days saved shall be Judah, And Israel shall dwell in confidence: And this is the name by which they shall call him, Jehovah Our Righteousness

7 Therefore, behold, the days will come, saith Jehovah, In which it shall no more be said, ``Live does Jehovah,'' Who brought the children of Israel from the land of Egypt;

8 But rather, ``Live does Jehovah,'' who has brought up And led the seed of the house of Israel From the land of the north, and all the lands To which I had driven them; And they shall dwell in their own land.

9 On account of the prophets, Broken is my heart within me, Disjointed are all my bones; I am become like a drunken man Who has been overcome by wine, On account of Jehovah, And on account of the words of his holiness;

10 For with adulterers the land is filled: For on account of perjury mourned has

the land, Dried up have the pastures of the desert; And their course has been evil, And their strength not right.

11 For both prophet and priest have acted wickedly; Even in my house have I found Their wickedness, saith Jehovah.

12 Therefore their way shall be to them slippery; In darkness shall they stumble and fall therein; For I shall bring on them evil, The year of their visitation, saith Jehovah.

13 In the prophets of Samaria have I seen fatuity, They prophesied by Baal, And made my people Israel to go astray:

14 But in the prophets of Jerusalem Have I seen depravity; By adultery and walking in falsehood They even strengthen the hands of the wicked, That they may not turn, each from his wickedness: They shall be all to me as Sodom, And its inhabitants as Gomorrah.

15 Therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts Concerning these prophets, --- I will feed them with a deadly poison, And give them waters of gall to drink; For from the prophets of Jerusalem Has gone forth impiety through all the laud.

16 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Hear ye not the words of the prophets Who prophesy to you; They make you to be vain; A vision of their own heart do they speak, And not from the mouth of Jehovah;

17 Who say to those who despise me, Spoken has Jehovah, ``Peace shall be to you;'' And to all who walk in the wickedness of their own hearts They say, ``Come upon you shall not evil;

18 For who hath been in the counsel of Jehovah, And seen and heard his word? Who hath listened to his word and heard it?''

19 Behold the whirlwind of Jehovah! With fury it goeth forth; Even the impending whirlwind; On the head of the ungodly shall it fall:

20 Turn back shall not the anger of Jehovah Till he has done and confirmed The thoughts of his own heart: In the extremity of days Ye shall fully understand this.

21 I sent not the prophets, yet they have run; I spoke not to them, yet they have prophesied.

22 But if they had stood in my counsel, Surely they would have made my people hear my words, And turned them from their evil way, And from the wickedness of their doings?

23 Am I a God at hand, saith Jehovah, And not a God afar off?

24 Can a man hide himself in coverts That I could not see him? saith Jehovah; Do not I fill the heavens and the earth? saith Jehovah.

25 I have heard what the prophets say Who prophesy falsely in my name, Saying, ``I have dreamed, I have dreamed.''

26 How long will it be in the heart of the prophets To prophesy falsehood, Yea, of the prophets of the deceit of their own heart!

27 Who think to make my people forget My name by their own dreams, Which they relate, each to his friend, As forgotten my name have their fathers through Baal.

28 The prophet who hath a dream, He will relate a dream; And he with whom is my word, He will speak my word of truth: What is the chaff to the wheat? saith

Jehovah.

29 Is not my word like fire? saith Jehovah, And like the hammer that breaks the stone?

30 Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith Jehovah, Who steal my words, each from his friend:

31 Behold, I am against the prophets, saith Jehovah, Who elevate their own tongue, And say, ``It is the word:''

32 Behold, I am against those Who prophesy false dreams, saith Jehovah; And who relate them, and deceive my people By their lies and their levity, Though I sent them not, nor commanded them: And they will not profit this people, saith Jehovah.

33 But if ask thee will this people, Or a prophet, or a priest, saying, ``What is the burden of Jehovah?'' Then shalt thou say to them, ``What burden? --- I will forsake you, saith Jehovah.''

34 And the prophet, and the priest, and the people, Who shall say, ``The burden of Jehovah,'' I will even punish that man and his house.

35 Thus shall ye say, every one to his friend, And every one to his brother, ``What has Jehovah answered?'' Or ``What has Jehovah spoken?''

36 But the burden of Jehovah mention no more; For the burden of each shall be his word: For ye have corrupted the words of the living God, Of Jehovah of hosts, our God.

37 Thus shalt thou say to the prophet, --- ``What has Jehovah answered thee?'' Or ``What has Jehovah spoken?''

38 But if ye will say, ``The burden of Jehovah;'' Therefore Jehovah saith thus, --- Because ye say, ``The burden of Jehovah,'' Though I sent to you, saying, Ye shall not say, ``The burden of Jehovah.''

39 Therefore, behold, I will wholly take you away, And will cast you off, and this city Which I gave to you and to your fathers, From my presence; And I will bring upon you a perpetual reproach, And a perpetual disgrace, Which shall not be forgotten.

Translation: Jeremiah 24

CHAPTER 24

1 Jehovah shewed me a vision, and, behold, two baskets of figs set before the Temple of Jehovah, after Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had carried away Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim the king of Judah, and the princes of Judah, and the artificer, and the engraver, from Jerusalem, and led them away to Babylon:

2 One basket of figs very good, like early figs, and another basket of figs very bad, which could not be eaten, being so bad.

3 And Jehovah said to me, ``What seest thou, Jeremiah?'' And I said, ``Figs, good figs, very good; and bad, very bad, which cannot be eaten, being so bad.''

4 And the word of Jehovah came to me, saying,

5 Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, As these good figs, so will I acknowledge the captivity of Judah, which I sent from this place to the land of the Chaldeans, for good:

6 And I will set my eye upon them for good, and will restore them to this land; and I will build them up and not pull them down, and I will plant them and not pluck them up;

7 And I will give them a heart to know me, that I am Jehovah; and they shall be to me a people, and I will be to them a God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.

8 But as to the bad figs, which cannot be eaten, being so bad, surely thus saith Jehovah, so will I render Zedekiah the king of Judah, and his princes, and the residue at Jerusalem, those who remain in this land and those who dwell in the land of Egypt;

9 And I will set them for a commotion, for an evil to all kingdoms of the earth, for a reproach, and a terror, and a taunt, and a curse in all places where I shall drive them;

10 And I will send among them the sword, the famine, and the pestilence, until they be consumed from the face of the land which I gave to them and to their fathers.

Translation: Jeremiah 25

CHAPTER 25

1 The word which came by Jeremiah to all the people of Judah in the fourth year of Jehoiakim the son of Josiah the king of Judah, (this was the first year of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon,)

2 Which Jeremiah the prophet spake to all the people of Judah, and to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, ---

3 From the thirteenth year of Josiah the son of Amon the king of Judah, to this day, (this is the twenty-third year,) hath Jehovah spoken to me, and I have spoken to you, rising up early, but ye have not hearkened:

4 And Jehovah sent to you all his servants the prophets, rising up early and sending, (but ye hearkened not, nor inclined your ear to hear,)

5 Saying, --- Return ye, I pray, each from his evil way, And from the wickedness of your doings, And dwell in the land which Jehovah gave To you and to your fathers from age to age:

6 And walk ye not after alien gods, To serve them and to bow down before them; And provoke me not by the work of your hands, And I will not do you evil.

7 But ye hearkened not to me, saith Jehovah; For ye provoked me by the work of your hands, To do evil to you.

8 Therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Because ye have not hearkened to my words,

9 Behold, I will send for and take All the families of the north, saith Jehovah, And Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant; And I will bring them to this land And to its inhabitants, And to all these nations around; And I will destroy them, And make them an astonishment, And a hissing, and perpetual desolations;

10 And I will cause to cease among them The voice of joy, and the voice of gladness, The voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride, The sound of millstones, and the light of the candle.

11 And this whole land shall be a waste and a wonder; And serve shall these nations The king of Babylon seventy years.

12 And it shall be, when fulfilled shall be seventy years, That I shall visit on the king of Babylon, And on his people, saith Jehovah, Their iniquity, --- and upon the land of Chaldea, And I will make it perpetual desolations:

13 And I will bring on that land all my words, Which I have spoken concerning it, All that is written in this book, Which Jeremiah has prophesied of the nations:

14 For they shall rule over strong nations, And over mighty kings; And I will render to these according to their doing, And according to the work of their hands.

15 For thus said Jehovah, the God of Israel, to me, Take the cup of the wine of this wrath from my hand, and give it to drink to all the nations to whom I shall send thee,

16 That they may drink and be incensed, and become distracted on account of the sword which I shall send among them.

17 And I took the cup from the hand of Jehovah, and gave it to drink to all the nations to whom Jehovah had sent me, ---

18 To Jerusalem and to the cities of Judah, even to its kings and to its princes, to make them a waste, and an astonishment, and a hissing, and a curse, as at this day, ---

19 To Pharaoh the king of Egypt, to his servants, and to his princes, and to all his people,

20 And to the promiscuous multitude, and to all the kings of the land of Uz, and to all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and to Askelon, and to Gaza, and to Ekron, and to the remnant of Ashdod, ---

21 To Edom, and to Moab, and to the children of Ammon,

22 And to all the kings of Tyre, and to all the kings of Sidon, and to all the kings of the island beyond the sea,

23 And to Dedan, and to Tema, and to Buz, and to all the extreme ones in a corner,

24 And to all the kings of Arabia, and to all the kings of the mingled race who dwell in the desert,

25 And to all the kings of Zimri, and to all the kings of Elam, and to all the kings of the Medes,

26 And to all the kings of the north, those who are near, as well as those who are afar off, every one shall be against his brother, --- and to all kingdoms of the earth, which are upon the face of the earth; and the king of Sheshach shall drink after them.

27 And thou shalt say to them, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Drink ye and be drunken, and vomit and fall, and rise not on account of the sword which I send among you.

28 And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup from thine hand to drink, then shalt thou say to them, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, Drinking ye shall drink;

29 For behold, upon the city on which my name is called, I begin to bring evil, and shall ye be treated as innocent? ye shall not be treated as innocent; for I am calling for a sword on all the inhabitants of the earth, saith Jehovah.

30 Thou shalt also prophesy to them all these words, and say to them, --- Jehovah from on high shall roar, And from his holy habitation utter his voice; Roaring he shall

roar on his dwelling, A shout like that of vintagers shall he respond Against all the inhabitants of the earth:

31 Reach shall the sound to the extremity of the earth, For a contention has Jehovah with the nations, A dispute has he with all flesh; The wicked will he give to the sword, saith Jehovah.

32 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Behold, evil shall go forth from nation to nation, And a great tempest shall be raised From the extremities of the earth;

33 And the slain of Jehovah in that day shall be From one end to the other end of the earth: They shall not be lamented, nor gathered, nor buried; As dung on the face of the earth shall they be.

34 Howl, ye pastors, and cry, And roll [in the dust,] ye choice of the flock; For fulfilled are your days For the slaughter and your breakings; And ye shall fall like a precious vessel:

35 And perish shall flight from the pastors, And escape from the choice of the flock.

36 The voice of the cry of the pastors! And the howling of the choice of the flock! For destroyed has Jehovah their pastures;

37 Perished also are the peaceful tents, Through the indignation of the wrath of Jehovah.

38 He has left, as a lion, his tabernacle; For reduced is their land to a waste Through the wrath of the Oppressor, And through the indignation of his wrath.

Translation: Jeremiah 26

CHAPTER 26

1 In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, this word came from Jehovah, saying,

2 Thus saith Jehovah, Stand in the court of the house of Jehovah, and speak to all the cities of Judah, who come to worship in the Temple of Jehovah, all the words which I have commanded thee to speak to them; diminish not a word:

3 If peradventure they will hear, and turn, each from his evil way, then will I repent of the evil which I think of doing to them on account of the wickedness of their doings.

4 Thou shalt then say to them, Thus saith Jehovah, If ye will not hear me to walk in my law, which I have set before you,

5 To hearken to the words of my servants the prophets, whom I send to you, rising up

6 Early and sending, (but ye have not hearkened,) then will I make this house like Shiloh, and this city will I make a curse to all the nations of the earth.

7 And the priests, and the prophets, and all the people heard Jeremiah speaking these words in the house of Jehovah.

8 And it was when Jeremiah had finished speaking all that Jehovah had commanded him to speak to all the people, that the priests, and the prophets, and all the people apprehended him, saying, ``Dying thou shalt die;

9 Why hast thou prophesied in the name of Jehovah, saying, `Like Shiloh shall this house be, and this city shall be desolate without, an inhabitant?''' (And all the people were assembled against Jeremiah in the Temple of Jehovah.)

10 And the princes of Judah heard of these things, and went down from the king's house to the house of Jehovah, and sat at the entrance of the new gate of the Temple of Jehovah.

11 Then said the priests and the prophets to the princes, and to all the people, saying, ``This man is worthy of death; for he has prophesied against this city as ye

have heard with your ears.''

12 And Jeremiah said to all the princes, and to all the people, saying, --- Jehovah hath sent me to prophesy against this house, and against this city all the words which ye have heard:

13 And now make good your ways and your doings, and obey the voice of Jehovah your God, and Jehovah will repent of the evil which he hath pronounced against you.

14 And as for me, behold I am in your hand; do to me as may seem good and right in your eyes:

15 But know assuredly, that if ye slay me, ye will bring innocent blood on yourselves, and on this city, and on its inhabitants; for in truth Jehovah hath sent me to you, to speak all these words in your ears.

16 And the princes, and all the people said to the priests and the prophets, ``This man is not worthy of death; for in the name of Jehovah our God hath he spoken to us.''

17 Then rose up men from the elders of the land, and said to the whole assembly of the people, saying, ---

18 Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah the king of Judah, saying, --- ``Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Sion as a field shall be plowed, And Jerusalem shall become heaps, And the mount of the house like the heights of the forest.''

19 Killing, did Hezekiah the king of Judah, and all Judah, kill him? did he not fear Jehovah? and did he not supplicate the face of Jehovah? and Jehovah repented of the evil which he had spoken against them: but we are doing a great evil against our own souls.

20 But there was also a man who prophesied in the name of Jehovah, Uriah the son of Shemaiah, from Kirjath-jearim; and he prophesied against this city, and against this land according to all the words of Jeremiah:

21 When the King Jehoiakim and all the chief men and the princes heard his words, then the king sought to slay him; but Uriah heard and feared, and he fled and went into Egypt.

22 And the King Jehoiakim sent men into Egypt, even Elnathan the son of Achbor, and men with him into Egypt:

23 And they brought Uriah up from Egypt, and brought him to the King Jehoiakim, who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people.

24 Nevertheless the hand of Ahikam the son of Shaphan was with Jeremiah, so that he was not delivered into the hand of the people to be slain.

Translation: Jeremiah 27

CHAPTER 27

1 In the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, this word came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, ---

2 Thus said Jehovah to me, Make for thee bands and yokes, and put them on thy neck;

3 Then send them to the king of Edom, and to the king of Moab, and to the king of the children of Ammon, and to the king of Tyre, and to the king of Sidon, by the hand of the ambassadors, who shall come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah the king of Judah:

4 And thou shalt give them a message to their masters, saying, --- Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Thus shall ye say to your masters, ---

5 I made the earth, man also and beast, Which are on the face of the earth, By my great power and my extended arm; And given it have I to whom it seemed good to me:

6 And now given have I all these lands Into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar The king of Babylon, my servant; And also the beast of the field Have I given to him to serve him:

7 And serve him and his son, And his son's son, shall all nations, Until the time of his land shall come, And also of himself; yea, serve him Shall many nations and great kings.

8 And it shall be as to the nation and kingdom, Who will not serve him, even Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, And who will not put their neck Under the yoke of the king of Babylon, With the sword, and famine, and pestilence, Will I visit that nation, saith Jehovah, Until I consume them by his hand.

9 And you, hearken not to your prophets, And to your diviners, and to your dreamers, And to your augurs, and to your sorcerers, Who speak to you, saying, --- ``Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon;''

10 For they prophesy falsely to you, That they might move you far from your own

land, And that I might cast you away and ye perish:

11 But the nation which shall bring its neck Under the yoke of the king of Babylon and serve him, I will leave it in its own land, saith Jehovah; And it shall cultivate it and dwell in it.

12 To Zedekiah also, the king of Judah, I spoke according to all these words, saying, --- Bring your neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, And serve him and his people, and ye shall live.

13 Why should ye perish, thou and thy people, By the sword, and famine, and pestilence, As Jehovah has spoken of the nation, Which will not serve the king of Babylon:

14 And hearken not to the words of the prophets, Who speak to you, saying, --- ``Ye shall not serve the king of Babylon;'' For falsely do they prophesy to you;

15 For I have not sent them, saith Jehovah, But they prophesy in my name falsely, That I might drive you out, And that ye might perish, ye, And the prophets who prophesy to you.

16 To the priests also and to all the people spake I, saying, --- Thus saith Jehovah, --- Hearken not to the words of your prophets, Who prophesy to you, saying, --- ``Behold, the vessels of the house of Jehovah Shall now soon be restored from Babylon;'' For falsehood do these prophesy to you:

17 Hearken ye not to them; Serve the king of Babylon and ye shall live; Why should this city become a desolation?

18 But if they be prophets, And if the word of Jehovah be with them, Let them now intercede with Jehovah of hosts, That the vessels which remain in the house of Jehovah, And in the house of the king of Judah, And in Jerusalem, may not go to Babylon.

19 For thus saith Jehovah of hosts of the pillars, and of the sea, and of the bases, and of the residue of the vessels which are left in this city,

20 Which Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon did not take away, when he led captive Jeconiah the king of Judah from Jerusalem to Babylon, and all the nobles of Judah and Jerusalem;

21 yea, thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, of the vessels which remain in the house of Jehovah, and in the house of the king, and in Jerusalem;

22 To Babylon shall they be carried, and there shall they be until the day in which I shall visit them, saith Jehovah, and bring them up and restore them to this place.

Translation: Jeremiah 28

CHAPTER 28

1 And it was in that year, at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah the king of Judah, in the fourth year, in the fifth month, that Hananiah the son of Azur the prophet, who was of Gibeon, spoke to me in the Temple of Jehovah, in the presence of the priests, and of all the people, saying,

2 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon.

3 Further, when two years shall pass, I will restore to this place all the vessels of the house of Jehovah which Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon has taken away from this place and carried to Babylon:

4 And Jeconiah the son of Jehoiakim the king of Judah, and all the captives of Judah, who have gone to Babylon, will I restore to this place, saith Jehovah; for I have broken the yoke of the king of Babylon.

5 Then Jeremiah the prophet said to Hananiah the prophet, in the presence of the priests and in the presence of all the people, who were standing in the house of Jehovah;

6 Yea, Jeremiah the prophet said, Amen, may Jehovah do so, may Jehovah confirm thy words which thou hast prophesied as to the restoration of the vessels of the temple, and of all the captives from Babylon to this place.

7 Nevertheless, hear thou now this word which I declare in thy hearing, and in the hearing of all the people;

8 The prophets who have been before me and before thee from the beginning, and prophesied against many nations and great kingdoms, have prophesied of war, and of evil, and of pestilence:

9 The prophet who prophesies of peace, when the word shall come to pass, that prophet shall be known that Jehovah has sent him in truth.

10 Then Hananiah the prophet took the band from the neck of Jeremiah the

prophet and broke it;

11 And Hananiah spake in the presence of all the people, saying, --- Thus saith Jehovah, In this manner will I break off the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon from the neck of all the nations. And the prophet Jeremiah went his way.

12 And the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah, after Hananiah the prophet broke off the yoke from the neck of Jeremiah the prophet, saying, ---

13 Go and speak to Hananiah, saying, Thus saith Jehovah, Thou hast broken the bands of wood; but make for thee instead of them bands of iron:

14 For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, A yoke of iron have I laid on the neck of all these nations, that they may serve Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and they shall serve him; and I have also given to him the beasts of the field.

15 Jeremiah the prophet said also to Hananiah the prophet, Hear, I pray, Hananiah; Jehovah hath not sent thee, and thou hast made this people to trust in falsehood:

16 Therefore, thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will cast thee away from the face of the earth; die shalt thou this year, because thou hast spoken revolt against Jehovah.

17 And Hananiah the prophet died in that year, in the seventh month.

Translation: Jeremiah 29

CHAPTER 29

1 These are the words of the epistle which Jeremiah the prophet sent from Jerusalem to the residue of the elders of the captivity, and to the priests, and to the prophets, and to the whole people, whom Nebuchadnezzar had led away captive from Jerusalem to Babylon,

2 After Jeconiah the king, and the queen had gone forth, and the chief men, the princes of Judah and Jerusalem, the artificers also, and the engravers, from Jerusalem, ---

3 By the hand of Elasah the son of Shaphan, and of Gemariah the son of Hilkiah, (whom Zedekiah the king of Judah had sent to Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, to Babylon,) saying, ---

4 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, to the whole captivity whom I have led captive from Jerusalem to Babylon, ---

5 ``Build ye houses, and inhabit them; plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them;

6 Take wives, and beget sons and daughters; Take also wives for your sons, And give your daughters in marriage to husbands, And let them bear sons and daughters; And increase there and be not diminished:

7 And seek the peace of the city, To which I have removed you; And pray for it to Jehovah, For in its peace shall be your peace.''

8 For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, --- Let not your prophets who are in the midst of you, Nor your diviners, deceive you; And attend not to your dreams which ye dream:

9 For they falsely prophesy to you in my name; I have not sent them, saith Jehovah.

10 For thus saith Jehovah, --- For when completed in Babylon Shall be seventy years, I will visit you, And will rouse up for you my good word, That I may bring you back to this place:

11 For I know my thoughts, Which I think of you, saith Jehovah, --- Thoughts of peace and not of evil, To give you the end and the expectation.

12 And ye shall call on me and go forward; And pray to me, and I will hear you:

13 And ye shall seek me, and shall find me; Because ye will seek me with the whole heart.

14 And I will be found by your saith Jehovah, And will restore your captivity, And will gather you from all nations, And from all places, where I have driven you, Saith Jehovah, and I will bring you back To the place whence I have expelled you.

15 As ye have said, ``Raise for us will Jehovah prophets in Babylon;''

16 Therefore thus saith Jehovah to the king who sits on the throne of David, and to the whole people who dwell in this city, to your brethren who have not gone forth with you into exile, --- thus saith Jehovah of hosts, ---

17 Behold, I will send upon them the sword, The famine, and the pestilence, And will make them like worthless figs, Which, being so bad, cannot be eaten:

18 Yea, I will pursue them with the sword, The famine, and the pestilence, And will set them for a commotion To all the kingdoms of the earth, For a curse and for an astonishment, And for a hissing and for a reproach, Among all the nations to whom I shall drive them;

19 Because they hearkened not to my words, saith Jehovah, Which I sent to them by my servants the prophets, Rising up early and sending; And ye hearkened not, saith Jehovah.

20 Hear ye also the word of Jehovah, the whole captivity, whom I have sent from Jerusalem to Babylon;

21 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, concerning Ahab the son of Kolaiah, and concerning Zedekiah the son of Maaseiah, who prophesy to you in my name a lie, --- Behold, I will deliver them into the hand Of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, And he shall kill them before your eyes:

22 And taken from them shall be a curse By all the captivity of Judah in Babylon, saying, --- ``Let Jehovah make thee like Zedekiah and Ahab, Whom the king of Babylon burnt in the fire:''

23 Because they have done villainy in Israel, And prostituted the wives of their friends, And spoke a word in my name falsely, Which I had not commanded them; But I know, and am witness, saith Jehovah.

24 And as to Shemaiah, the Nehelamite, thou shalt thus say, ---

25 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, --- Because thou hast sent in my name letters to the whole people, who are at Jerusalem, and to Zephaniah, the son of Maaseiah, the priest, and to all the priests, saying, ---

26 Jehovah hath made thee a priest in the room of Jehoiada the priest, that ye might be the rulers of the house of Jehovah over every one that is insane and prophesies, that thou mightest put him in prison and in manacles:

27 And thou --- wherefore hast thou not reproved Jeremiah, the Anathothite, who prophesies to you?

28 Even because he hath sent to us in Babylon, saying, --- ``Long is the time, build ye houses and inhabit them;

29 Plant gardens and eat the fruit of them.'' (Now Zephaniah had read this letter in the ears of Jeremiah the prophet:)

30 Therefore the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah, saying, ---

31 Send to the whole captivity, saying, --- Thus saith Jehovah of Shemaiah the Nehelamite; Because Shemaiah has prophesied to you, When I had not sent him, And has made you to trust in falsehood;

32 Therefore thus saith Jehovah, --- Lo I will visit Shemaiah the Nehelamite and his seed; There shall not be to him a man To dwell in the midst of this people; And he shall not see the good, Which I shall do to my people, saith Jehovah; Because he has spoken rebellion against Jehovah.

Translation: Jeremiah 30

CHAPTER 30

1 The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, ---

2 Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, saying, --- Write thee all the words which I have spoken to thee in a book;

3 For, be- hold, the days are coming, saith Jehovah, when I shall restore the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith Jehovah; and I will restore them to the land which I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it.

4 Even these are the words which Jehovah hath spoken of Israel and Judah, ---

5 Surely thus saith Jehovah, --- A voice of trembling have we heard, Of fear and not of peace.

6 Ask and see, can a male bring forth? Why have I seen all men With their hands on their loins as a woman in travail? Turned also are all faces into paleness.

7 Alas! for great that day, none like it, Even a time of distress to Jacob; Yet from it shall he be saved:

8 And it shall be in that day, saith Jehovah of hosts, That I will break the yoke from thy neck, And thy bands will I burst asunder, And no more force thee to serve shall strangers;

9 But serve shall they Jehovah their God, And David their king, whom I will raise up for them.

10 And thou Jacob my servant, fear not, saith Jehovah, And be not thou, Israel, afraid; For behold I will save thee from far, And thy seed from the land of their captivity, And dwell shall Jacob, and rest, and be secure, And none shall terrify him:

11 For I shall be with thee, saith Jehovah, to save thee; For I will make an end of all the nations, Among whom I shall scatter thee; Yet of thee I will not make an end: But I will chastise thee in moderation, And I will not wholly cut thee off.

12 For thus saith Jehovah, Grievous thy bruise, desperate thy wound!

13 No one undertakes thy cause; For a cure, medicines and healing thou hast not.

14 All thy friends forget thee, they ask not for thee; For with the stroke of an enemy have I struck thee, With the chastisement of the cruel, On account of the multitude of thine iniquity, Because prevailed have thy sins.

15 Why criest thou because of thy bruise? Heavy is thy sorrow: For the multitude of thine iniquity. Because thy sins have prevailed, Have I done these things to thee.

16 Therefore, all who devour thee shall be devoured, And all thine enemies shall go into captivity, And they who plunder thee shall become a plunder, And all who spoil thee shall be a spoil:

17 For I will bring a healing to thee, And from thy wounds will I heal thee, saith Jehovah; Because an outcast have they called thee, Sion, Whom no one careth for.

18 Thus saith Jehovah, --- Behold, I will restore the captivity of Jacob's tents, And his dwellings will I pity; And built shall be the city on its heaps, And the palace in its own place shall stand:

19 And go forth from them shall praise and the voice of joy; And I will increase them, and they shall not be lessened; And I will honor them, and they shall not be degraded;

20 And his children shall be as at the beginning, And his assembly before me shall be established, And I will visit all his oppressors:

21 And his valiant man shall be from himself, And his ruler from his midst shall come forth; And I will bring him nigh, and he shall come to me; For who is he who forms his heart, That he may come to me, saith Jehovah!

22 And ye shall be my people, and I will be your God.

23 Behold as a tempest shall Jehovah's wrath go forth, As an involving tempest; On the head of the ungodly shall it settle:

24 Not return shall the fury of Jehovah's wrath, Till he performs it, and till he effects the thoughts of his heart; In the latter days ye shall understand this.

Translation: Jeremiah 31

CHAPTER 31

1 At that time, saith Jehovah, Will I be a God to all the families of Israel; And they shall be my people.

2 Thus saith Jehovah, --- Found favor in the desert Hath a people who had escaped the sword, By advancing till he gave rest to Israel.

3 Of old Jehovah appeared to me: Nay, with perpetual love have I loved thee; Therefore have I prolonged to thee mercy.

4 I will yet build thee, And built shalt thou be, virgin of Israel; Thou shalt yet be adorned with thy tabrets, And go forth with the choir of players;

5 Thou shalt yet plant vineyards On the mountains of Samaria; Plant shall planters and eat the fruit.

6 For the day shall be, when they shall cry, The watchmen, on Mount Ephraim, --- ``Arise, and let us ascend into Sion, To Jehovah our God.''

7 For thus saith Jehovah, --- Exult for Jacob with joy, And shout at the head of the nations, Publish, give thanks, and say, ``Save, Jehovah, thy people, the remnant of Israel.''

8 Behold, I will bring them from the land of the north, And gather them from the ends of the earth; Among them shall be the blind and the lame, The pregnant, and she that travaileth; Together a great company shall they return thither.

9 With weeping shall they come, And in mercies will I lead them; I will lead them to streams of water, In a straight way, where they shall not stumble: For I will be to Israel a father, And Ephraim, my first-born is he.

10 Hear the word of Jehovah, ye nations, And tell it in islands afar off, and say, --- ``He who scattered Israel will gather him, And will watch him as a shepherd his flock:''

11 For redeem Jacob will Jehovah, And free him from the hand of one stronger than himself;

12 And come shall they, and shout on the height of Sion; And flow together shall they to the bounty of Jehovah, For corn and wine and oil, And for the young of the flock and the herd; And their soul shall be as a watered garden, And they shall mourn no more.

13 Then rejoice shall the virgin in the dance, And the youth and the aged together; And I will turn their mourning to joy, And comfort them and cheer them after their sorrow;

14 And I will fill the soul of the priests with fatness, And my people with my goodness shall be satiated, saith Jehovah.

15 Thus saith Jehovah, --- A voice on high is heard, The lamentation of bitter weeping; Rachel, weeping for her children, Refused comfort for her children, because they are not,

16 Thus saith Jehovah, Hold thy voice from weeping, And thine eyes from tears; For a reward shall be to thy work, saith Jehovah, And return shall they from the land of the enemy:

17 Yea, there will be a hope in the latter end, saith Jehovah; For return shall thy children to their own border.

18 Hearing I have heard Ephraim when exiled, --- ``Thou hast chastised me, and I was instructed, Like a bullock not trained; Turn thou me, and I shall be turned, For thou, Jehovah, art my God.

19 Verily, after thou hadst turned me, I repented; And after I knew myself, I smote my thigh; I was ashamed and even confounded, Because I bore the reproach of my youth.''

20 Is Ephraim a son dear to me --- Is he a son delighted in Even from the time I spoke to him? Remembering I will still remember him; Therefore sounded for him have my bowels; Pitying I pitied him, saith Jehovah.

21 Set up titles for thee, raise for thee heaps,: Fix my heart on the pathway, On the way thou hast walked; Return, virgin of Israel, return to these thy cities.

22 How long wilt thou wander, rebellious daughter! For create does Jehovah a new thing on the earth --- A woman shall surround a man.

23 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, --- They shall again say this word in the land of Judah, And in the cities, when I restore their captivity, --- ``Bless thee let Jehovah, The habitation of righteousness, the mount of holiness.''

24 And dwell in it shall Judah and all his cities, Also husbandmen, and they shall go with the flock:

25 For I will water the thirsty soul, And every hungry soul will I fill.

26 I then awoke and saw, And my sleep had been sweet to me.

27 Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, That I will sow the house of Israel and the house of Judah, With the seed of man and with the seed of beast:

28 And it shall be, that as I have watched over them, To root up and to break down, And to break in pieces and to destroy and to afflict; So will I watch over them, To build and to plant, saith Jehovah.

29 In those days they shall no more say, --- Our fathers have eaten a sour grape, And the children's teeth are blunted;

30 But every man, in his iniquity shall he die; Every man, eating a sour grape, Blunted shall be his teeth.

31 Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, That I will make with the house of Israel, And with the house of Judah, a new covenant:

32 Not according to the covenant I made With their fathers, in the day I took their hand, To bring them out from the land of Egypt; Because void have they made that covenant, Though I ruled over them, saith Jehovah.

33 But this is the covenant which I will make With the house of Israel, after those days, saith Jehovah, --- I will put my law in their inward parts, And on their heart will I write it; And I will be to them a God, And they shall be to me a people:

34 And teach shall no one any more his neighbor, And no one his brother, saying, --- ``Know ye Jehovah;'' for all shall know me, From the least to the greatest of them, saith Jehovah; For I will forgive their sins, And their iniquities will I remember no more.

35 Thus saith Jehovah, --- He who hath set the sun for light by day, And the courses of the moon and stars for light by night, Who moves the sea and its waves roar, --- Jehovah of hosts is his name:

36 If removed shall be these ordinances From my presence, saith Jehovah, Then also the seed of Israel shall cease To be a nation before me continually:

37 Thus saith Jehovah, --- If measured can be the heavens above, Or searched the foundations of the earth below, Then also will I reject the whole seed of Israel For all that they have done, saith Jehovah.

38 Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, That built shall be the city of Jehovah From the tower of Hananeel to the corner gate;

39 And go forth shall the measuring line from before it, Even to the hill Gareb, and surround Goatha,

40 And all the valley of carcasses and ashes, And all the fields to the brook Kedron, Even to the corner gate of the horses eastward: Being holiness to Jehovah, it shall not be cut off, Nor destroyed any more for ever.

Translation: Jeremiah 32

CHAPTER 32

1 The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah in the tenth year of Zedekiah, king of Judah; this was the eighteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar:

2 And then the army of the king of Babylon besieged Jerusalem, and Jeremiah the prophet was shut up in the court of the prison, which was in the palace of the king of Judah;

3 For Zedekiah king of Judah had shut him up, saying, Why hast thou prophesied, saying, --- ``Thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I deliver this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he wilt take it:

4 And Zedekiah, king of Judah, shall not escape from the hand of the Chaldeans; for delivering I will deliver him into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes;

5 And to Babylon will he bring Zedekiah, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith Jehovah: when ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper.''

6 And Jeremiah said, the word of Jehovah came to me, saying, ---

7 Behold, Hanameel, the son of Shallum thine uncle, will come to thee and say, ``Buy thee my field which is in Anathoth, for thine is the right of affinity to buy.''

8 And Hanameel, my uncle's son, came to me, as Jehovah had spoken, into the court of the prison, and said, ``Buy, I pray thee, my field which is in Anathoth, which is in the land of Benjamin, for thine is the right of inheritance, and thine the redemption; buy it for thyself.'' Then I knew that it was the word of Jehovah;

9 And I bought the field from Hanameel, my uncle's son, who was in Anathoth, and I weighed money to him, seven shekels and ten pieces of silver:

10 When I had written in a book and sealed it, and had taken witnesses and weighed the money in a balance;

11 Then I took the book of the purchase, the sealed according to the law and statute, and the open;

12 And gave the book of the purchase to Baruch, the son of Neriah, the son of Maaseiah, before the eyes of Hanameel, my uncle's son, and before the eyes of the witnesses who were written in the book of the purchase, and before the eyes of all the Jews who sat in the court of the prison;

13 And I commanded Baruch in their presence, saying,

14 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Take these books, the book of purchase, the sealed and the open book, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue for many days;

15 For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, They shall again buy houses and fields and vineyards in this land.

16 And I prayed to Jehovah, after I gave the book of the purchase to Baruch, the son of Neriah, saying, ---

17 ``Ah! Lord Jehovah! behold thou hast made the heavens and the earth by thy great power and by thine extended arm;

18 There is nothing difficult for thee: thou shewest mercy to thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of fathers into the bosom of their children after them:

19 God, strong, mighty! Jehovah of hosts is his name; great in counsel, mighty in work, whose eyes are open on all the ways of the children of men, to render to every one according to his ways and according to the fruit of his doings;

20 Who hast wrought signs and wonders in the land of Egypt even to this day, and in Israel and among men; and hast made thyself a name as at this day;

21 And hast brought forth thy people Israel from the land of Egypt by signs and wonders, and with a strong hand and an extended arm, and with great terror;

22 And hast given them this land, which thou didst swear to their fathers to give them, a land flowing with milk and honey;

23 And they entered in and possessed it, but they have not hearkened to thy voice nor walked in thy law; all that thou hast commanded them to do they have not done; therefore hast thou made all this evil to befall them.

24 ``Behold, the mounts have come to the city to take it, and the city is given to the hand of the Chaldeans, who war against it by means of the sword, the famine, and the pestilence; and what thou hast spoken has happened; and behold thou seest it.

25 Yet thou, Lord Jehovah, hast said to me, Buy thee the field for money, and make witnesses to attest, when yet the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans.''

26 And the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah, saying, ---

27 Behold, I Jehovah, am the God of all flesh, Will anything be hard for me?

28 Therefore thus saith Jehovah, Behold I give this city into the hand of the Chaldeans and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take it;

29 And enter in shall the Chaldeans who war against the city, and shall set this city on fire and burn it, and the houses on the roofs of which they have burned incense to Baal, and poured out libations to alien gods, in order to provoke me.

30 For the children of Israel and the children of Judah have been only doing evil before me from their childhood; for the children of Israel have been only provoking

me by the work of their hands, saith Jehovah.

31 For to provoke my wrath and my indignation has this city been to me from the day they built it to this day, to cause me to remove it from my presence,

32 For all the evil of the children of Israel and of the children of Judah, which they have done to provoke me to wrath, --- they, their kings, their princes, their priests and prophets, and the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

33 For they turned to me the back and not the face; and when I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, they hearkened not so as to receive correction:

34 And they have set their abominations in the house on which my name is called, to pollute it;

35 And have built high places to Baal, which are in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to cause their sons and their daughters to pass to Molech, which I commanded them not, nor did it come to my mind, to do this abomination so as to make Judah to sin.

36 And now, therefore, thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, concerning this city of which ye say, ``Given it is into the hand of the king of Babylon, by the sword, and famine, and pestilence;''

37 Behold I will gather them from all the lands to which I shall have driven them in my wrath, and fury, and great indignation, and will restore them to this land, and make them dwell in safety;

38 And they shall be to me a people, and I will be to them a God.

39 And I will give them one heart and one way that they may fear me continually, that it may be well with them and with their children after them;

40 And I will make with them a perpetual covenant, so as not to depart from them to do them good; and my fear will I put in their hearts, that they may not depart from me;

41 And I will rejoice over them in doing them good, and will plant them in this land in truth, with all my heart, and with all my soul.

42 For thus saith Jehovah, As I have brought on this people all this great evil, so will I bring on them all the good which I have declared concerning them:

43 And bought shall be fields in this land of which ye say, ``Forsaken it is by man and beast, and given into the hand of the Chaldeans.''

44 Fields with money shall they buy, writing in a book and sealing, and attesting by witnesses, in the land of Benjamin, and through the circuits of Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, and in cities on the mountains, and in cities on the plains, and in the cities of the south; for I will restore their captivity, saith Jehovah.

Translation: Jeremiah 33

CHAPTER 33

1 And the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah a second time, when he was as yet a captive in the court of the prison, saying, ---

2 Thus saith Jehovah that made it, Jehovah who formed it to establish it? Jehovah is his name, ---

3 Call to me and I will answer thee, And declare to thee great things And hidden things which thou knowest not,

4 For thus, saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, --- As to the houses of this city, And as to the houses of the kings of Judah, Which have been thrown down By the warlike engines and by the sword;

5 They come to fight with the Chaldeans, Even to fill them (houses) with the carcasses of men, Whom I have smitten in my wrath and indignation. And because I hid my face from this city On account of all its wickedness, ---

6 Behold I will bring to it restoration and healing. And I will heal them and open for them An abundance of peace and truth;

7 And I will restore the captivity of Judah And the captivity of Israel, And build them as at the beginning;

8 And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, By which they have sinned against me, And will forgive all their iniquities, By which they have sinned against me, And by which they have acted wickedly towards me:

9 And it shall be for me a name of joy, A praise and glory, among all nations of the earth, Who shall hear of all the good which I shall do to them, And fear shall they and tremble for all the good And all the peace which I shall give them.

10 Thus saith Jehovah, --- Yet heard in this place, of which ye say --- ``Desolate it is, without man and without beast Even in the cities of Judah And in the streets of Jerusalem, Which are reduced to solitude, without man, And without an inhabitant, and without a beast,'' ---

11 Shall be the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, The bridegroom's voice and the voice of the bride, The voice of them who say, ``Praise Jehovah of hosts, For good is Jehovah, for his mercy is for ever,'' --- Of them who shall bring the sacrifice of praise Into the house of Jehovah; For I will restore the captivity of the land As at the first, saith Jehovah.

12 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- There shall yet be in this place, Desolate, without man and beast, And in all its cities, the habitation Of shepherds making their flock to lie down:

13 In the cities of the mountain and the cities of the plain, And in the cities of the south and in the land of Benjamin, And around Jerusalem, and in the cities of Judah, Shall sheep yet pass under the hands Of a numberer, saith Jehovah.

14 Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, That I will confirm my good word, Which I have spoken to the house of Israel, And to the house of Judah:

15 In those days and at that time I will make to grow to David a branch of righteousness, And he will do judgment and righteousness in the land.

16 In those days saved shall be Judah, And Jerusalem shall dwell in safety; And this is the name by which she shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness.

17 For thus saith Jehovah, --- Not fail to David shall a man To sit on the throne of the house of Israel;

18 And to the priests, the Levites, not fail shall a man, To offer before me burnt-offerings, To burn an oblation and to sacrifice continually.

19 And the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah, saying, ---

20 Thus saith Jehovah, If void ye can make My covenant as to the day, And my covenant as to the night, That the day and night should not be in their seasons;

21 Then void shall be made my covenant With David my servant, That he should have no son to reign on his throne, And with the Levites, the priests, my ministers.

22 As the hosts of the heavens cannot be numbered, Nor the sand of the sea be measured; So will I multiply the seed of David my servant, And of the Levites my ministers.

23 And the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah, saying, --- Hast thou not seen how this people speak, saying, --- ``There are two families whom Jehovah has chosen, But he has rejected them;''

24 And my people have they despised, So as no more to regard them as a nation.

25 Thus saith Jehovah, If I have not settled My covenant with the day and the night, And the laws of the heavens and the earth, Then I will reject the seed of Jacob And of David my servant, So as not to take of his seed to be rulers Over the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob: For I will restore their captivity And will shew mercy to them.

Translation: Jeremiah 34

CHAPTER 34

1 The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, when Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, and his whole army, and all the kingdoms of the earth, which were under his dominion, and all the nations, made war against Jerusalem and all the cities, saying, ---

2 Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Go and say to Zedekiah, the king of Judah, yea, say to him, Thus saith Jehovah, Behold I deliver this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire;

3 And thou shalt not be saved from his hand, for thou shalt surely be taken, and into his hands shalt thou be delivered, and thine eyes shall see the eyes of the king of Babylon, and his mouth shall speak to thy mouth, and to Babylon shalt thou go.

4 Yet hear the word of Jehovah, thou Zedekiah king of Judah; Thus saith Jehovah of thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword;

5 In peace shalt thou die, and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings, who were before thee, so shall they burn thee, and, ``Ah! Lord!'' shall they lament for thee: for the word have I spoken, saith Jehovah.

6 And Jeremiah the prophet spake to Zedekiah king of Judah all these words in Jerusalem,

7 When the armies of the king of Babylon were fighting against Jerusalem and all the cities of Judah, which remained, even Lachish and Azekah; for these remained of the cities of Judah, being fortified cities.

8 The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, after King Zedekiah made a covenant with all the people, who were in Jerusalem, to proclaim liberty to them, ---

9 That every one should let his servant and every one his maid, a Hebrew and a Hebrewess, go free, so that no one among the Jews might make his brother to serve.

10 And hear did all the princes and all the people, who had come to the covenant to let each his servant and each his maid go free, so as not to make them any more

to serve, and they obeyed and dismissed them.

11 But they changed afterwards, and remanded their servants and maids whom they had set free, and forced them to be servants and maids.

12 Then came the word of Jehovah to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, ---

13 Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, --- I made a covenant with your fathers in the day when I brought them from the land of Egypt, from the house of servants, saying, ---

14 At the end of seven years ye shall let free every one his brother, and Hebrew, who had been sold to thee and served thee six years, yea, thou shalt let him depart free from thee; but your fathers hearkened not to me nor inclined their ear.

15 But ye have turned this day and have done what is right in mine eyes, by proclaiming liberty, every one to his neighbor, and ye have made a covenant before me in the house on which my name is called.

16 But ye have gone back and have profaned my name, and ye have remanded every one his servant and every one his maid, whom ye had set free to follow their own will, and forced them to be servants and maids.

17 Therefore, thus saith Jehovah, Ye have not hearkened to me in proclaiming liberty, every one to his brother and every one to his neighbor; behold, I proclaim as to you, saith Jehovah, liberty to the sword, to the pestilence, and to the famine; and I will give you for a commotion to all the kingdoms of the earth;

18 Yea, I will give the men who have transgressed my covenant, who have not confirmed the words of the covenant which they had made before me by the calf which they cut into two parts, and passed between its parts,

19 Even the princes of Judah and the princes of Jerusalem, the chiefs and the priests and all the people, who passed between the parts of the calf;

20 Yea, I will give them into the hand of their enemies and into the hand of those who seek their life; and their carcasses shall be food for the birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth;

21 And Zedekiah king of Judah and his princes will I give into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of those who seek their life, even into the hand of the king of Babylon's army, which have gone up from you.

22 Behold, I will command, saith Jehovah, and will make them to return to this city; and they shall take it and burn it with fire, and make the cities of Judah a waste without an inhabitant.

Translation: Jeremiah 35

CHAPTER 35

1 The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, in the days of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, saying, ---

2 Go to the house of the Rechabites, and speak to them, and bring them into the house of Jehovah, into one of the chambers, and give them wine to drink.

3 Then I took Jaazaniah, the son of Jeremiah, the son of Habaziniah, and his brethren, and all his sons, even the whole house of the Rechabites;

4 And brought them into the house of Jehovah, into the chamber of the sons of Hanan, the son of Igdaliah, a man of God, which was nigh the chamber of the princes, which was above the chamber of Maaseiah, the son of Shallum, the keeper of the treasury;

5 And I set before the sons of the house of the Rechabites pots full of wine and cups; and I said to them, Drink wine.

6 But they said, We will not drink wine, for Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, commanded us, saying, Ye shall not drink wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever;

7 And houses ye shall not build, nor sow seed, nor plant, a vineyard, nor have any such thing; but ye shall dwell in tents all your days; that ye may live many days in the land where ye are strangers.

8 And we have obeyed the voice of Jonadab the son of Rechab, our father, as to all the things which he commanded us, that we should not drink wine all our days, we, our wives, our sons, and our daughters;

9 Nor build houses to dwell in, nor have a vineyard, or a field, or seed;

10 But we have dwelt in tents, and have obeyed, and done according to all things which Jonadab our father hath commanded us.

11 But it was that, when Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, came up into the land, we then said, Come, let us enter into Jerusalem from the face of the army of the Chaldeans, and from the face of the army of the Syrians; and we have dwelt in

Jerusalem.

12 Then came the word of Jehovah to Jeremiah, saying, ---

13 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Go and tell the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction, so as to obey my words? saith Jehovah:

14 Confirmed are the words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, which he commanded his sons, that they should not drink wine, for they have drunk none to this day, but they have obeyed the commandment of their father: but I have spoken to you, rising up early and speaking, yet ye have not obeyed me;

15 And I have sent to you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending, saying, Return, I pray you, every one from his evil way, and make right your doings, and walk not after foreign gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye inclined not your ear nor obeyed me.

16 Because the sons of Jonadab the son of Rechab have performed the command of their father, which he had commanded them, while this people have not obeyed me, ---

17 Therefore thus saith Jehovah, the God of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring on Judah, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, all the evil which I have pronounced against them; for I have spoken to them, and they have not hearkened; and I have called them, but they have not answered.

18 And to the house of the Rechabites Jeremiah said, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Because ye have obeyed the command of Jonadab your father, and have kept all his commandments, and have done according to all the things which he had commanded you;

19 Therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, There shall not fail a man from Jonadab the son of Rechab to stand before me continually.

Translation: Jeremiah 36

CHAPTER 36

1 And it was in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, that this word came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, saying, ---

2 Take thee a roll of a book and write in it all the words which I have spoken to thee concerning Israel and concerning Judah, and concerning all the nations, from the day in which I have spoken to thee, from the days of Josiah, even to this day.

3 It may be that the house of Judah will attend to all the evil which I purpose to do to them, so that they may return, every one from his evil way, and that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.

4 And Jeremiah called Baruch, the son of Neriah: and Baruch wrote from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of Jehovah, which he had spoken to him, in a roll of a book.

5 And Jeremiah commanded Baruch, saying, I am shut up, I cannot go to the house of Jehovah;

6 But go thou and read in the roll what thou hast written from my mouth, the words of Jehovah, in the ears of the people, in the house of Jehovah, on a fast day; and also in the ears of all Judah, who come from their cities shalt thou read them.

7 It may be that they will prostrate themselves before Jehovah, and return every one from his evil way; for great is the indignation, and great is the wrath which Jehovah has spoken against this people.

8 And Baruch the son of Neriah did according to all the things which Jeremiah the prophet had commanded him, reading in the book the words of Jehovah in the house of Jehovah.

9 And it was that in the fifth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, in the ninth month, they proclaimed a fast before Jehovah to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people who came from the cities of Judah to Jerusalem.

10 And Baruch read in the book the words of Jeremiah in the house of Jehovah, in

the chamber of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan the scribe, in the higher court, at the entrance of the new gate of the house of Jehovah, in the ears of all the people.

11 And Micah the son of Gemariah, the son of Shaphan, heard all the words of Jehovah from the book;

12 And he went down to the king's house, to the scribe's chamber; and, lo, all the princes were sitting there, Elishama the scribe, and Delaiah the son of Shemaiah, and Elnathan the son of Achbor, and Gemariah the son of Shaphan, and Zedekiah the son of Hananiah, and all the princes.

13 And Micah declared to them all the words which he had heard when Baruch read in the book in the ears of the people.

14 And all the princes sent Jehudi the son of Nethaniah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Cushi, unto Baruch, saying, The roll in which thou didst read in the ears of the people, take in thine hand and come: and Baruch the son of Neriah, took the roll in his hand and came to them.

15 And they said to him, Sit down now, and read it in our ears.

16 And it was that when they heard all the words, they feared every one as to his neighbor, and said to Baruch, Declaring we shall declare to the king all these words.

17 And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words from his month?

18 And Baruch said to them, With his mouth he pronounced these words to me, and I wrote them on a book with ink.

19 Then the princes said to Baruch, Go and hide thyself, thou and Jeremiah, and let no one know where ye be.

20 And they went to the king into the court, but laid up the volume in the chamber of Elishama the scribe; and they related all the words in the ears of the king;

21 And the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll, and he took it out of the chamber of Elishama the scribe: and Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes who stood before the king.

22 And the king was sitting in the winter-house, in the ninth month, and there was a fire-hearth burning before him:

23 And it was that when Jehudi had read three or four pages, he cut it with a penknife, and cast it into the fire which was in the fire-hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire which was in the fire-hearth.

24 But neither the king nor any of his servants feared, nor rent their garments, when they heard all these words.

25 Nevertheless Elnathan, and Delaiah, and Gemariah, interceded with the king, that he should not burn the roll; but he hearkened not to them.

26 And the king commanded Jerahmeel the son of Hammelech, and Seraiah the son of Azriel, and Shelemiah the son of Abdeel, to take Baruch the scribe, and Jeremiah the prophet: but Jehovah hid them.

27 Then came the word of Jehovah to Jeremiah, after the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch had written from the mouth of Jeremiah, saying, ---

28 Take thee again another roll, and write in it all the former words which were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim, the king of Judah hath burned:

29 And to Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, shalt thou say, Thus saith Jehovah, Thou hast burned this book, saying, Why hast thou written in it, saying, The king of Babylon shall surely come and shall destroy this place, and cause to cease from it man and beast?

30 Therefore thus saith Jehovah concerning Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, He shall have none to sit on the throne of David; and his dead body shall be cast forth to the heat by day, and to the frost by night;

31 And I will visit on him and on his seed, and on his servants, their iniquity; and I will bring on them, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and on the men of Judah, all the evil which I have denounced on them: but they hearkened not.

32 Then Jeremiah took another roll and gave it to Baruch, the son of Neriah, the scribe, who wrote in it from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim, the king of Judah, had burnt in the fire; and added to them were many words of the same kind.

Translation: Jeremiah 37

CHAPTER 37

1 And king Zedekiah, the son of Josiah, reigned instead of Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim, whom Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, made king in the land of Judah:

2 But neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, hearkened to the words of Jehovah, which he spake by the Prophet Jeremiah.

3 And king Zedekiah sent Jehucal, the son of Shelemiah, and Zephaniah, the son of Maaseiah the priest, to Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Pray now to Jehovah our God for us.

4 Now Jeremiah came in and went out among the people, and they had not yet put him in the house of the prison;

5 And the army of Pharaoh had come forth from Egypt, and the Chaldeans besieging Jerusalem had heard of them and had gone from Jerusalem.

6 Then the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah the Prophet, saying, ---

7 Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, Thus shall ye say to the king of Judah, who sent you to me to inquire of me, Behold, the army of Pharaoh, which has come forth for your aid, shall return to the land of Egypt;

8 And the Chaldeans shall return and fight against this city, and take it and burn it with fire.

9 Thus saith Jehovah, Deceive not yourselves, saying, Going the Chaldeans shall go away from us, for they shall not go away.

10 For were you to smite the whole army of the Chaldeans, who fight against you, and there remained of them wounded men, they would rise up, each from his tent, and burn this city with fire

11 And it was that after the army of the Chaldeans had gone up from Jerusalem because of Pharaoh's army,

12 Jeremiah went forth from Jerusalem, to go to the land of Benjamin, that he

might withdraw himself there among the people.

13 When he was at the gate of Benjamin, the captain of the ward was there, whose name was Irijah, the son of Shelemiah, the son of Hananiah, who laid hold on Jeremiah the prophet, saying, Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans:

14 And Jeremiah said, It is false, I am not falling away to the Chaldeans; but he did not hearken to him. And Irijah laid hold on Jeremiah and brought him to the princes.

15 And the princes were incensed against Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in the house of prison, in the house of Jonathan the scribe, for they made that the house of prison.

16 When Jeremiah came into the dungeon and into the cells, and had been there many days,

17 Then Zedekiah the king sent and took him out; and the king asked him privately and said, Is there a word from Jehovah? and Jeremiah said, There is: and he hath said, Into the hand of the king of Babylon shall thou be delivered.

18 And Jeremiah said to King Zedekiah, What sin have I done against thee and thy servants and this people, that ye have delivered me into the house of prison?

19 And where are your prophets who have prophesied to you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you nor against this land?

20 And now hear, I pray thee, O lord my king; let my humble prayer be acceptable to thee, cause me not to return into the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I should die there.

21 And King Zedekiah commanded, and they put Jeremiah in the court of the prison, and gave him a crust of bread daily, from the street of the bakers, until all the bread of the city was consumed: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

Translation: Jeremiah 38

CHAPTER 38

1 And Shephatiah, the son of Mattan, and Gedaliah, the son of Pashur, and Jucal, the son of Shelemiah, and Pashur, the son Malchiah, heard the words which Jeremiah had spoken to all the people, saying, ---

2 Thus saith Jehovah, He who remains in this city shall die by the sword, famine, or pestilence; but he who goeth forth to the Chaldeans shall live; and his life shall be to him a prey, and he shall live.

3 Thus saith Jehovah, Behold, this city shall surely be delivered into the hand of the army of the king of Babylon, and they shall take it.

4 And the princes said to the king, Let this man, we pray thee, die; for he thus weakens the hands of the men of war who remain in this city, and the hands of the people, by speaking to them according to these words: for this man seeketh not the peace of this people but their ruin.

5 And King Zedekiah said to them, Behold, he is in your hands, for the king can do nothing against you.

6 And they took Jeremiah and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah, the son of Hammelech, which was in the court of the prison; and they let Jeremiah down with cords; and there was no water in the dungeon, but mire, and Jeremiah sunk in the mire.

7 Now Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, an eunuch, heard that they had east Jeremiah into the dungeon; and the king was sitting in the gate of Benjamin;

8 And Ebedmelech went forth from the king's house and spake to the king, saying,

9 O lord my king, these men have acted wickedly, in all that they have done to Jeremiah the Prophet, in throwing him into the dungeon, where if left alone he must die with hunger; for there is no more bread in the city.

10 Then the king commanded Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, saying, Take with thee hence thirty men, and bring up Jeremiah the Prophet from the dungeon before he

die.

11 And Ebedmelech took the men with him, and went into the king's house, even to a place under the store-room, and took from thence rags torn and worn out, and let them down by cords to Jeremiah in the dungeon.

12 And Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, said to Jeremiah, Put now these torn and worn-out rags under thine arm-holes under the cords. And Jeremiah did so.

13 Then they drew up Jeremiah by the cords, and raised him up from the dungeon; and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.

14 And King Zedekiah sent and took Jeremiah the Prophet with him to the third entrance, which is in the house of Jehovah; and the king said to Jeremiah, ``I ask thee a word; hide not a word from me.''

15 And Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, If I tell thee, slaying, wilt thou not slay me? and if I give thee counsel thou wilt not hearken to me.

16 And Zedekiah the king swear to Jeremiah in secret, saying, Live doth Jehovah, who made us this soul, I will not slay thee, and I will not deliver thee unto the hand of those who seek thy life.

17 Then Jeremiah said to Zedekiah, Thus saith Jehovah, the God of hosts, the God of Israel, If going thou wilt go forth unto the chiefs of the king of Babylon, live shall thy life, and this city shall not be burned with fire, but live shalt thou and thy house:

18 But if thou wilt not go forth to the chiefs of the king of Babylon, delivered shall be this city into the hand of the Chaldeans, and burn it shall they with fire, and thou shalt not escape from their hand.

19 And King Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, I fear the Jews who have gone over to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hands and reproach me.

20 Then Jeremiah said, They will not deliver thee: hearken, I pray thee, to the voice of Jehovah which I announce to thee, and it shall be well with thee, and live shall thy soul:

21 But if thou refuse to go forth, this is the word which Jehovah has shewn to me, ---

22 Behold, even all the women who remain in the house of the king of Judah, shall go forth to the chiefs of the king of Babylon; and behold, they shall say, ``Persuaded thee and prevailed over thee have thy familiar friends; fixed are thy feet in the mire, turned backward.''

23 And all thy wives and thy children shall they bring out to the Chaldeans, and thou shalt not escape from their hand, for by the hand of the king of Babylon shalt thou be taken, and this city wilt thou burn with fire.

24 Then Zedekiah said to Jeremiah, Let no man know of these words, and thou shalt not die:

25 But if the princes hear that I have spoken with thee, and come to thee and say to thee, Tell us now what thou hast spoken to the king, hide nothing from us, and we will not kill thee, and what the king hath said to thee;

26 Then shalt thou say to them, I humbly prayed the king that he would not make me to return to the house of Jonathan to die there.

27 And all the princes came to Jeremiah and asked him; and he told them accord-

ing to those words which the king had commanded; and they said no more, for the conversation had not been heard.

28 And Jeremiah dwelt in the court of the prison to the day when Jerusalem was taken: and it happened according to what he had said that Jerusalem was taken.

Translation: Jeremiah 39

CHAPTER 39

1 In the ninth year of Zedekiah, the king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon and

2 All his army to Jerusalem, and besieged it; in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, on the ninth of the month, the city was broken into;

3 And all the chiefs of the king of Babylon entered and sat in the middle gate, even Nergal-sharezar, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim, Rab-saris, Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, and the rest of the chiefs of the king of Babylon.

4 And it was that when Zedekiah, the king of Judah, and all the men of war, saw them, they fled and went forth from the city by night, by the way of the king's garden, through the gate between the two walls, and went forth by the way of the desert.

5 But the army of the Chaldeans pursued them, and took Zedekiah in the desert of Jericho; and they took him and brought him to Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, to Riblah, in the land of Hamath, and he dealt judicially with him.

6 And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah at Riblah before his eyes; and all the nobles of Judah did the king of Babylon slay:

7 And he blinded the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with chains, to bring him to Babylon.

8 And the house of the king, and the houses of the people, the Chaldeans burned with fire, and the walls of Jerusalem they pulled down:

9 But the residue of the people who had remained in the city, and the deserters who had gone over to him, even the residue of the people who had been left, Nebuzar-adan, the prince of the executioners, removed to Babylon.

10 But the poor of the people, who had nothing, Nebuzar-adan, the prince of the executioners, left in the land of Judah, and gave them in that day vineyards and fields.

11 Now Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had given a charge respecting

Jeremiah by Nebuzar-adan, the prince of the executioners, saying,

12 Take him, and set thine eyes on him, and do him no harm; but as he shall say to thee do thou to him.

13 And Nebuzar-adan, the prince of the executioners, sent, and Nebushasban, Rab-saris and Nergal-sharezar, Rab-mag, and all the chiefs of the king of Babylon,

14 Yea, they sent and took Jeremiah from the court of the prison, and delivered him to Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, to lead him home; and so he dwelt among the people.

15 But the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah when he was yet shut up in the court of the prison, saying,

16 Go and speak to Ebedmelech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold I bring my words on this city for evil and not for good; and they shall be before thy face that day:

17 But I will deliver thee in that day, saith Jehovah, and thou shalt not be delivered into the hand of the men, the face of whom thou fearest;

18 For I will surely rescue thee, by the sword thou shalt not fall, and thy life shall be for a prey to thee, because thou hast trusted in me, saith Jehovah.

Translation: Jeremiah 40

CHAPTER 40

1 The word which came to Jeremiah from Jehovah, after Nebuzar-adan, the prince of the executioners, had let him go from Ramah, when he had taken him; for he had been bound with chains among all the captivity of Jerusalem and Judah, who were carried away to Babylon.

2 But the prince of the executioners took Jeremiah, and said to him, ---

3 Jehovah thy God hath spoken this evil as to this place: and Jehovah hath brought it and done as he had spoken, because ye have sinned against Jehovah and hearkened not to his voice; therefore hath this evil come upon you.

4 Now, as to thee, be- hold, I have loosed thee this day from the chains which were on thine hands; if it be good in thine eyes to come to Babylon, come, and I will set mine eyes on thee; but if it be evil in thine eyes to come to Babylon, forbear: behold, the whole land is before thee; according to what is good and right in thine eyes to go, thither go.

5 (And he had not yet returned,) return then to Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath set over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people, or go to whatever place it seemeth good in thine eyes to go. And the prince of the executioners gave him meat and a reward, and dismissed him:

6 And Jeremiah went to Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, to Mizpah, and dwelt with him among the people who had been left in the land.

7 When all the princes of the forces who were in the field, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had set Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, over the land, and that he had committed to him men, and women, and children, and the poor of the land, who had not been removed to Babylon;

8 Then came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth; and Ephai the

Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men.

9 And Gedaliah, the son of Shaphan, swear to them and to their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans, but submit yourselves and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you:

10 And I, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to stand before the Chaldeans who may come to us; and gather ye wine, and summer-fruits, and oil, and put into your vessels, and dwell in the cities which ye have taken.

11 When also all the Jews which were in Moab, and among the children of Ammon, and in Edom, and those in all countries, heard that the king of Babylon had dismissed a remnant of Judah, and had set over them Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan;

12 Then all the Jews came from all those places whither they had been driven, yea, they came to the land of Judah, unto Gedaliah, to Mizpah; and they gathered wine and summer-fruits in great abundance.

13 And Johanan, the son of Kareah, and all the leaders of the forces, who had been in the field, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, and said to him:

14 ``Knowing, dost thou know that Baalis, the king of the children of Ammon, hath sent Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, to smite thy life?'' But Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, believed them not.

15 And Johanan, the son of Kareah, said privately to Gedaliah in Mizpah, saying, I will now go and will smite Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, and no one shall know: why should he smite thy life, and all Judah, who are gathered unto thee, be dispersed, and the remnant of Judah perish?

16 But Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, said to Johanan, the son of Kareah, By no means do this thing; for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael.

Translation: Jeremiah 41

CHAPTER 41

1 And it happened in the seventh month that Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the royal seed, and the chiefs of the king, even ten men, came with him to Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, to Mizpah, and did eat bread there together in Mizpah.

2 Then Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, rose up, and the ten men who were with him, and smote Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, with the sword; yea, they slew him whom the king of Babylon had set over the land:

3 And the Jews who were with him, even with Gedaliah, in Mizpah, and the Chaldeans who were found there, men of war, did Ishmael smite.

4 And it was the following day, after he had killed Gedaliah, and no man knew it,

5 That men came from Shechem, and from Shiloh, and from Samaria, fourscore, having their heads shaven, and their garments rent, and having cut themselves, with an oblation and incense, to offer them in the house of Jehovah.

6 And Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, went out from Mizpah to meet them, walking along and weeping; and it was that when he met them, he said to them, Come to Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam.

7 And it was that when they had come to the midst of the city, Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, slew them, nigh the middle of the trench, he and the men who were with him.

8 But ten men were found among them who said to Ishmael, Slay us not; for we have hidden stores in the field, wheat, and barley, and oil, and honey; and he forbare, and slew them not among their brethren.

9 Now the trench into which Ishmael cast all the carcasses of the men whom he had smitten along with Gedaliah, was that which King Asa had made on account of Baasha, the king of Israel; this did Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, fill with the slain.

10 Then Ishmael took captive all the remnant of the people who were in Mizpah,

even the king's daughters, and all the people who had been left in Mizpah, whom Nebuzar-adan, the prince of the executioners, had committed to the care of Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam; yea, Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, took them and went, that he might pass over to the children of Ammon.

11 But Johanan, the son of Kareah, and all the leaders of the forces who ere with him, heard of all the evil which Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, had done;

12 And they took all the men, and went forth to right with Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, and found him at the great waters which are in Gibeon.

13 And it was that when all the people who were with Ishmael saw Johanan, the son of Kareah, and all the leaders of the forces who were with him, they rejoiced:

14 And all the people whom Ishmael had taken captive from Mizpah, turned, and returned, and went with Johanan, the son of Kareah;

15 But Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, escaped with eight men from Johanan, and went to the children of Ammon.

16 And Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the leaders of the forces who were with him, took all the remnant of the people whom he had recovered from Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, from Mizpah, after he had smitten Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, strong men, men of war, and women, and children, and eunuchs, whom he had recovered from Gibeon;

17 And they went and dwelt in Geruth-Chimham, which is near Bethlehem, that they might proceed to enter into Egypt,

18 On account of the Chaldeans, for they feared them, because Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, had smitten Gedaliah, whom the king of Babylon had set over the land.

Translation: Jeremiah 42

CHAPTER 42

1 Then came near all the leaders of the forces and Johanan, the son of Kareah, and Jezaniah, the son of Hoshaiah, and all the people, from the least to the greatest,

2 And said to Jeremiah the prophet, --- Let our petition, we pray thee, be acceptable to thee; pray now for us to Jehovah thy God in behalf of this remnant, for we are left a few out of many, as thine eyes see us;

3 And let Jehovah thy God shew us the way in which we are to walk, and the thing which we are to do.

4 And Jeremiah said to them, I have heard; behold, I will pray to Jehovah your God according to your words; and it shall be that whatsoever word Jehovah shall answer you, I will declare it to you; I will hide nothing from you.

5 Then they said to Jeremiah, Let Jehovah be between us a faithful and true witness, except we do according to all the words which Jehovah thy God shall send to us:

6 Whether good or evil, the voice of Jehovah our God, for which we send thee to him, will we obey: for well will it be with us, when we obey the voice of Jehovah our God.

7 And it was that at the end of ten days the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah;

8 And he called Johanan, the son of Kareah, and all the leaders of the forces, who were with him, and all the people, from the least to the greatest;

9 And said to them, --- Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, to whom you sent me to lay humbly your prayer before him,

10 If dwelling ye will dwell in this land, then will I build you and not pull you down, and plant you and not pluck you up; for I repent of the evil which I have brought on you.

11 Fear not the face of the king of Babylon, whose face ye do fear; fear him not, saith Jehovah, for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand;

12 And I will shew mercies to you, and he will have mercy on you, and cause you to dwell in your own land.

13 But if ye say, We will not dwell in this land, nor obey the voice of Jehovah your God,

14 Saying, No, but to the land of Egypt will we go, where we shall not see war, and the sound of the trumpet we shall not hear, and for bread we shall not hunger, and there will we dwell.

15 Now, therefore, hear the word of Jehovah, ye remnant of Judah, for thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, If setting ye set your face to enter into Egypt, and ye go there to sojourn,

16 Then it shall be that the sword which ye fear, shall overtake you there, even in the land of Egypt, and the famine which ye dread shall lay hold on you there, even in the land of Egypt, and there ye shall die:

17 And all the men who have set their faces to go into Egypt to sojourn there, shall die by the sword, or by famine, or by pestilence; and not one of them shall remain or escape from the evil which I shall bring on them.

18 For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, As my wrath and mine indignation have been poured out on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so mine indignation shall be poured out on you when ye go into Egypt: and ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach; and ye shall no more see this place.

19 Jehovah hath spoken against you, ye remnant of Judah: go not into Egypt; knowing, know ye that I have made a protest to you this day.

20 For ye deceived your own souls, when ye sent me to Jehovah your God, saying, Pray for us to Jehovah our God, and according to all that Jehovah our God shall say, so declare to us and we will do so.

21 And I have declared to you this day, but ye have not hearkened to the voice of Jehovah your God, and according to all the things for which he hath sent me to you.

22 And now knowing, know ye, that by the sword and by famine and by pestilence shall ye die in the place to which ye desire to go, that ye may sojourn there.

Translation: Jeremiah 43

CHAPTER 43

1 And it was that when Jeremiah had finished to speak to all the people all the words of Jehovah their God, for which Jehovah their God had sent him to them all, even for these words,

2 Then Azariah, the son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan, the son of Kareah, and all the proud men, said, speaking to Jeremiah, Falsehood dost thou speak; Jehovah our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not to Egypt to sojourn there;

3 But Baruch, the son of Neriah, rouses thee against us, to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, to slay us and to remove us to Babylon.

4 So Johanan, the son of Kareah, and all the leaders of the forces and the whole people, did not hearken to the voice of Jehovah, to dwell in the land of Judah:

5 But Johanan, the son of Kareah, and all the leaders of the forces, took the remnant of Judah, who had returned from all the nations, to which they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah,

6 Even the men, and the women, and the children, and the king's daughters, and every soul which Nebuzar-adan, the prince of the executioners, had left with Gedaliah, the son of Ahikam, the son Shaphan, and with Jeremiah the prophet, and with Baruch, the son of Neriah;

7 And they went into the land of Egypt; for they did not obey the voice of Jehovah; and they came as far as Tahpanhes.

8 And the word of Jehovah came to Jeremiah in Tahpanhes, saying, ---

9 Take in thine hand great stones, and hide them in the clay in the brick-kiln, which is by the gate of Pharaoh's house in Tahpanhes, in the sight of the men of Judah;

10 And thou shalt say to them, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will send and bring Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne on these stones, which I have hid, and he shall spread his tent

over them;

11 And he shall come and smite the land of Egypt, those for death to death, and those for captivity to captivity, and those for the sword to the sword;

12 And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt, and he shall burn them and carry them away captive, and roll up the land of Egypt as a shepherd rolls up his garment; and he shall go forth thence in peace:

13 And he shall break in pieces the statues of Beth-shemesh, which is in the land of Egypt; and the houses of the gods of Egypt shall he burn with fire.

Translation: Jeremiah 44

CHAPTER 44

1 The word which came to Jeremiah concerning all the Jews who dwelt in the land of Egypt, who dwelt at Migdol and at Tahpanhes, and at Memphis, even in the land of Pathros, saying, ---

2 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, ye have seen all the evil which I have brought on Jerusalem and on all the cities of Judah; and behold they are a waste this day, and no one dwells in them,

3 Because of the wickedness which they had done to provoke me, by going to burn incense and to serve foreign gods, whom they had not known, neither they nor their fathers:

4 And I sent to them all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending, saying, Do not, I pray you, the thing of this abomination, which I hate;

5 But they hearkened not, nor inclined their car to turn from their wickedness and not to burn incense to foreign gods.

6 Then my indignation and my wrath were poured out and were kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, and they became a waste as at this day.

7 And now, thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Why do ye this great evil against your own souls, to cut off from you man and woman, child and suckling, even from the midst of Judah, so as to leave you no remnant remaining,

8 To provoke me by the works of your hands, by burning incense to foreign gods in the land of Egypt, to which ye are gone to dwelt there, that ye may be cut off, and that ye may be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth?

9 Have ye forgotten the evils of your fathers and the evils of the kings of Judah, and the evils of their wives, and your own evils, and the evils of your wives, which they did in the land of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem:

10 And they have not humbled themselves to this day, nor have they feared, nor

walked in my law and in my statutes, which I had set before you and before your fathers.

11 Therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I set my face against you for evil, even to cut off all Judah;

12 And I will take the remnant of Judah, who have set their face to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed in the land of Egypt; they shall fall by the sword, by famine shall they be consumed, from the least to the greatest; by the sword and by famine shall they die, and they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach:

13 And I will visit them who dwell in Egypt, as I visited Jerusalem, with the sword, and famine, and pestilence.

14 And there shall be none to escape among the remnant of Judah who have come to sojourn here, even in the land of Egypt, and to return to the land of Judah on returning to which they set their minds to dwell there, for they shall not return except those who have escaped.

15 Then all the men answered Jeremiah, even they who knew that their wives burned incense to foreign gods, and all the women who stood by, a great company, and all the people who dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, saying, ---

16 As to the word which thou hast spoken to us in the name of Jehovah, we will not hearken to thee;

17 But we shall do whatsoever that goeth forth from our mouth, to burn incense to the frame-work of heaven, and to pour out libations to it, as we did, we and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, and we were satisfied with bread, and were happy, and saw no evil:

18 But from the time we left off to burn incense to the frame-work of heaven, and to pour out libations to it, we have been destitute of every- thing, and have been consumed by the sword and famine.

19 And when we burned incense to the frame-work of heaven, and poured out libations to it, did we without our men make cakes to it to worship it, and pour out libations to it?

20 Then said Jeremiah to all the people, to the men, and to the women, even to all the people who had returned to him the answer, saying, ---

21 The incense which ye burned in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, you and your fathers, your kings and your princes, and all the people of the land, hath not Jehovah remembered it?

22 And hath it not come to his mind? Nay, Jehovah could no longer bear you for the wickedness of your doings, for the abominations which ye did; and reduced is your land to a waste, and is become an astonishment and a curse, as it appears at this day:

23 Because ye burned incense and sinned against Jehovah, and hearkened not to the voice of Jehovah, nor walked in his law, and statutes, and testimonies, therefore hath this evil happened to you, as it appears at this day.

24 Jeremiah said again to all the people and to all the women, --- Hear the word of Jehovah, all ye Judah who are in the land of Egypt, ---

25 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, saying, Ye and your wives have spoken with your mouth and fulfilled with your hands, saying, Doing we shall do our vows which we have vowed, to burn incense to the frame-work of heaven and to pour out libations to it: confirming ye will confirm your vows, and doing ye will do your vows.

26 Therefore hear the word of Jehovah, all ye Judah who dwell in the land of Egypt, Behold, I have sworn by my great name, saith Jehovah, that my name shall no more be called upon by the mouth of any man of Judah, saying, ``The Lord Jehovah liveth in all the land of Egypt.''

27 Behold I will watch over them for evil and not for good, and consumed shall be all the men of Judah, who are in the land of Egypt, by the sword and by famine, until they be consumed:

28 And they who shall escape from the sword and return from the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, shall be few in number; and all the remnant of Judah, who have entered into the land of Egypt to dwell there, shall know whose word shall stand, mine or theirs.

29 And this shall be a sign to you, saith Jehovah, that I will punish you in this place, that ye may know that standing my words shall stand against you for evil, ---

30 Thus saith Jehovah, Behold, I will deliver Pharaoh-Hophra into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of those who seek his life, as I delivered Zedekiah, the king of Judah, into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, his enemy, and who sought his life.

Translation: Jeremiah 45

CHAPTER 45

1 The word which Jeremiah the prophet spake to Baruch, the son of Neriah, when he wrote these words in a book from the mouth of Jeremiah, in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah, saying, ---

2 Thus saith Jehovah, the God of Israel, concerning thee, O Baruch:

3 Thou hast said, Woe now to me! for Jehovah hath added grief to my sorrow; I am wearied with my sighing, and rest have I not found.

4 Thus shalt thou say to him, Thus saith Jehovah, Behold, what I builded I pull down, and what I planted I pluck up, even this whole land;

5 And seekest thou great things for thyself? seek not; for behold I am bringing evil on all flesh, saith Jehovah; and I will give thee thy life as a prey in all the places whither thou wilt go.

Translation: Jeremiah 46

CHAPTER 46

1 The word of Jehovah which came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning all the nations:

2 Of Egypt, concerning the army of Pharaoh-Necho, the king of Egypt, which was by the river Euphrates, at Carchemish, which Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, smote in the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the son of Josiah, the king of Judah:

3 Prepare ye the buckler and shield, And move on to battle;

4 Tie the horses, and go up, ye horsemen; Stand in your helmets, Brighten the lances, put on the coats of mail.

5 Why have I seen them broken, turned backward! Even their valiants have been smitten, And by flight have they fled and looked not back; Terror is on every side, saith Jehovah;

6 Let not the swift flee away, Nor the valiant escape: In the north, on the bank of the river Euphrates, Shall they stumble and fall.

7 Who is this that like a river riseth up, Like floods swelling, its waters!

8 Egypt like a river riseth up, And like floods swelling, its waters; For he saith, I will go up and cover the land, I will destroy the city and its inhabitants.

9 Go up, ye horses; toss, ye chariots; Go forth, ye the valiant; The Ethiopians and Lybians, who hold the shield, And the Lydians, who hold and stretch the bow.

10 But this is the day of the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, The day of vengeance, to avenge on his adversaries; And devour shall the sword and be satiated, And inebriated shall it be with their blood; For a sacrifice hath the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, In the land of the north, by the river Euphrates.

11 Go up to Gilead, and take rosin, Thou virgin, daughter of Egypt! In vain dost thou multiply medicines; There is no healing for thee.

12 Heard have the nations of thy disgrace, And by thine outcry filled is the earth; For the valiant against the valiant has stumbled, And both have fallen together.

13 The word which Jehovah spake to Jeremiah the prophet respecting the coming of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, to smite the land of Egypt:

14 Declare ye in Egypt, and publish in Migdol, Publish in Noph, in Tahpanhes say, --- Stand and prepare thyself, For devoured hath the sword those around thee.

15 How scattered are thy valiants! They stood not, for Jehovah hath driven them.

16 He hath multiplied; they stumbled, Yea, fell, each on his friend: And they said, ``Rise, and let us return To our people, and to the land of our nativity, From the face of the wasting sword.

17 They cried there, Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, Is a king of trouble; He hath passed over the set time.

18 Live do I, saith the king, Jehovah of hosts is his name; For as Tabor is in the mountains, And as Carmel is by the sea, so will he come.

19 Thy furniture of transmigration prepare, Thou inhabitant of Egypt; For Noph shall be a solitude, Yea, it shall be wasted, without an inhabitant.

20 A beautiful heifer is Egypt; Distress from the north cometh, it cometh.

21 Her mercenaries also in the midst of her Are like the bullocks of the stall; For these also shall turn their backs, They shall flee together, they shall not stand; For the day of calamity is come upon them, The time of their visitation.

22 Her voice shall be like that of the serpent; For with power shall they come, And with axes shall they come against her, Like hewers of wood.

23 Cut down shall they thy forest, saith Jehovah, That it may not be investigated; For they have multiplied more than locusts, And they are without number.

24 Ashamed is the daughter of Egypt, Delivered into the hand of the north people.

25 Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, hath said, Behold, I will visit the multitude of No, Pharaoh also, and Egypt, And her gods and her kings, Even Pharaoh and those who trust in him;

26 And I will give them into the hand Of those who seek their life, And into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, The king of Babylon, |And into the hand of his servants: But it shall afterwards be inhabited As in days of old, saith Jehovah.

27 But fear not thou, my servant Jacob, Nor be thou, Israel, broken in mind; For behold, I will save thee from far, And thy seed from the land of their captivity: Yea, return shall Jacob, and rest, And be secure, and none will terrify him.

28 Fear thou not, my servant Jacob, Saith Jehovah, for I am with thee; For I will make an end of all the nations To which I have driven thee; But of thee will I not make an end: Yet I will chastise thee in moderation, And will not wholly cut thee off.

Translation: Jeremiah 47

CHAPTER 47

1 The word of Jehovah which came to Jeremiah the prophet, concerning the Philistines, before Pharaoh smote Gaza:

2 Thus saith Jehovah, --- Behold, waters ascend from the north, And they shall be an overflowing flood, And shall overflow the land and all in it, The city and its inhabitants; And cry aloud shall all men, And howl shall every inhabitant of the land.

3 For the noisy sound of the hoofs of his steeds, For the commotion of his chariots, For the rumbling of his wheels, Not look shall fathers to their children, On account of the feebleness of their hands;

4 Because of the day which is come, To destroy all the Philistines, To cut off Tyre and Sidon, All the residue of their strength; For Jehovah lays waste the Philistines, The remnant of the island of Caphtor.

5 Come is baldness on Gaza, Destroyed is Ashkelon; The remnant of their valley! How long wilt thou rend thyself?

6 Ah! sword of Jehovah! How long wilt not thou rest? Hide thyself in thy scabbard, rest and be still.

7 How canst thou rest? since Jehovah Hath commanded it against Ashkelon, And against the shore of the sea; There hath he appointed it.

Translation: Jeremiah 48

CHAPTER 48

1 Concerning Moab: Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, --- Woe upon Nebo! for it is laid waste, Ashamed, taken is Kiriathaim; Ashamed is Misgab and dismayed.

2 No more shall be the boasting of Moab over Heshbon; They have consulted an evil against her, --- ``Come and let us cut her off from being a nation.'' Also Madmen, thou shalt be cut off, After thee shall go the sword.

3 The sound of a cry from Horonaim! A waste and great destruction!

4 Distressed is Moab; A cry have her little ones made to be heard.

5 For in the ascent to Luhith, With weeping shall ascend weeping; For in the descent to Horonaim, The enemies a cry of distress shall hear:

6 Flee ye, save your lives; And ye shall be as the juniper in the desert,

7 Therefore, because thy confidence Was in thy works and in thy treasures, Even thou shalt be taken: And go forth shall Chemosh into captivity, His priests and his princes together.

8 And come shall a waster to every city, Nor shall a city escape; Perish also shall the valley, And destroyed shall be the plain, As Jehovah hath spoken.

9 Give wings to Moab, For flying she shall fly, And her cities shall be a waste, That there will be none to inhabit them.

10 Cursed is he who doeth the work of Jehovah deceitfully, And cursed is he who restrains his sword from blood.

11 Quiet has been Moab from his childhood, And hath settled on his dregs, And hath not been changed from vessel to vessel, And to captivity he hath not gone: Therefore remained has his flavor in him, And his odor was not changed.

12 Therefore, behold, the days are coming, saith Jehovah, That I will send to him drivers, Who will drive him out; And his vessels will they empty, And his bottles will they scatter:

13 And ashamed will be Moab of Chemosh, As ashamed was the house of Israel of Bethel, The object of their confidence.

14 How say ye, ``We are valiant, and men strong for war:''

15 Wasted is Moab, and from his cities they have vanished, And his young men have descended to the slaughter, Saith the King, Jehovah of hosts is his name.

16 Nigh is the destruction of Moab to come, And her calamity greatly hastens. Be ye moved for him all who are around him, And all ye who know his name, say, --- ``How has the strong staff been broken, the beautiful rod!''

17 Come down from glory, and dwell in thirst, Thou inhabitant, the daughter of Dibon!

18 For the waster of Moab comes up against thee, The destroyer of thy fortresses.

19 On the way stand and look, Thou inhabitant of Aroer. Ask the fugitive, and her who has escaped, ``Say, what hath happened?''

20 Ashamed is Moab, for he is broken. Howl ye, and cry out, And proclaim in Arnon that Moab is laid waste.

21 Judgment also shall come on the plain country, On Holon, and on Jahazah, and on Mephaath,

22 And on Dibon, and on Nebo, and on Beth-diblathaim,

23 And on Kiriathaim, and on Beth-gamul, and on Beth-meon,

24 And on Kerioth, and on Bozrah, And on all the cities of the land of Moab, far and near

25 Cut, off is the horn of Moab, And his strength is broken, saith Jehovah.

26 Make him drunk, for against Jehovah hath he magnified him- self; And roll himself shall Moab in his own vomit; And he also shall be a derision;

27 For has not Israel been a derision to thee? Has he been found among thieves? For since thou hast spoken of him, thou hast been excited.

28 Leave the cities, and dwell in the rock, Ye inhabitants of Moab: And they shall be as a dove, Which makes a nest in the passages, Beyond the mouth of the cleft.

29 Heard have we of the pride of Moab; Very proud is his haughtiness, And his pride, and the loftiness of his heart.

30 I know, saith Jehovah, his insolence, And his lies are not stable they shall not do so

31 Therefore for Moab will I howl, And to all Moab will I cry aloud; I will mutter to the men of the city of potsherd.

32 With the weeping of Jazer Will I weep for thee, vine of Sibmah: Thy shoots have passed over the sea, Even to the sea came Jazer: On thy summer-fruits and on thy vintages Has fallen a waster.

33 And taken away shall be joy and exultation, From the fruitful field, from the land of Moab; And the wine from the presses will I make to cease: He will not tread with shouting, shouting, There will not be shouting.

34 At the cry of Heshbon, to Elealeh, to Jahaz, Will they send forth their voice, From Zoar to Horonaim; An heifer three years old is Moab; Verily even the waters of Nimrim shall be dried up.

35 And I will cause to cease from Moab, saith Jehovah, Him who offers on the high

place, And who burns incense to his gods

36 Therefore my heart for Moab Shall make a sound like pipes, And my heart for the men of the city of potsherd Like pipes shall make a sound; For the treasures he had made have perished.

37 For on every head shall be baldness, And to every beard, a shaving, And on all hands, incisions, and on loins, sackcloth.

38 On all the roofs of Moab, And in all her streets, shall be mourning altogether; For I will break Moab like a vessel In which there is no pleasure, saith Jehovah.

39 How Moab is broken! they will howl; How has he turned his back! he is ashamed: Yea, Moab is become a derision, And a terror to all around.

40 For thus saith Jehovah, --- Behold, as an eagle will he fly, And extend his wings over Moab:

41 Taken are the cities, the strongholds are seized, And the heart of the men of Moab shall be in that day As the heart of a woman in distress.

42 And broken shall Moab be, so as not to be a people, Because against Jehovah hath he exalted himself.

43 Terror, and the pit, and the snare, shall be on thee, Inhabitant of Moab, saith Jehovah:

44 He who flies from terror shall fall into the pit, And he who ascends from the pit shall be taken in the snare; For I will bring upon her, upon Moab, The year of their visitation, saith Jehovah.

45 Under the shadow of Heshbon shall they stand, Who from violence shall flee: But fire shall go forth from Heshbon, And a flame from the midst of Sihon; And it shall consume the corner of Moab, And the extremities of the sons of tumult.

46 Woe to thee, Moab! Perished have the people of Chemosh! For driven have been thy sons into captivity, And thy daughters into exile.

47 But I will restore the captivity of Moab In the latter days, saith Jehovah. Thus far the judgment of Moab.

Translation: Jeremiah 49

CHAPTER 49

1 Concerning the children of Ammon: Thus saith Jehovah, --- Hath Israel no children? hath he no heir? Why doth their king inherit Gad, And his people dwell in its cities?

2 Therefore, behold, the days are coming, saith Jehovah, That I will cause to be heard the trumpet of war At Rabbah, of the children of Ammon; And she shall be a heap of desolation, And her daughters shall be burned with fire, And possess his possessors shall Israel, saith Jehovah.

3 Howl thou, Heshbon, for laid waste is Ai; Cry aloud, ye daughters of Rabbah. Gird on sackcloth, lament, Run here and there by the fences; For their king, into captivity is he gone, And his priests and his princes with him.

4 Why gloriest thou in thy deep valleys? Flown down has thy valley, rebellious daughter! Who trusted in her hidden places, Saying, Who can come to me?

5 Behold, I will bring on thee terror, saith the Lord, Jehovah of hosts, from all around thee; And ye shall be driven out, each one before him, And there will be none to gather the dispersed.

6 But I will afterwards restore The captivity of the children of Ammon, saith Jehovah.

7 Concerning Edom: Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Is there not wisdom any more in Teman? Has counsel perished from the intelligent? Overflowing has been their wisdom!

8 Flee, ye inhabitants of Dedan, Who have turned and made deep your dwelling; For the ruin of Esau will I bring on him, At the time of his visitation.

9 If vintagers had come to thee, Would they not have left some grapes? If thieves in the night, would they not have destroyed What would suffice them?

10 But I will uncover Esau, I will disclose his hidden things, So that he cannot be concealed: Plundered shall be his seed, And his brethren and his neighbors; And he

shall be no more.

11 Leave thy orphans, I will nourish them; And thy widows, let them trust in me.

12 For thus saith Jehovah, --- Behold, those to whom it was not their judgment To drink the cup, shall surely drink, And shalt thou be exempted? Thou shalt not be exempted, For drinking thou shalt drink it.

13 For I have by myself sworn, saith Jehovah, That a waste, a reproach, a desert, And a curse, shall Bozrah become; And all her cities shall be perpetual wastes.

14 A hearing have we heard from Jehovah, And a messenger to the nations has been sent, --- ``Be ye gathered and come against her, And rise ye up to the battle.''

15 For behold, small made I thee among the nations, Contemptible among men:

16 Deceived thee has thy terror, the pride of thine heart; Thou who dwellest in the fissures of rocks, Who occupiest the heights of mountains: Though thou raisest high, as an eagle, thy nest, Thence will I draw thee down, saith Jehovah.

17 And Edom shall become a waste; Every one passing by her shall be astonished, And shall hiss on account of all her strokes.

18 As in the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah And of their neighboring cities, saith Jehovah, Dwell there shall no man, Nor shall a son of man abide there.

19 Behold, as a lion from the swelling of Jordan, Will he ascend to the habitation of strength: After having made him to rest, I will make him flee from her; And who is the chosen one whom I shall set over her? For who is as I am? And who will protest against me? And who is the shepherd that before me will stand?

20 Therefore, hear ye the counsel of Jehovah, Which he hath counseled against Edom, And his thoughts which he hath thought Against the inhabitants of Teman; Surely draw them forth shall the least of the flock, Surely destroyed over them shall be their dwellings.

21 At the sound of their fall, tremble shall the earth, The cry of their voice shall at the Red Sea be heard.

22 Behold, as an eagle will he ascend and fly, And will spread his wings over Bozrah; And the heart of the valiant men of Edom in that day Shall be like the heart of a sorrowful woman.

23 Concerning Damascus: Ashamed is Hamath and Arpad; Because they heard a bad report, they melt away, Like a turbulent sea which cannot rest.

24 Weakened is Damascus, she turns to flight, Terror hath laid hold on her, Anguish and pangs have seized her, As a woman in travail.

25 How is not forsaken the city of praise --- The city of my joy?

26 Yet fall shall her young men in her streets, And all the men of war shall be cut off In that day, saith Jehovah of Hosts.

27 For I will kindle a fire in the wall of Damascus, And it shall consume the palaces of Ben-hadad.

28 Concerning Kedar, and the kingdoms of Hazor, which Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had smitten: Thus saith Jehovah, --- Arise ye, ascend against Kedar, And destroy the children of the east.

29 Their tents and their flocks shall they take away, And their curtains and all their vessels; Their camels also shall they take to themselves, And they shall cry to

them, ``Terror is on every side.''

30 Flee ye, depart far away, (Though deep have they made to dwell The inhabitants of Hazor, saith Jehovah;) For consulted against you hath Nebuchadnezzar, The king of Babylon, a counsel, And he hath purposed against you a purpose.

31 Arise ye, ascend against a secure nation, That dwelleth in confidence, saith Jehovah; It hath neither gates nor bars, it dwelleth alone.

32 And their camels shall became a prey, And the abundance of their cattle a plunder; And I will scatter them to every wind, Even the utmost corners; And from all the sides thereof Will I bring their destruction, saith Jehovah.

33 And Hazor shall be the habitation of dragons, A perpetual desolation; Dwell there shall no man, Nor shall a son of man abide in her.

34 The word which came to Jeremiah, the prophet, against Elam, at the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah, the king of Judah, saying:

35 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Behold, I will break the bow of Elam, The chief part of their strength;

36 And I will bring against Elam four winds From the four quarters of the heavens; And I will scatter them to these four winds, And there shall not be a nation To which some fugitives from Elam shall not come.

37 For I will terrify Elam before their enemies, And before those who seek their life; And I will bring on them the evil Of the indignation of my wrath, saith Jehovah; And I will send after them the sword Until I shall have consumed them;

38 And I will erect my throne in Elam, And destroy thence the king and the princes, saith Jehovah.

39 But it shall be in the latter days That I will restore the captivity of Elam, saith Jehovah.

Translation: Jeremiah 50

CHAPTER 50

1 The word which Jehovah spoke concerning Babylon, concerning the land of the Chaldeans, by Jeremiah the prophet:

2 Tell ye among the nations, proclaim, Raise up also a banner, proclaim, conceal not; Say ye, ``Taken is Babylon, Confounded is Bel, broken is Merodach, Confounded are her images, broken are her idols.''

3 For ascend against her shall a nation from the north, Which will turn her land to a waste, So that there will be no dweller in it, man or beast; They have fled, they have departed.

4 In those days and at that time, saith Jehovah, Come shall the children of Israel And the children of Judah together; Going and weeping they shall come, And Jehovah their God will they seek.

5 To Sion will they ask the way, hither their faces, --- ``Come ye and let us join ourselves to Jehovah, By a perpetual covenant, not to be forgotten.''

6 A lost sheep have been my people; Their pastors have made them to wander; On the mountains they strayed, From mountain to hill they went, They forgot the place of their lying down.

7 All who found them devoured them, And their adversaries said, ``We sin not, Because they have sinned against Jehovah, The habitation of justice, And the hope of their fathers, even Jehovah.''

8 Flee ye from the midst of Babylon, And from Chaldea go forth, And be as he-goats before the flock.

9 For, behold, I will rouse and bring against Babylon, An assembly of great nations from the land of the north, And they shall set in order against her; Thence taken will she be; Their arrows, like those of a skillful valiant man, They shall not return in vain.

10 And Chaldea shall be a prey, And all who plunder her shall be satiated, saith Jehovah,

11 Surely ye rejoiced and exulted When ye plundered mine heritage; Ye became fat as a heifer well fed, And neighed like strong horses.

12 Ashamed greatly shall be your mother, Blush shall she who bare you; Behold, the last of nations shall she be, A desert, a waste, a solitude!

13 Because of the indignation of Jehovah She shall not be inhabited, And shall be an entire waste; All who pass by Babylon shall be astonished, And shall hiss for all her strokes.

14 Set in order against Babylon around; All ye who bend the bow, Shoot at her, spare not the arrows, For against Jehovah hath she sinned.

15 Cry ye aloud against her around; She hath given her hand, Fallen have her foundations, Demolished have been her walls, Because it is the vengeance of Jehovah; Vengeance take ye on her; as she has done, do to her.

16 Cut off the sower from Babylon, And him who handles the sickle in the time of harvest: From the face of the wasting sword Every one shall look to his own people, Every one to his own land shall flee.

17 A scattered flock hath Israel been, Lions have driven him out; The first who devoured him was the king of Assyria, And this last hath broken his bones, Even Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon.

18 Therefore thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel --- Behold, I will visit the king of Babylon and his land, As I visited the king of Assyria:

19 And I will restore Israel to his folds, And he shall feed on Carmel and Bashan, And on mount Ephraim and Gilead; And satisfied shall be his soul.

20 In those days and at that time, saith Jehovah, Sought will be the iniquity of Israel, and there will be none; And the sin of Judah, and it shall not be found: For I will pardon those whom I shall reserve.

21 On the land of the exasperating ascend, And against the inhabitants of visitation, Slay and destroy after them, saith Jehovah; And do all that I have commanded thee.

22 A sound of battle in the land and a great ruin!

23 Now has the hammer of the whole earth Been cut off and broken in pieces! How has Babylon become a waste among the nations!

24 I set a snare for thee, therefore taken wert thou, Babylon, though thou knewest not: Thou wept found, and hence taken, Because against Jehovah thou didst contend.

25 Opened hath Jehovah his treasure, And brought forth the instruments of his wrath; For this is the work of the Lord, the Jehovah of hosts, In the land of the Chaldeans.

26 Come ye against her from the extremity, Open her repositories, tread her as heaps, Destroy her wholly, that there may be to her no remnant.

27 Slay all her bullocks, Let them descend to the slaughter Woe to them, for their day is come, The time of their visitation.

28 The voice of these who flee and escape From the land of Babylon! To announce in Sion the vengeance of Jehovah our God, The vengeance of his temple.

29 Summon against Babylon the mighty, All who bend the bow; Besiege her

around, that there may be no escape; Render to her according to her work, According to all she has done, do ye to her; For against Jehovah has she acted proudly, Against the Holy One of Israel.

30 Therefore fall shall her young men in her streets, And all her men of war shall be destroyed In that day, saith Jehovah.

31 Behold, I am against thee, the proud one, Saith the Lord, the Jehovah of hosts; For come is thy day, the time of thy visitation.

32 And stumble shall the proud and fall, And there will be no one to raise him up; And I will kindle a fire in his cities, And it shall consume all round him.

33 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- Oppressed have been the children of Israel And the children of Judah together; And all who led them captives have prevailed against them, They have refused to let them go.

34 Their Redeemer is strong, Jehovah of hosts is his name, Their cause pleading he will plead, So as to destroy the land, And to make to tremble the inhabitants of Babylon.

35 A sword on the Chaldeans, saith Jehovah! And on all the inhabitants of Babylon! And on all her princes and on her wise men!

36 A sword on her diviners! and they shall become foolish; A sword on her valiant men! and they shall be terrified;

37 A sword on her horses! and on her chariots! And on her multitude, in the midst of her! They shall be as women; A sword on her treasures! and they shall be plundered;

38 A drought on her waters! and they shall be dried up: For it is the land of carved images, And in idols they glory.

39 Therefore dwell there shall wild birds with wild beasts, And dwell there shall the daughters of ostriches; And it shall not be inhabited any more for ever; It shall not be an habitation to all generations.

40 As in God's overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, And of their neighboring cities, saith Jehovah, Dwell there shall no man, For shall a son of man abide there.

41 Behold, a people cometh from the north, Even a great nation and many kings Shall be roused from the sides of the earth.

42 On the bow and the shield shall they lay hold, Cruel shall they be, and will shew no mercy; Their voice like the sea shall roar, And on horses shall they ride, Prepared as a man for battle Against thee, daughter of Babylon.

43 Heard has the king of Babylon a report of them, And feeble became his hands; Anxiety laid hold on him, And anguish, like a woman in travail.

44 Behold, as a lion from the swelling of Jordan Will he ascend to the strong habitation: After having made him to rest, I will make him flee from her; And who is the chosen one whom I shall set over her? For who is as I am? And who will protest against me? And who is the shepherd that before me will stand?

45 Therefore hear ye the counsel of Jehovah, Which he hath counseled against Babylon; And his thoughts which he has thought Against the land of the Chaldeans: Surely draw them forth shall the least of the flock, Surely destroyed over them shall be their dwellings.

46 At the sound of Babylon being taken, tremble shall the earth, And a cry among the nations shall be heard.

Translation: Jeremiah 51

CHAPTER 51

1 Thus saith Jehovah, --- Behold, I will raise a destroying wind against Babylon, And against boasters of wisdom, my adversaries;

2 And I will send against Babylon winnowers, And they shall winnow her and empty her land; For they shall be against her around in the day of evil.

3 As to him who bends the bow, And him who raises himself up in his coat of mail, --- Spare ye not her young men, Destroy all her army

4 And fall shall they wounded, in her land, And pierced through in her streets.

5 For not widowed is Israel, nor Judah By his God, by Jehovah of hosts: But rather their land is filled with sin On account of the Holy One of Israel.

6 Flee ye from the midst of Babylon, And save ye, every one his life, Lest ye perish in her iniquity; For it is the time of Jehovah's vengeance, A reward will he render to her

7 A golden cup has Babylon been In Jehovah's hand, inebriating the whole earth; From her wine have the nations drunk, Therefore have the nations become mad.

8 Suddenly has Babylon fallen, and is broken; Howl ye for her, take rosin for her wound, It may be that she can be healed!

9 We have tried to heal Babylon, But she was not healed; Leave her, and let us depart, Every one to his own land; For to the heavens has reached her judgment And has risen up to the clouds.

10 Brought forth has Jehovah our righteousness; Come ye and let us declare in Sion The work of Jehovah our God.

11 Polish the arrows, prepare the shields, Rouse will Jehovah the spirit of the kings of Media; For as to Babylon his thought is to destroy her. For it is Jehovah's vengeance, the vengeance of his temple.

12 On the wails of Babylon raise the standard, Increase the watch, set the watchmen, Set in order the ambushes: For as Jehovah has thought, so will he do What he

hath spoken concerning the inhabitants of Babylon.

13 Thou that dwellest among great waters, Who aboundest in treasures, Come is thine end, the measure of thy cupidity.

14 Sworn hath Jehovah by himself, --- Surely I will fill thee with men as with locusts, Who will shout over thee with the vintage-shouting, ---

15 (Even) he who made the earth by his power, Who hath constituted the world by his wisdom, And by his knowledge extended the heavens,

16 At whose voice there is abundance of waters in the heavens, Who raises vapors from the extremity of the earth, Who makes the lightnings and the rain, And brings out the wind from his treasures.

17 Infatuated is every man become by his knowledge, Put to shame shall be every founder by the graven image, For a lie is the molten image, And there is no breath in them:

18 Vanity are they, the work of illusions; At the time of their visitation they shall perish.

19 Not like these is the portion of Jacob; For the former of all things is He, And the rod of his inheritance is Israel; Jehovah of hosts is his name.

20 A hammer hast thou been to me, weapons of war; And by thee have I broken nations in pieces, And by thee destroyed kingdoms:

21 Yea, by thee have I broken in pieces The horses and their riders, And by thee have I broken in pieces The chariots and their riders2

22 And by thee have I broken in pieces Men and women, And by thee have I broken in pieces Old men and children, And by thee have I broken in pieces Young men and maidens,

23 And by thee have I broken in pieces The shepherds and their flocks, And by thee have I broken in pieces The husbandmen and their yokes of oxen, And by thee have I broken in pieces The captains and the rulers.

24 But I will render to Babylon And to all the inhabitants of Chaldea, All the evils which they have done in Sion, Before your eyes, saith Jehovah.

25 Behold, I am against thee, O destroying mountain, saith Jehovah, Which destroyest all the earth; And I will extend my hand over thee, And will roll thee down from the rocks, And will make thee a burnt mountain:

26 And they shall not take of thee a stone for a corner, Nor a stone for foundations; For perpetual wastes shalt thou be, saith Jehovah.

27 Raise a banner in the land, Sound a trumpet among the nations, Prepare the nations against her, Assemble against her the kingdoms of Ararat, Of Minni and of Ashkenaz; Set up against her a leader, Bring forth the horse as the horrible locust;

28 Prepare against her the nations, The kings of Media, her captains and her princes, And all the land of its dominion.

29 And tremble shall the land and be in pain, For confirmed as to Babylon shall be the thoughts of Jehovah: To set the land of Babylon a waste, So as to have no inhabitant.

30 Ceased have the valiant men of Babylon to fight, They sat down in their fortresses; Fail did their valor, they became women, Burnt were her dwellings, broken

her bars.

31 A runner to meet a runner ran, And a messenger to meet a messenger, To announce to the king of Babylon That taken was the city at its extremity;

32 And the fords were taken, And the pools were burnt with fire, And the men of war were broken in pieces.

33 For thus saith Jehovah of hosts, the God of Israel, --- The daughter of Babylon shall be like a threshing-floor, (Come will) the time of treading her; Yet a little while and come will her harvest.

34 Devoured me, broken me in pieces, Hath Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon; He hath set me an empty vessel, He hath swallowed me like a dragon, He hath filled his belly with my delicacies, He hath cast me off.

35 My plunder and my flesh be on Babylon, Shall the inhabitant of Sion say; My blood be on the inhabitants of Chaldea, Shall Jerusalem say.

36 Therefore thus saith Jehovah, --- Behold, I will plead thy cause, And avenge thy vengeance, For I will make dry her sea, And will dry up her fountain:

37 And Babylon shall become heaps An habitation of dragons, A wonder and a hissing, without an inhabitant.

38 They will roar as lions, They will roar as whelps of lions.

39 In their heat will I make their feasts, And make them drunk, that they may exult And sleep a perpetual sleep, And not awake, saith Jehovah.

40 I will bring them as lambs to the slaughter, As rams and he-goats.

41 How has Sheshach been taken! And captured, the praise of the whole land! How has Babylon become a waste among nations!

42 Come up over Babylon has the sea, With the multitude of its waves is she covered.

43 Her cities shall be a waste, And a land of desert, and a land of drought, Pass through it shall no man, And dwell in it shall no son of man.

44 And I will visit Bel in Babylon; And I will draw what he hath swallowed out of his month: And flow to him together shall nations no more: Even the wall of Babylon hath fallen.

45 Go out from the midst of her, my people, And save ye, every one his life, From the indignation of Jehovah's wrath.

46 And let not faint be your heart, And fear ye not the rumor heard in the land; Come in one year shall a rumor, And afterwards in another year, a rumor; --- And violence shall be in the land, And a ruler after a ruler.

47 Therefore, behold, the days are coming, That I will visit the images of Babylon; And her whole land shall be ashamed, And all her slain, they shall fall in the midst of her.

48 And rejoice over Babylon shall heaven and earth, And all the things that are in them; When from the north shall come to her Destroyers, saith Jehovah.

49 As Babylon made to fall the slain of Israel, So for Babylon they shall fall, the slain of all the land.

50 Ye who have escaped from the sword, Depart, stand not still; From afar remember Jehovah, And let Jerusalem come to your minds.

51 We are ashamed, because we have heard reproach; Shame hath covered our faces, because strangers came Into the sanctuaries of the house of Jehovah.

52 Therefore, behold, the days are coming, saith Jehovah, That I will visit her graven images, And in the whole land groan shall the wounded.

53 Though Babylon ascended into heaven, And though in the height she fortified her strength, From me would come to her wasters, saith Jehovah.

54 The voice of a cry from Babylon! And a great crashing from the land of the Chaldeans!

55 For Jehovah will lay waste Babylon, And will destroy from her the voice of boasting: And sound shall their waves like great waters, Sent forth shall be the sound of their voice.

56 For come to her, to Babylon, is a waster, And taken are her valiant men, Broken is their bow; For the God of retributions is Jehovah, Recompensing he will recompense.

57 And I will inebriate her princes and her wise men, And her captains, and her rulers, and her valiant men: And they shall sleep a perpetual sleep, And shall not awake, saith the King, Whose name is Jehovah of hosts.

58 Thus saith Jehovah of hosts, --- The wall of Babylon, though wide, Shall yet surely be demolished; And her gates, though high, Shall yet be consumed with fire: Thus labored have the people for nothing, And the nations for the fire, and wearied themselves.

59 The word which Jeremiah the prophet commanded Seraiah, the son of Neraiah, the son of Maaseiah, when he went for Zedekiah, the king of Judah, to Babylon, in the fourth year of

60 his reign; and Seraiah was a quiet prince: and Jeremiah wrote in a book all the evil that should come on Babylon, even all

61 These words which had been written against Babylon; and Jeremiah said to Seraiah, --- ``When thou comest to Babylon and hast seen it, then read

62 All these words, and say, --- `O Jehovah, thou hast spoken against this place, to destroy it, so that there should be no inhabitant in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall become perpetual desolations.'

63 And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt tie a stone

64 To it, and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates, and shalt say, --- `Thus sink shall Babylon, and shall not rise from the evil which I shall bring on her, though they may weary themselves.' Thus far the words of Jeremiah.

Translation: Jeremiah 52

CHAPTER 52

1 Twenty-one years old was Zedekiah when he began to reign, and eleven years reigned he in Jerusalem; and the name of his mother was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.

2 And he did evil in the sight of Jehovah, according to all the things which Jehoiakim had done:

3 And on account of the indignation of Jehovah against Jerusalem and Judah, until he cast them away from his presence, Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

4 And it was in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, in the tenth of the month, that Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, and encamped against it, and built against it a fortress on every side.

5 And the city was besieged till the eleventh year of Zedekiah.

6 In the fourth month, on the ninth of the month, the famine prevailed in the city, so that there was no bread for the people of the land:

7 And the city was broken in upon, and all the men of war fled, and went out of the city by night, by the way of the gate, between two walls, which were near the king's garden; (and the Chaldeans were near the city around:) and they went out by the way of the desert.

8 And the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king, and they took Zedekiah in the deserts of Jericho; for all his army were scattered from him.

9 They then took the king, and brought him to the king of Babylon in Riblah, to the land of Hamath; who pronounced judgment upon him.

10 And the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes; and all the princes of Judah he also slew in Riblah:

11 But he blinded the eyes of Zedekiah, and bound him with chains; And the king of Babylon brought him to Babylon, and put him in prison till the day in which he

died.

12 Now, in the fifth month, in the tenth day of the month, (that year was the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon,) Nebuzar-adan, the prince of the soldiers, who stood before the king of Babylon, came into Jerusalem,

13 And burnt the house of Jehovah and the house of the king, and all the houses of Jerusalem, even every great house he burnt with fire:

14 And all the walls of Jerusalem around they destroyed, even the whole army of the Chaldeans, which was with the prince of the soldiers.

15 And some of the poor of the people and the rest of the people who had remained in the city, and the fugitives who had fled over to the king of Babylon, and the remainder of the multitude, Nebuzar-adan, the prince of the soldiers, led away captive.

16 But some of the poor of the land, Nebuzar-adan, the prince of the soldiers, left to be vinedressers and husbandmen.

17 And the brass pillars which were in the house of Jehovah, and the bases, and the brazen sea which was in the house of Jehovah, the Chaldeans broke in pieces, and carried away all their brass to Babylon.

18 The pots also, and the shovels and the snuffers and the basons and the spoons, and all the vessels of brass, with which they ministered, they took away.

19 And the dishes and the pans and the basons and the pots and the candlesticks and the spoons and the bowls, some of which were all of gold and some were all of silver, the prince of the soldiers took away.

20 The two pillars, the one sea, and the twelve oxen of brass, which were under the bases which Solomon had made in the house of Jehovah, there was no weight as to the brass of all these vessels.

21 As to the pillars, the height of each pillar was eighteen cubits, and a thread of twelve cubits surrounded it, and its thickness was four fingers; it was hollow.

22 And the chapiter which was over it was brass, and the height of one chapiter was five cubits, and net-work and pomegranates were on the chapiter around; all these were of brass; and like these were the second pillar and the pomegranates.

23 And there were pomegranates, ninety-six on one side; all the pomegranates on the net-work around were one hundred.

24 The prince of the soldiers took away also Seraiah, the chief priest, and Zephaniah, the second priest, and the three keepers of the door:

25 And from the city he took away one eunuch, who had been set over the men of war: and seven men of those who attended the king, who were found in the city, and a scribe, the chief of the army, who gathered to the army the people of the land, and sixty men of the people of the land, who were found in the midst of the city.

26 And Nebuzar-adan, the prince of the soldiers, took them away and brought them to the king of Babylon in Riblah:

27 And the king of Babylon smote them and slew them in Riblah, in the land of Hamath; and he removed Judah from his own land.

28 These are the people whom Nebuchadnezzar carried away captive: in the seventh year, three thousand and twenty-three Jews;

29 In the eighteenth of Nebuchadnezzar, he carried away captive from Jerusalem eight hundred and thirty-two souls;

30 In the three-and-twentieth year of Nebuchadnezzar, Nebuzar-adan, the prince of the soldiers, carried away Jews, seven hundred and forty-five souls; --- all the souls were four thousand and six hundred.

31 And it came to pass in the thirty-seventh year of Jehoiachin, the king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-fifth of the month, that Evil-merodach, the king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin, the king of Judah, and brought him forth from prison;

32 And he spake kindly to him, and set his throne above the thrones of the kings, who were with him in Babylon;

33 And he changed his prison garments, and ate bread before him always, all the days of his life.

34 And his portion, a perpetual portion was given him by the king of Babylon every day, until the day he died, all the days of his life.

PRAISE TO GOD.

Translation: Lamentations 1

CHAPTER 1

1 How sits solitary the city Which abounded in people I How is she become as a widow, Who was great among the nations! She who ruled among provinces Is become tributary!

2 Weeping she has wept in the night And her tears are on her cheeks; She has no comforter All along all her lovers; All her friends have dealt falsely with her, They are become her enemies.

3 Migrated hath Judah because of oppression, And because of much servitude; She dwelleth among the nations, She finds no rest; All who pursued her have taken her between the straits.

4 The ways of Sion mourn, For they come not to the festivals; All her gates are desolate, her priests are sighing; her virgins are afflicted, And she is in bitterness!

5 Her adversaries have become the head, Her enemies have prospered; Because Jehovah hath afflicted her For the greatness of her iniquities: Her little ones have gone into exile Before the adversary;

6 And departed from the daughter of Sion Has all her glory; her princes have become like harts, Who cannot find pasture; And they have gone without strength Before their pursuer.

7 Remember did Jerusalem, In the days of her affliction and want, All her desirable things, Which were from ancient days; When fall did her people into the hand of the enemy, And she had no helper: Seen her have enemies, They laughed at her Sabbath.

8 A sin hath Jerusalem sinned, Therefore she is become a wandered; All who honored her have despised her, Because they have seen her nakedness; She even groaned, And turned backward:

9 Her shame is in her skirts; She remembered not her end; Therefore she came down wonderfully, She hath no comforter: See, Jehovah, my affliction, For magnified

himself hath the enemy.

10 His hand did the enemy stretch out To all her desirable things; For she saw the heathens, When they entered her sanctuary, Respecting whom thou hast commanded, They shall not come to thy congregation.

11 All her people are sighing, They are seeking bread; They have given their desirable things For food, to restore life: See, Jehovah, and look, For I am vile.

12 is it nothing to all of you Who pass by the way? Look and see, if there be a sorrow Like the sorrow that is come to me; For afflicted me hath Jehovah, In the day of the indignation of his wrath.

13 From on high hath he sent fire into my bones And it hath prevailed over them: He hath spread his net for my feet, He hath turned me backward; He hath made me desolate, Sorrowing all the day.

14 Tied is the yoke of mine iniquities by his hand, They are twined together: They have come up on my neck, He hath weakened my strength: Given me up hath the Lord, Into the hand of my enemies, From whom I shall not be able to rise.

15 Trodden under foot all my valiant men Hath the Lord in the midst of me: He hath brought on me the fixed time To destroy my young men; The winepress hath the Lord trodden, As to the virgin, the daughter of Judah.

16 For this I weep; mine eye mine eye! Waters flow down; For removed far from me is a comforter Who might revive my soul; My children are become desolate, For prevailed has the enemy.

17 Expand did Sion her hands, She had no comforter; Given a charge had Jehovah as to Jacob, To his adversaries all around him; Become is Jerusalem An abomination among them.

18 Righteous is Jehovah, For his mouth have I provoked, Hear, I pray, all ye people, And behold my sorrow: My virgins and my young men, They are gone into captivity.

19 I called to my friends, They deceived me; My priests and my elders, In the city they expired, While they were seeking food for themselves, To revive their soul.

20 See, Jehovah, for I am distressed, My bowels are troubled; Overwhelmed is my heart within me, For rebelling I have rebelled: Without bereaves the sword, Within it is as death,

21 They have heard that I mourn, That I have no comforter; All mine enemies have heard of my evil; They rejoice that thou hast done it, And brought the day thou hast announced: But they shall be as I am.

22 Let all their wickedness Come into thy presence; And do to them as thou hast done To me for all my sins; For my sighings are many, And my heart is weak.

Translation: Lamentations 2

CHAPTER 2

1 How hath the Lord clouded in his wrath The daughter of Sion! He hath cast down from heaven to the earth The glory of Israel; And hath not remembered his footstool In the day of his wrath!

2 Destroyed hath the Lord, and spared not, All the habitations of Jacob; He hath demolished in his indignation The fortresses of the daughter of Judah; He hath cast them to the ground, he hath profaned Her kingdom and her princes.

3 He hath broken in the indignation of his wrath Every horn of Israel; He hath withdrawn his right hand From before the enemy; And he burned like fire in Jacob, The flame devoured all around.

4 Bent hath he his bow as an enemy, Stand did his right hand as an adversary, And he slew all the delights of the eye In the tabernacle of the daughter of Sion He hath poured forth As fire, his wrath.

5 The Lord hath been like an enemy, He hath destroyed Israel; He hath destroyed all his palaces, He hath demolished his fortresses; He hath increased in the daughter of Judah Mourning and lamentation:

6 And he hath removed as a garden His tabernacle; He hath destroyed his testimony; Forgotten hath Jehovah in Sion The assembly and the Sabbath; He hath rejected, in the indignation of his wrath, The king and the priest:

7 Abhorred hath Jehovah his altar, He hath cast off his sanctuary; Given up hath he into the hand of the enemy The walls of her palaces: A noise they made in the house of Jehovah, As on the day of the assembly.

8 Resolve did Jehovah to destroy the wall Of the daughter of Sion; He extended a line, He drew not back his hand from scattering; Therefore mourned hath the rampart and the wall, They have fallen together.

9 Sunk have her gates in the ground; He hath destroyed and broken her bars; Her king and her princes, They are among the heathens; There is no law, her prophets,

They find no vision from Jehovah:

10 They sit on the ground, they are silent, The elders of the daughter of Sion; They cast dust on their head, They gird themselves with sackcloth; Bend to the ground their head Do the virgins of Jerusalem.

11 Consume with tears did mine eyes, Troubled were my bowels; Poured forth on the ground was my liver, For the breach of the daughter of my people; When the child and the suckling Vanished away in the streets of the city.

12 To their mothers they say,- ``Where is corn and wine`` While they vanish away, as a dying man, In the streets of the city, And while they pour out their souls Into the bosom of their mothers

13 What can I testify to thee? What can I compare to thee, O daughter of Jerusalem? What can I liken to thee, to comfort thee, O virgin, the daughter of Sion? For great as the sea is thy breach, Who can heal thee?

14 Thy prophets have seen for thee Vanity and insipidity. And they disclosed not thine iniquity, That they might reverse thy captivity; And they saw for thee Prophecies of vanity and expulsions.

15 They clapped at thee their hands, All who passed by on the road; They hissed and moved their head At the daughter of Jerusalem, --- ``Is this the city of which they said, Perfect in beauty, the joy of all the earth?

16 Opened at thee their mouth Have all thine enemies; They hissed and gnashed the teeth, They said, ``We shall devour her, Surely the day which we expected We have found, we have seen.''

17 Jehovah hath done what he had purposed; He hath fulfilled his word, Which he had commanded from days of old; He hath overthrown and not spared; And tie hath made to rejoice over thee the enemy, He hath raised up the horn of thine adversaries.

18 Cry out did their heart to the Lord: O wall of the daughter of Sion, Make tears to flow down As a river, day and night; Give thyself no rest, Let not the pupil of thine eye cease.

19 Rise, cry aloud in the night, At the beginning of the watches; Pour out like waters Thy heart before the Lord; Raise lip to him thy hands For the life of thy little ones, Who faint through famine At the head of all the streets.

20 See, Jehovah, and look, To whom thou hast done this: Should women eat their own fruit, Infants while nursed! Should they be slain in the Lord's sanctuary, The priest and the prophet!

21 Lie on the ground in the streets Did boys and old men; My virgins and my young men, They fell by the sword: Thou hast killed in the day of thy wrath, Thou hast slaughtered and not spared.

22 Thou hast summoned, as on t festive day, My terrors all around; And in the day of the indignation of Jehovah!, There was none surviving or remaining; Whom I nursed and brought up, The enemy consumed them.

Translation: Lamentations 3

CHAPTER 3

1 I am a man who hath seen affliction Through the rod of his indignation'
2 Me hath he led and made to go Into darkness, and not into light.
3 Surely against me is he turned, He turns his hand daily.
4 To grow old hath he made my flesh and my skin, He hath broken my bones.
5 He hath builded against me, And surrounded me with gall and trouble.
6 In darkness hath he made me to lie As the dead for ever.
7 He hath shut me up, that I cannot go forth He hath made heavy my fetter.
8 Even when I cried, and cried aloud, he shut out my prayer.
9 He hath enclosed my ways with hewn stones, My paths hath he perverted.
10 A bear lying in wait hath he been to me, A lion in his den.
11 My ways hath he perverted, and lie hath torn me, He hath made me a waste.
12 He hath bent his bow, and made me As a mark for the arrow.
13 He hath made to enter into my reins The sons of his quiver.
14 I became a derision to all my people, Their song all the day.
15 He hath satiated me with bitterness, He hath filled me with gall.
16 He hath broken with pebbles my teeth, He hath covered me with dust,
17 And far removed from peace is my soul; I have forgotten good.
18 And I said, ``Perished hath my strength And my hope from Jehovah;''
19 When I remember my affliction and my trouble, The poison and the gall:
20 Remembering remember does my soul, And it is humbled within me
21 This will I recall to my mind, Therefore will I hope.
22 The mercies of Jehovah! surely they are not consumed; Surely failed not have his compassion's;
23 Renewed are they in the morning; Great is thy faithfulness.
24 My portion is Jehovah, said my soul, Therefore will I hope in him.
25 Good is Jehovah to him who waits for him, To the soul that seeks him;

26 Good it is to hope and to be silent, As to the salvation of Jehovah;
27 Good it is for a man To bear the yoke in his youth:
28 He will sit apart, and be silent, For he will raise it on himself;
29 He will put in the dust his mouth, If so be that there is hope;
30 He will give to the smiter his cheek, He will be filled with reproaches.
31 For not cast away for ever Will the Lord;
32 For though he causes grief, he will yet show compassion, According to the multitude of his mercies;
33 :For he does not from his heart afflict, Nor cause grief to the children of men.
34 When one tears under his feet All the bound of the earth, ---
35 When he perverts man's judgment Before the face of the Most High, ---
36 When he turns a man aside in his causes --- The Lord does not regard.
37 Who is this that says, ``It was, And God has not commanded it''
38 From the mouth of the Most High Can not good and evil proceed?
39 Why should he weary himself, a living man, And a man in his sins?
40 Let us examine our ways, and search, And turn to Jehovah;
41 Let us lift up our hearts with our hands To God in the heavens.
42 We have sinned, and have been rebellious, Thou hast not spared;
43 Thou hast covered us over in wrath, and pursued us, Thou hast slain and not spared.
44 Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, So that prayer cannot pass through.
45 An offscouring and a refuse hast thou made us In the midst of the nations;
46 Opened at us their mouth Have all our enemies;
47 Fear and the pit have come to us, Desolation and a breach.
48 Rivers of waters mine eye brings down, For the breach of the daughter of my people.
49 Mine eye flows down and rests not; There will be no intermissions,
50 Until Jehovah looks down, And beholds from heaven.
51 Mine eye grieves my soul, Because of all the daughters of my city.
52 Hunting they have hunted me as a sparrow, Who are mine enemies without cause;
53 They have made fast in a pit my life, And cast a stone over me;
54 Flowed have waters over my head; I said, I am cut off.
55 I called on thy name, Jehovah, From the deepest pit:
56 My voice hast thou heard; close not thine ear To my groaning, to my cry.
57 Thou didst draw nigh in the day I cried to thee, Thou didst say, ``Fear not.''
58 Thou hast, O Lord, pleaded the cause of my soul, Thou hast redeemed my life.
59 Thou hast seen, e Jehovah, my oppression; Defend my cause.
60 Thou hast seen all their vengeance's, All their counsels against me.
61 Thou hast heard, O Jehovah, their reproaches, All their counsels against me,-
62 The speeches of those who rose against me, And their words against me daily.
63 Look on their sitting down and their rising up; I am their song.
64 Render to them their reward, O Jehovah, According to the work of their hands.
65 Give them blindness of heart; Thy curse be on them.

66 Pursue them in wrath, and destroy them From under the heavens of Jehovah.

Translation: Lamentations 4

CHAPTER 4

1 How obscured is the gold! How changed is the fine gold! Cast forth have been the stones of the sanctuary At the head of all the streets

2 The precious sons of Sion, Clothed in gold, How they are counted as earthen pitchers, The work of the potter's hands!

3 Even serpents draw out the breast, They suckle their young ones: The daughter of my people was cruel, Like the ostriches in the desert.

4 Cleave did the tongue of the suckling To the roof of his mouth for thirst; The little ones asked bread, No one divided to them.

5 They who fed on delicacies Perished in the streets; They who had been brought up in scarlet Embraced the dunghills:

6 And the punishment of the daughter of my people Has been greater than the punishment of Sodom, Which was overthrown as in a moment, And no strokes remained on her.

7 Purer were her Nazarites than snow, Whiter than milk; They were ruddy in their body, Above precious stones; Sapphire was their polish:

8 Darker than darkness became their form, They were not known in the streets; Cleave did their skin to their bones, It became dry as wood.

9 Better were the slain with the sword Than the slain with famine: They pined away, having been pierced through By the knits of the field.

10 The hands of compassionate mothers Boiled their own offspring; They became food for them, At the destruction of the daughter of my people.

11 Fulfilled has Jehovah his wrath; He poured forth the indignation of his wrath; And he kindled a fire in Sion, Which devoured her foundations.

12 They could not have believed, the kings of the earth, Nor all the inhabitants of the world, That enter would the adversary and the enemy Into the gates of Jerusalem.

13 For the sin of her prophets, The iniquities of her priests, Who shed in the midst

of her The blood of the righteous, ---

14 They wandered blind in the streets, They were polluted with blood; Because they could not But touch their garments.

15 Depart ye, ``Unclean,'' they cried to them, Depart, depart, come not near: Because they fled, and also wandered, They said among the Gentiles, ``They shall not return to dwell;

16 The face of Jehovah hath divided them, He will no more regard them.'' The face of the priests they respected not, And to the elders they shewed no mercy.

17 While we were yet standing, our eyes failed, As to our vain help; In our looking out we looked out To a nation that could not save us.

18 They hunted our steps, So that we could not walk in our streets; Draw near did our end, fulfilled were our days, Surely come did our end.

19 Swifter were our pursuers Than the eagles of heaven; On the mountains they followed us, They lay in wait for us in the desert.

20 The spirit of our nostrils, the anointer of Jehovah, Was taken in their snares; Of whom we said, ``Under his shadow We shall live among the nations.''

21 Rejoice and be glad, thou daughter of Edom, Who dwellest in the land of Uz. To thee also shall the cup pass over, Thou shalt be inebriated and made naked.

22 Completed is thy punishment, O daughter of Sion, He will no more deliver thee into exile; He will visit thine iniquity, O daughter of Edom, And will uncover thy sin.

Translation: Lamentations 5

CHAPTER 5

1 Remember, O Jehovah, what has come to us; Look, and see our reproach:

2 Our heritage is turned over to foreigners, Our houses to aliens.

3 Orphans are we become, without a father; Our mothers are as widows.

4 Our own water, for money we drink; Our own wood, for a price it comes to us.

5 On our necks have we suffered persecution; We have labored, and had no rest.

6 To the Egyptians we extended the hand, To the Assyrians, to be satisfied with bread.

7 Our fathers sinned, and are not; And we their iniquities have borne.

8 Servants have ruled over us; None delivered from their hands.

9 With our life have we procured our bread, Because of the drought of the desert.

10 Our skins are like an oven black, Because of the burnings of famine.

11 Women in Sion have been ravished, Virgins in the cities of Judah.

12 Princes by their own hand were hung, The faces of elders were not honored.

13 Young men they took to grind, And boys under the wood fell.

14 Eiders ceased from the gate, Young men from their music.

15 Ceased has the joy of our heart, Turned into mourning has our dance.

16 Fallen has the crown of our head; Woe now to us, for we have sinned!

17 Therefore faint is our heart; For this darkener! are our eyes,

18 Even for mount Sion, which is desolate; Foxes pass through it.

19 Thou Jehovah for ever sittest, Thy throne is through all ages.

20 Why shouldest thou perpetually forget us, And forsake us for ever.

21 Turn us, Jehovah, to thee, and we shall be turned; Renew our days as of old;

22 Except thou hast wholly rejected us, And hast become very angry with us.

PRAISE BE TO GOD

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Greek Words and Phrases

- {ἀνατολὴν} {δίκαιαν}: 1
- {ἀποῤῥίψω}: 1
- {ἰσχὺν}: 1
- {ὸ} {κληθήσεται}: 1
- {ὅτι}: 1
- {ῥιπιστὰ}: 1
- {Καὶ} {βασιλεύσει} {βασιλεὺς}: 1
- {ζασανιστήριον}: 1
- {κάκων}: 1
- {καρδιογνώστης},: 1
- {κελεύειν}: 1
- {λῶμμα}: 1
- {μέτοικον}: 1
- {μίλτος}: 1
- {μίλτω}: 1
- {μαχητὴς} {ἰσχύων}: 1
- {μετάστρεφω}: 1
- {πονήρων}: 1
- {πρὸς}: 1
- {πρὸς} {ἅ} ({ἔθνη})-{πρὸς} {αὐτούς}: 1
- {σακέαν}: 1
- {στρεζλωτήριον}: 1
- {συγκλείς}: 1
- {ἀποικία}: 1
- {ἀρχιμάγειρον}: 1
- {δυνάστας}: 1
- {εὐθανασίαν}: 1

- {κατὰ}: 1
- {οὗτος}: 1
- {ἀπωσμῶν}: 1
- {ἐνδεχόμενα}: 1
- {ἐνδεχόμενον}: 1
- {Θρήνους}: 1
- {κέλευμα}: 1 2
- {κέλευσμα}: 1
- {κελευμα}: 1
- {περιψήματα}: 1 2

Hebrew Words and Phrases

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- :{אולי} 1 2
- :{אחרית} 1 2
- :{איש} 1
- :{אך} 1
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- :{אלה} 1 2 3 4
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- :{אמור} 1
- :{אמר} 1
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- :{אמרים} 1
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Latin Words and Phrases

- Yr hwn y daeth gair yr Arglwydd atto: 1
- arva: 1
- atto: 1
- bellato fortis: 1
- facio: 1
- malitia: 1
- malum: 1
- mittam: 1
- pravitatem: 1
- suscitabo: 1
- ut: 1
- y rhai yr arogldarthasant ar eu pennau: 1
- arula: 1
- conturbata: 1
- magister militum: 1
- suscitabo: 1
- Delicta majorum immeritus lues, Romane: 1
- Educationum: 1
- Ira furor brevis est: 1
- Jam canit extremos effœtus vinitor antes: 1
- O patria! O divum domus Ilium! Et inclyta bello Moenia Dardanidum! Ferus omnia Jupiter Argos Transtulit: 1
- Postquam res Asiae, Priamique everterre gentem Immeritam visum Superis: 1
- Satis jampridem sanguine nostro Laomedonteae luimus perjuria Troiae: 1
- Venit summa dies et ineluctabile tempus Dardaniae: fuimus Troes; fuit Ilium et ingens Gloria Teucrorum: ferus omnia Jupiter Argos Transtulit: incensa Danai

dominantur in urbe: 1
- et reliquias multitudinis: 1
- et reliquum populum: 1
- exossavit: 1
- suam: 1
- verticem: 1

French Words and Phrases

- De vieux haillons: 1
- Vieux haillons trainez, ou, qui avoyent traine: 1
- des vieux haillons a demi pourris: 1
- usez: 1