

# CHAPTER 36

We have done with Mount Seir, and left it desolate, and likely to continue so, and must now turn ourselves, with the prophet, to the mountains of Israel, which we find desolate too, but hope before we have done with the chapter to leave in better plight. Here are two distinct prophecies in this chapter: —

**I.** Here is one that seems chiefly to relate to the temporal estate of the Jews, wherein their present deplorable condition is described and the triumphs of their neighbours in it; but it is promised that their grievances shall be all redressed and that in due time they shall be settled again in their own land, in the midst of peace and plenty (v. 1-15).

**II.** Here is another that seems chiefly to concern their spiritual estate, wherein they are reminded of their former sins and God's judgments upon them, to humble them for their sins and under God's mighty hand (v. 16-20). But it is promised,

1. That God would glorify himself in showing mercy to them (v. 21-24).
2. That he would sanctify them, by giving them his grace and fitting them for his service; and this for his own name's sake and in answer to their prayers (v. 25-38).

## ~~361~~ EZEKIEL 36:1-15

### GOD'S COMPASSION FOR ISRAEL

The prophet had been ordered to set his face *towards the mountains of Israel* and *prophesy against them*, ~~362~~Ezekiel 6:2. Then God was coming forth to contend with his people; but now that God is returning in mercy to them he must speak good words and comfortable words to these mountains, v. 1 and again v. 4. *You mountains of Israel, hear the word of the Lord;* and what he says to them he says *to the hills, to the rivers, to the valleys, to the desolate wastes* in the country, and to the cities *that are forsaken*, v. 4. and again v. 6. The people were gone, some one way and some another; nothing remained there to be spoken to but the places, the mountains and valleys; these the Chaldeans could not carry away with

them. *The earth abides for ever.* Now, to show the mercy God had in reserve for the people, he is to speak of him as having a dormant kindness for the place, which, if the Lord had been pleased for ever to abandon, he would not have called upon to *hear the word of the Lord*, nor *would he as at this time have shown it such things as these.* Here is,

**I.** The compassionate notice God takes of the present deplorable condition of the land of Israel. It has become both a *prey* and a *derision to the heathen that are round about*, v. 4.

**1.** It has become a prey to them; and they are all enriched with the plunder of it. When the Chaldeans had conquered them all their neighbours flew to the spoil as to a shipwreck, every one thinking all his own that he could lay his hands on (v. 3): *They have made you desolate, and swallowed you up on every side, that you might be a possession to the heathen, to the residue of them, even such as had themselves narrowly escaped the like desolation.* No one thought it any crime to strip an Israelite. *Turba Romae sequitur fortunam ut semper* — *The mob of Rome still praise the elevated and despise the fallen.* It is the common cry, when a man is down, *Down with him.*

**2.** It has become a derision to them. They took all they had and laughed at them when they had done. *The enemy said, "Aha! even the ancient high places are ours in possession,* v. 2. Neither the antiquity, nor the dignity, neither the sanctity nor the fortifications, of the land of Israel, are its security, but we have become masters of it all." The more honours that land had been adorned with, and the greater figure it had made among the nations, the more pride and pleasure did they take in making a spoil of it, which is an instance of a base and sordid spirit; for the more glorious and prosperity was the more piteous is the adversity. God takes notice of it here as an aggravation of the present calamity of Israel: *You are taken up in the lips of talkers and are an infamy of the people*, v. 3. All the talk of the country about was concerning the overthrow of the Jewish nation; and every one that spoke of it had some peevish ill-natured reflection or other upon them. They were the *scorning of those that were at ease and the contempt of the proud*, <sup>Psalm</sup> 123:4. There are some that are noted for talkers, that have something to say of every body, but cannot find in their hearts to speak well of any body; God's people, among such people, were sure to be a reproach when the crown had fallen from their head. Thus it

was the lot of Christianity, in its suffering days, to be *every where spoken against*.

**II.** The expressions of God's just displeasure against those who triumphed in the desolations of the land of Israel, as many of its neighbours did, even the residue of the brethren, and Idumea particularly. Let us see,

**1.** How they dealt with the Israel of God. They carved out large possessions to themselves out of their land, out of God's land; for so indeed it was: "*They have appointed my land into their possession* (v. 5), and so not only invaded their neighbour's property, but intrenched upon God's prerogative." It was the holy land which they laid their sacrilegious hands upon. They did not own any dependence upon God, as the God of that land, nor acknowledge any remaining interest that Israel had in it, but *cast it out for a prey*, as if they had won it in a lawful war. And this they did without any dread of God and his judgments and without any compassion for Israel and their calamities, but with the *joy of all their hearts*, because they got by it, and *with despiteful minds* to Israel that lost by it. Increasing wealth, by right or wrong, is all the joy of a worldly heart; and the calamities of God's people are all the joy of a despiteful mind. And those that had not an opportunity of making a prey of God's people made a reproach of them; so that they were *the shame of the heathen*, v. 6. Every body ridiculed them and made a jest of them; and the truth is they had by their own sin made themselves vile; so that God was righteous herein, but men were unrighteous and very barbarous.

**2.** How God would deal with those who were thus in word and deed abusive to his people. He has *spoken against the heathen*; he has passed sentence upon them; he has determined to reckon with them for it, and this *in the fire of his jealousy*, both for his own honour and for the honour of his people, v. 5. Having a *love for both as strong as death*, he has a *jealousy for both as cruel as the grave*. They spoke in their malice against God's people, and he will speak in his jealousy against them; and it is easy to say which will speak most powerfully. God will speak *in his jealousy and in his fury*, v. 6. Fury is not in God; but he will exert his power against them and handle them as severely as men do when they are in a fury. He will so *speak to them in his wrath as to vex them in his sore displeasure*. What he says he will stand to, for it is backed with an oath. He has *lifted up his hand* and sworn by himself, has sworn and will not repent. And what is it that is said with so much heat, and yet with so much

deliberation? It is this (v. 7), *Surely the heathen that are about you, they shall bear their shame*. Note, The righteous God, to whom vengeance belongs, will render shame for shame. Those that put contempt and reproach upon God's people will, sooner or later, have it *burned upon themselves*, perhaps in this world (either their follies or their calamities, their miscarriages or their mischances, shall be their reproach), at furthest in that day when all the impenitent shall *rise to shame and everlasting contempt*.

**III.** The promises of God's favour to his Israel and assurances given of great mercy God had in store for them. God takes occasion from the outrage and insolence of their enemies to show himself so much the more concerned for them and ready to do them good, as David hoped that God would recompense him good for Shimei's cursing him. *Let them curse, but bless thou*. In this way, as well as others, the enemies of God's people do them real service, even by the injuries they do them, against their will and beyond their intention. We shall have no reason to complain if, the more unkind men are, the more kind God is — if, the more kindly he speaks to us by his word and Spirit, the more kindly he acts for us in his providence. The prophet must say so to the *mountains of Israel*, which were now *desolate and despised*, that God is *for them* and will *burn to them*, v. 9. As the curse of God reaches the ground for man's sake, so does the blessing. Now that which is promised is,

**1.** That their rightful owners should return to the possession of them: *My people Israel are at hand to come*, v. 8. Though they are at a great distance from their own country, though they are dispersed in many countries, and though they are detained by the power of their enemies, yet they shall *come again to their own border*, <sup><2611></sup>Jeremiah 31:17. The time is at hand for their return. Though there were above forty years of the seventy (perhaps fifty) yet remaining, it is spoken of as near, because it is sure, and there were some among them that should live to see it. *A thousand years are with God but as one day*. The mountains of Israel are now desolate; but God will *cause men to walk upon them again, even his people Israel*, not as travellers passing over them, but as inhabitants — not tenants, but freeholders: *They shall possess thee*, not for term of life, but for themselves and their heirs; *thou shalt be their inheritance*. It was a type of the heavenly Canaan, to which all God's children are heirs, every Israelite indeed, and into which they shall shortly be all brought together, out of the countries where they are now scattered.

2. That they should afford a plentiful comfortable maintenance for their owners at their return. When the land had *enjoyed her sabbaths* for so many years, it should be so much the more fruitful afterwards, as we should be after rest, especially a sabbath rest: *You shall be tilled and sown* (v. 9) and shall *yield your fruit to my people Israel*, v. 8. Note, It is a blessing to the earth to be made serviceable to men, especially to good men, that will serve God with cheerfulness in the use of those good things which the earth serves up to them.
3. That the people of Israel should have not only a comfortable sustenance, but a comfortable settlement, in their own land: *The cities shall be inhabited; the wastes shall be builded*, v. 10 *And I will settle you after your old estates*, v. 11. Their own sin had unsettled them, but now God's favour shall resettle them. When the prodigal son has become a penitent he is settled again in his father's house, according to his former estate. Bring hither the *first robe*, and put it on him. *Nay, I will do better unto you now than at your beginnings*. There is more joy for the sheep that is brought back than there would have been if it had never gone astray. And God sometimes multiplies his people's comforts in proportion to the *time that he has afflicted them*. Thus God blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning, and doubled to him all he had.
4. That the people, after their return, should be *fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the land*, so that it should not only be inhabited again, but as thickly inhabited, and as well peopled, as ever. God will bring back to it *all the house of Israel, even all of it* (observe what an emphasis is laid upon that, v. 10), *all whose spirits God stirred up to return*; and those only were reckoned of *the house of Israel*, the rest had cut themselves off from it; or, though but few, in comparison, returned at first, yet afterwards, at divers times, they *all* returned; and then (says God) *I will multiply these men* (v. 10), *multiply man and beast; and they shall increase*, v. 11. Note, God's kingdom in the world is a growing kingdom; and his church, though for a time it may be diminished, shall recover itself and be again replenished.
5. That the reproach long since cast upon the land of Israel by the evil spies, and of late revived, that *it was a land that ate up the inhabitants* of it by famine, sickness, and the sword, should be quite rolled away, and there should never be any more occasion for it. Canaan had got into a bad name. It had of old *spued out the inhabitants* (~~CRS~~ Leviticus 18:28), the

natives, the aborigines, which was turned to its reproach by those that should have put another construction upon it, <sup><4133></sup>Numbers 13:32. It had of late devoured the Israelites, and spued them out too; so that it was commonly said of it, It is a land which, instead of supporting its nations or tribes that inhabit it, *bereaves* them, *overthrows* them, and *causes them to fall*; it is a tenement which breaks all the tenants that come upon it. This character it had got among the neighbours; but God now promises that it shall be so no more: *Thou shalt no more bereave them of men* (v. 12), *shalt devour men no more*, v. 14. But the inhabitants shall live to a good old age, and not have the number of their months cut off in the midst. Compare this with that promise, <sup><3804></sup>Zechariah 8:4. Note, God will take away the reproach of his people by taking away that which was the occasion of it. When the nation is made to flourish in peace, plenty, and power, then they *hear no more the shame of the heathen* (v. 15), especially when it is reformed; when sin, which is the reproach of any people, particularly of God's professing people, is taken away, then they *hear no more the reproach of the people*. Note, When God returns in mercy to a people that return to him in duty, all their grievances will be soon redressed and their honour retrieved.

## <sup><4116></sup>EZEKIEL 36:16-24

### GOD'S COMPASSION FOR ISRAEL

When God promised the poor captives a glorious return, in due time, to their own land, it was a great discouragement to their hopes that they were unworthy, utterly unworthy, of such a favour; therefore, to remove that discouragement, God here shows them that he would do it for them purely *for his own name's sake*, that he might be glorified in them and by them, that he might manifest and magnify his mercy and goodness, that attribute which of all others is most his glory. And, the restoration of that people being typical of our redemption by Christ, this is intended further to show that the ultimate end aimed at in our salvation, to which all the steps of it were made subservient, was the glory of God. To this end Christ directed all he did in that short prayer, *Father, glorify thy name*; and God declared it was his end in all he did in the immediate answer given to that prayer, by a voice from heaven: *I have glorified it, and I will glorify it yet again*, <sup><6128></sup>John 12:28. Now observe here,

**I.** How God's name had suffered both by the sins and by the miseries of Israel; and this was more to be regretted than all their sorrow, which they had brought upon themselves; for the honour of God lies nearer the hearts of good men than any interests of their own.

**1.** God's glory had been injured by the sin of Israel when they were in their own land, v. 17. It was a good land, a holy land, a land that had the eye of God upon it. *But they defiled it by their own way*, their wicked way; that is *our own way*, the way of our own choice; and we ourselves must bear the blame and shame of it. The sin of a people defiles their land, renders it abominable to God and uncomfortable to themselves; so that they cannot have any holy communion with him nor with one another. What was unclean might not be made use of. By the abuse of the gifts of God's bounty to us we forfeit the use of them; and, the mind and conscience being defiled with guilt, no comfort is allowed us, *nothing is pure* to us. Their way in the eye of God was like the pollution of a woman during the days of her separation, which shut her out from the sanctuary and made very things she touched ceremonially unclean, <sup><B5B></sup> Leviticus 15:19. Sin is that *abominable thing which the Lord hates*, and which he cannot endure to look upon. They *shed blood and worshipped idols* (v. 18) and with those sins *defiled the land*. For this God *poured out his fury* upon them, *scattered them among the heathen*. Their own land was sick of them, and they were sent into other lands. Herein God was righteous, and was justified in what he did; none could say that he did them any wrong, nay, he did justice to his own honour, for he *judged them according to their way and according to their doings*, v. 19. And yet, the matter being not rightly understood, he was not glorified in it; for the enemies did say, as Moses pleaded the Egyptians would say if he had destroyed them in the wilderness, that *for mischief he brought them forth*. Their neighbours considered them rather as a holy people than as a sinful people, and therefore took occasion from the calamities they were in, instead of glorifying God, as they might justly have done, to reproach him and put contempt upon him; and God's name was *continually every day blasphemed* by their oppressors, <sup><B5B></sup> Isaiah 52:5.

**2.** When they *entered into the land of the heathen* God had no glory by them there; but, on the contrary, his holy name was profaned, v. 20.

**(1.)** It was profaned by the sins of Israel; they were no credit to their profession wherever they went, but, on the contrary, a reproach to it. The

*name of God and his holy religion was blasphemed through them,*

<sup><4124></sup>Romans 2:24. When those that pretended to be in relation to God, in covenant and communion with him, were found corrupt in their morals, slaves to their appetites and passions, dishonest in their dealings, and false to their words and the trust reposed in them, the enemies of the Lord had thereby great occasion given them to blaspheme, especially when they quarrelled with their God for correcting them, than which nothing could be more scandalous.

(2.) It was profaned by the sufferings of Israel; for from them the enemies of God took occasion to reproach God, as unable to protect his own worshippers and to make good his own grants. They said, in scorn, "*These are the people of the land, these wicked people (you see he could not keep them in their obedience to his precepts), these miserable people — you see he could not keep them in the enjoyment of his favours. These are the people that came out of Jehovah's land, they are the very scum of the nations. Are these those that had statues so righteous whose lives are so unrighteous? Is this the nation that is so much celebrated for a wise and understanding people, and that is said to have God so nigh unto them? Do these belong to that brave, that holy nation, who appear here so vile, so abject?*" Thus God sold his people and did not *increase his wealth by their price,* <sup><4412></sup>Psalms 44:12. The reproach they were under reflected upon him.

II. Let us now see how God would retrieve his honour, secure it, and advance it, by working a great reformation upon them and then working a great salvation for them. He would have *scattered them among the heathen, were it not that he feared the wrath of the enemy,* <sup><4526></sup>Deuteronomy 32:26, 27. But, though they were unworthy of his compassion, yet *he had pity for his own holy name,* and a thousand pities it was that that should be trampled upon and abused. He looked with compassion on his own honour, which lay bleeding among the heathen, on that jewel which was trodden into the dirt, which *the house of Israel,* even in the land of their captivity, *had profaned,* v. 21. In pity to that God brought them out from the heathen, because their sins were more scandalous there than they had been in their own land. "Therefore I *will gather you out of all countries and bring you into your own land,* v. 24. *Not for your sake,* because you are worthy of such a favour, for you are most unworthy, but *for my holy name's sake* (v. 22), that *I may sanctify my great name,*" v. 23. Observe, by the way, God's holy name is his great name. His holiness is his greatness; so he reckons it himself. Nor does any



thing make a man truly great but being truly good, and partaking of God's holiness. God will magnify his name as a holy name, for he will sanctify it: *I will sanctify my name which you have profaned*. When God performs that which he has sworn by his holiness, then he sanctifies his name. The effect of this shall be very happy: *The heathen shall know that I am the Lord when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes and yours*. When God proves his own holy name, and his saints praise it, then he is sanctified in them, and this contributes to the propagating of the knowledge of him. Observe,

1. God's reasons of mercy are all fetched from within himself; he will bring his people out of Babylon, not for their sakes, but *for his own name's sake*, because he will be glorified.
2. God's goodness takes occasion from man's badness to appear so much the more illustrious; *therefore* he will sanctify his name by the pardon of sin, because it has been profaned by the commission of sin.

## EZEKIEL 36:25-38

### THE PROMISE OF A NEW HEART

The people of God might be discouraged in their hopes of a restoration by the sense not only of their unworthiness of such a favour (which was answered, in the foregoing verses, with this, that God, in doing it, would have an eye to his own glory, not to their worthiness), but of their unfitness for such a favour, being still corrupt and sinful; and that is answered in these verses, with a promise that God would by his grace prepare and qualify them for the mercy and then bestow it on them. And this was in part fulfilled in that wonderful effect which the captivity in Babylon had upon the Jews there, that it effectually cured them of their inclination to idolatry. But it is further intended as a draught of the covenant of grace, and a specimen of those spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in heavenly things by that covenant. As (Ezekiel 34) after a promise of their return the prophecy insensibly slid into a promise of the coming of Christ, the great Shepherd, so here it insensibly slides into a promise of the Spirit, and his gracious influences and operations, which we have as much need of for our sanctification as we have of Christ's merit for our justification.

**I.** God here promises that he will work a good work in them, to qualify them for the good work he intended to bring about for them, v. 25-27. We had promises to the same purport, <sup><3118></sup>Ezekiel 11:18-20.

**1.** That God would cleanse them from the pollutions of sin (v. 25): *I will sprinkle clean water upon you*, which signifies both the blood of Christ sprinkled upon the conscience to purify that and to take away the sense of guilt (as those that were sprinkled with the water of purification were thereby discharged from their ceremonial uncleanness) and the grace of the Spirit sprinkled on the whole soul to purify it from all corrupt inclinations and dispositions, as Naaman was cleansed from his leprosy by dipping in Jordan. Christ was himself clean, else his blood could not have been cleansing to us; and it is a Holy Spirit that makes us holy: *From all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you*. And (v. 29) *I will save you from all your uncleannesses*. Sin is defiling, idolatry particularly is so; it renders sinners odious to God and burdensome to themselves. When guilt is pardoned, and the corrupt nature sanctified, then we are cleansed from our filthiness, and there is no other way of being saved from it. This God promises his people here, in order to his being sanctified in them, v. 23. We cannot sanctify God's name unless he sanctify our hearts, nor live to his glory, but by his grace.

**2.** That God would give them a *new heart*, a disposition of mind excellent in itself and vastly different from what it was before. God will work an inward change in order to a universal change. Note, All that have an interest in the new covenant, and a title to the new Jerusalem, have a new heart and a new spirit, and these are necessary in order to their walking in *newness of life*. This is that *divine nature* which believers are by the promises made partakers of.

**3.** That, instead of a *heart of stone*, insensible and inflexible, unapt to receive any divine impressions and to return any devout affections, God would give a *heart of flesh*, a soft and tender heart, that has spiritual senses exercised, conscious to itself of spiritual pains and pleasures, and complying in every thing with the will of God. Note, Renewing grace works as great a change in the soul as the turning of a dead stone into living flesh.

**4.** That since, besides our inclination to sin, we complain of an inability to do our duty, God will *cause them to walk in his statutes*, will not only

show them the way of his statutes before them, but incline them to walk in it, and thoroughly furnish them with wisdom and will, and active powers, for every good work. In order to this he will *put his Spirit within them*, as a teacher, guide, and sanctifier. Note, God does not force men to walk in his statutes by external violence, but causes them to walk in his statutes by an internal principle. And observe what use we ought to make of this gracious power and principle promised us, and put within us: *You shall keep my judgments*. If God will do his part according to the promise, we must do ours according to the precept. Note, The promise of God's grace to enable us for our duty should engage and quicken our constant care and endeavour to do our duty. God's promises must drive us to his precepts as our rule, and then his precepts must send us back to his promises for strength, for without his grace we can do nothing.

**II.** God here promises that he will take them into covenant with himself. The sum of the covenant of grace we have, v. 28. *You shall be my people, and I will be your God*. It is not, "If you will be my people, I will be your God" (though it is very true that we cannot expect to have God to be to us a God unless we be to him a people), but he has chosen us, and loved us, first, not we him; therefore the condition is of grace, is by promise, as well as the reward; not of merit, not of works: "*You shall be my people; I will make you so; I will give you the nature and spirit of my people, and then I will be your God.*" And this is the foundation and top-stone of a believer's happiness; it is heaven itself, <sup><62B></sup>Revelation 21:3, 7.

**III.** He promises that he will bring about all that good for them which the exigence of their case calls for. When they are thus prepared for mercy,

**1.** Then they shall return to their possessions and be settled again in them (v. 28): *You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers*. God will, in bringing them back to it, have an eye not to any merit of theirs, but to the promise made to the fathers; for therefore he gave it to them at first, <sup><62B></sup>Deuteronomy 7:7, 8. *Therefore* he is gracious, because he has said that he will be so. This shall follow upon the blessed reformation God would work among them (v. 33): "*In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, and so shall have made you meet for the inheritance, I will cause you to dwell in the cities, and so put you in possession of the inheritance.*" This is God's method of mercy indeed, first to part men from their sins, and then to restore them to their comforts.

2. Then they shall enjoy a plenty of all good things. When they are saved *from their uncleanness*, from their sins which kept good things from them, then *I will call for the corn and will increase it*, v. 29. Plenty comes at God's call, and the plenty he calls for shall be still growing; and when he speaks the word the fruit both of the tree and of the field shall multiply. As the inhabitants multiply the productions shall multiply for their maintenance; for he that sends mouths will send meat. Famine was one of the judgments which they had laboured under, and it had been as much as any a reproach to them, that they should be starved in a land so famed for fruitfulness. But now *I will lay no famine upon you*; and none are under that rod without having it laid on by him. Then they *shall receive no more reproach of famine*, shall never be again upbraided with that, nor shall it ever be said that God is a Master that keeps his servants to short allowance. Nay, they shall not only be cleared from the reproach of famine, but they shall have the credit of abundance. The land that had long *lain desolate in the sight of all that passed by*, that looked upon it, some with contempt and some with compassion, shall again *be tilled* (v. 34), and, having long lain fallow, it will now be the more fruitful. Observe, God will *call for the corn* and yet they must *till the ground* for it. Note, Even promised mercies must be laboured for; for the promise is not to supersede, but to quicken and encourage our industry and endeavour. And such a blessing will God command on the *hand of the diligent* that all who pass by shall take notice of it, with wonder, v. 35. They shall say, "See what a blessed change here is, how *this land that was desolate* has *become like the garden of Eden*, the desert turned again into a paradise," Note, God has honours in reserve for his people to be crowned with sufficient to counterbalance the contempt they are now loaded with, and in them he will be honoured. This wonderful increase both of the people of the land and of its products is compared (v. 38) to the large flocks of cattle that are brought to Jerusalem, to be sacrificed at one of the solemn feasts. Even the cities that now lie waste shall be filled with *flocks of men*, not like the flocks with which the pastures are *covered over* (<sup>1663</sup>Psalm 65:13), but like the holy flock which is brought to the courts of the Lord's house. Note, *Then* the increase of the numbers of a people is honourable and comfortable indeed when they are all dedicated to God as a holy flock, to be presented to him for *living sacrifices*. Crowds are a lovely sight in God's temple.

**IV.** He shows what shall be *the happy effects of this blessed change*.

**1.** It shall have a happy effect upon the people of God themselves, for it shall bring them to an ingenuous repentance for their sins (v. 31): *Then shall you remember your own evil ways and shall loathe yourselves.* See here what sin is; it is an *abomination*, a loathsome thing, that abominable thing which the Lord hates. See what is the first step towards repentance; it is *remembering our own evil ways*, reflecting seriously upon the sins we have committed and being particular in recapitulating them. We must remember against ourselves not only our gross enormities, *our own evil ways*, but our defects and infirmities, *our doings that were not good*, not so good as they should have been; not only our direct violations of the law, but our coming short of it. See what is evermore a companion of true repentance, and that is self-loathing, a holy shame and confusion of face: “You shall *loathe yourselves in your own sight*, seeing how loathsome you have made yourselves in the sight of God.” Self-love is at the bottom of sin, which we cannot but blush to see the absurdity of; but our quarrelling with ourselves is in order to our being, upon good grounds, reconciled to ourselves. And, *lastly*, see what is the most powerful inducement to an evangelical repentance, and that is a sense of the mercy of God; when God settles them in the midst of plenty, *then they shall loathe themselves for their iniquities.* Note, The goodness of God should overcome our badness and *lead us to repentance.* The more we see of God's readiness to receive us into favour upon our repentance the more reason we shall see to be ashamed of ourselves that we could ever sin against so much love. That heart is hard indeed that will not be thus melted.

**2.** It shall have a happy effect upon their neighbours, for it shall bring them to a more clear knowledge of God (v. 36): “*Then the heathen that are left round about you*, that spoke ignorantly of God (for so all those do that speak *ill* of him) when they saw the land of Israel desolate, shall begin to know better, and to speak more intelligently of God, being convinced that he is able to rebuild the most desolate cities and to replant the most desolate countries, and that, though the course of his favours to his people may be obstructed for a time, they shall not be cut off for ever.” They shall be made to know the truth of divine revelation by the exact agreement which they shall discern between God's word which he has spoken to Israel and his works which he has done for them: *I the Lord have spoken it, and I will do it.* With us saying and doing are two things, but they are not so with God.

**V.** He proposes these things to them, not as the *recompence* of their merits, but as the return of their prayers.

**1.** Let them not think that they have deserved it: *Not for your sakes do I this, be it known to you* (v. 22, 32); no, *be you ashamed and confounded for your own ways*. God is *doing* this, all this which he has promised; it is as sure to be done as if it were done already, and present events have a tendency towards it. But then,

**(1.)** They must renounce the merit of their own good works, and be brought to acknowledge that it is not for their sakes that it is done; so, when God brought Israel into Canaan the first time, an express *caveat* was entered against this thought. <sup>(ROM)</sup> Deuteronomy 9:4-6, *It is not for thy righteousness*. It is not for the sake of any of their good qualities or good deeds, not because God had any need of them, or expected any benefit by them. No, in showing mercy he acts by prerogative, not for our deserts, but for his own honour. See how emphatically this is expressed: *Be it known to you, it is not for your sakes*, which intimates that we are apt to entertain a high conceit of our own merits and are with difficulty persuaded to disclaim a confidence in them. But, one way or other, God will make all his favourites to know and own that it is his grace, and not their goodness, his mercy, and not their merit, that made them so; and that therefore not unto them, not unto them, but unto him, is all the glory due.

**(2.)** They must repent of the sin of their own evil ways. They must own that the mercies they receive from God are not only not merited, but that they are a thousand times forfeited; and therefore they must be so far from boasting of their good works that they must be ashamed and confounded for their evil ways, and then they are best prepared for mercy.

**2.** Yet let them know that they must desire and expect it (v. 37): *I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel*. God has spoken, and he will do it, and he will be sought unto for it. He requires that his people should *seek unto him*, and he will incline their hearts to do it, when he is coming towards them in ways of mercy.

**(1.)** They must pray for it, for by prayer God is sought unto, and enquired after. What is the matter of God's promises must be the matter of our prayers. By asking for the mercy promised we must give glory to the donor, express a value for the gift, own our dependence, and put honour upon prayer which God has put honour upon. Christ himself must ask, and

then God will *give him the heathen for his inheritance*, must *pray the Father*, and then he will *send the Comforter*; much more must we ask that we may receive.

(2.) They must consult the oracles of God, and thus also God is sought unto and enquired after. The mercy must be, not an act of providence only, but a child of promise; and therefore the promise must be looked at, and prayer made for it with an eye of faith fastened upon the promise, which must be both the guide and the ground of our expectations. Both these ways we find God enquired of by Daniel, in the name of the house of Israel, when he was about to do those great things for them; he consulted the oracles of God, for he *understood by books*, the book of the prophet Jeremiah, both what was to be expected and when; and then he *set his face* to seek God by prayer, <sup><sup></sup>Daniel 9:2, 3. Note, Our communion with God must be kept up by the word and prayer in all the operations of his providence concerning us and in both he must be enquired of.