

CHAPTER 59

In this chapter we have sin appearing exceedingly sinful, and grace appearing exceedingly gracious; and, as what is here said of the sinner's sin (v. 7, 8) is applied to the general corruption of mankind (~~<4815>~~Romans 3:15), so what is here said of a Redeemer (v. 20) is applied to Christ, ~~<5126>~~Romans 11:26.

I. It is here charged upon this people that they had themselves stopped the current of God's favours to them, and the particular sins are specified which kept good things from them (v. 1-8).

II. It is here charged upon them that they had themselves procured the judgments of God upon them, and they are told both what the judgments were which they had brought upon their own heads (v. 9-11) and what the sins were which provoked God to send those judgments (v. 12-15).

III. It is here promised that, notwithstanding this, God would work deliverance for them, purely for his own name's sake (v. 16-19), and would reserve mercy in store for them and entail it upon them (v. 20, 21).

~~<2891>~~ ISAIAH 59:1-8

THE PREVALENCE AND EFFECTS OF SIN

The prophet here rectifies the mistake of those who had been quarrelling with God because they had not the deliverances wrought for them which they had been often fasting and praying for, ~~<2888>~~Isaiah 58:3. Now here he shows,

I. That it was not owing to God. They had no reason to lay the fault upon him that they were not saved out of the hands of their enemies; for,

1. He was still as able to help as ever: *His hand is not shortened*, his power is not at all lessened, straitened, or abridged. Whether we consider the extent of his power or the efficacy of it, God can reach as far as ever and with as strong a hand as ever. Note, The church's salvation comes from the hand of God, and that has not waxed weak nor is it at all

shortened. *Has the Lord's hand waxed short?* (says God to Moses, ⁴¹²³Numbers 11:23). No, it has not; he will not have it thought so. Neither length of time nor strength of enemies, no, nor weakness of instruments, can shorten or straiten the power of God, with which it is all one to save by many or by few.

2. He was still as ready and willing to help as ever in answer to prayer: *His ear is not heavy, that it cannot hear.* Though he has many prayers to hear and answer, and though he has been long hearing prayer, yet he is still as ready to hear prayer as ever. The prayer of the upright is as much his delight as ever it was, and the promises which are pleaded and put in suit in prayer are still yea and amen, inviolably sure. More is implied than is expressed; not only his ear is not heavy, but he is quick of hearing. *Even before they call he answers,* ²⁷²⁴Isaiah 65:24. If your prayers be not answered, and the salvation we wait for be not wrought for us, it is not because God is weary of hearing prayer, but because we are weary of praying, not because his ear is heavy when we speak to him, but because our ears are heavy when he speaks to us.

II. That it was owing to themselves; they stood in their own light and put a bar in their own door. God was coming towards them in ways of mercy and they hindered him. *Your iniquities have kept good things from you,* ²¹²⁵Jeremiah 5:25.

1. See what mischief sin does.

(1.) It hinders God's mercies from coming down upon us; it is a partition wall that separates between us and God. Notwithstanding the infinite distance that is between God and man by nature, there was a correspondence settled between them, till sin set them at variance, justly provoked God against man and unjustly alienated man from God; thus it *separates between them and God.* "He is your God, yours in profession, and therefore there is so much the more malignity and mischievousness in sin, which separates between you and him." Sin *hides his face from us* (which denotes great displeasure, ⁴⁵¹⁷Deuteronomy 31:17); it provokes him in anger to withdraw his gracious presence, to suspend the tokens of his favour and the instances of his help; he hides his face, as refusing to be seen or spoken with. See here sin in its colours, sin exceedingly sinful, withdrawing the creature from his allegiance to his Creator; and see sin in its consequences, sin exceedingly hurtful, separating us from God, and so

separating us not only *from all good*, but *to all evil* (¹⁶²¹Deuteronomy 29:21), which is the very quintessence of the curse.

(2.) It hinders our prayers from coming up unto God; it provokes him to hide his face, that he will not hear, as he has said, ²¹¹⁵Isaiah 1:15. If we *regard iniquity in our heart*, if we indulge it and allow ourselves in it, God *will not hear our prayers*, ¹⁶⁶⁸Psalms 66:18. We cannot expect that he should countenance us while we go on to affront him.

2. Now, to justify God in hiding his face from them, and proceeding in his controversy with them, the prophet shows very largely, in the following verses, how many and great their iniquities were, according to the charge given him (²⁸¹¹Isaiah 58:1), *to show God's people their transgressions*; and it is a black bill of indictment that is here drawn up against them, consisting of many particulars, any one of which was enough to separate between them and a just and a holy God. Let us endeavour to reduce these articles of impeachment to proper heads.

(1.) We must begin with their thoughts, for there all sin begins, and thence it takes its rise: *Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity*, v. 7. Their imaginations are so, only evil continually. Their projects and designs are so; they are continually contriving some mischief or other, and how to compass the gratification of some base lust (v. 4): *They conceive mischief* in their fancy, purpose, counsel, and resolution (thus the embryo receives its shape and life), and then they *bring forth iniquity*, put it in execution when it is ripened for it. Though it is in pain perhaps that the iniquity is brought forth, through the oppositions of Providences and the checks of their own consciences, yet, when they have compassed their wicked purpose, they look upon it with as much pride and pleasure as if it were a *man-child born into the world*; thus, *when lust has conceived, it bringeth forth sin*, ³¹¹⁵James 1:15. This is called (v. 5) *hatching the cockatrice' egg and weaving the spider's web*. See how the thoughts and contrivances of wicked men are employed, and about what they set their wits on work.

[1.] At the best it is about that which is foolish and frivolous. Their thoughts are vain, like weaving the spider's web, which the poor silly animal takes a great deal of pains about, and, when all is done, it is a weak insignificant thing, a reproach to the place where it is, and which the besom sweeps away in an instant: such are the thoughts which worldly men entertain themselves with, building castles in the air, and pleasing

themselves with imaginary satisfaction, like the *spider*, which *takes hold with her hands* very finely (^{<118>}Proverbs 30:28), but cannot keep her hold.

[2.] Too often it is about that which is malicious and spiteful. They hatch the eggs of the cockatrice or adder, which are poisonous and produce venomous creatures; such are the thoughts of the wicked who delight in doing mischief. *He that eats of their eggs* (that is, he is in danger of having some mischief or other done him), *and that which is crushed* in order to be eaten of, or which begins to be hatched and you promise yourself some useful fowl from it, *breaks out into a viper*, which you meddle with at your peril. Happy are those that have least to do with such men. Even the spider's web which they wove was woven with a spiteful design to catch flies in and make a prey of them; for, rather than not be doing mischief, they will play at small game.

(2.) Out of this abundance of wickedness in the heart their mouth speaks, and yet it does not always speak out the wickedness that is within, but, for the more effectually compassing the mischievous design, it is dissembled and covered *with much fair speech* (v. 3): *Your lips have spoken lies*; and again (v. 4), *They speak lies*, pretending kindness where they intend the greatest mischief; or by slanders and false accusations they blasted the credit and reputation of those they had a spite to and so did them a real mischief unseen, and perhaps by suborning witnesses against them took from them their estates and lives; for a false tongue is sharp arrows, and coals of juniper, and every thing that is mischievous. *Your tongue has muttered perverseness*. When they could not, for shame, speak their malice against their neighbours aloud, or durst not, for fear of being disproved and put to confusion, they muttered it secretly. Backbiters are called *whisperers*.

(3.) Their actions were all of a piece with their thoughts and words. They were guilty of shedding innocent blood, a crime of the most heinous nature: *Your hands are defiled with blood* (v. 3); for blood is defiling; it leaves an indelible stain of guilt upon the conscience, which nothing but the blood of Christ can cleanse it from. Now was this a case of surprise, or one that occurred when there was something of a force put upon them; but (v. 7) *their feet ran to this evil*, naturally and eagerly, and, hurried on by the *impetus* of their malice and revenge, *they made haste to shed innocent blood*, as if they were afraid of losing an opportunity to do a barbarous thing, ^{<116>}Proverbs 1:16; ^{<117>}Jeremiah 22:17. *Wasting and destruction are*

in their paths. Wherever they go they carry mischief along with them, and the tendency of their way is to lay waste and destroy, nor do they care what havoc they make. Nor do they only thirst after blood, but with other iniquities are their *fingers defiled* (v. 3); they wrong people in their estates and make every thing their own that they can lay their hands on. *They trust in vanity* (v. 4); they depend upon their arts of cozenage to enrich themselves with, which will prove vanity to them, and their deceiving others will but deceive themselves. *Their works*, which they take so much pains about and have their hearts so much upon, *are all works of iniquity*; their whole business is one continued course of oppressions and vexations, *and the act of violence is in their hands*, according to the arts of violence that are in their heads and the thoughts of violence in their hearts.

(4.) No methods are taken to redress these grievances, and reform these abuses (v. 4): *None calls for justice*, none complains of the violation of the sacred laws of justice, nor seeks to right those that suffer wrong or to get the laws put in execution against vice and profaneness, and those lewd practices which are the shame, and threaten to be the bane, of the nation. Note, When justice is not done there is blame to be laid not only upon the magistrates that should administer justice, but upon the people that should call for it. Private persons ought to contribute to the public good by discovering secret wickedness, and giving those an opportunity to punish it that have the power of doing so in their hands; but it is ill with a state when princes rule ill and the people love to have it so. Truth is opposed, and there is not any that *pleads for it*, not any that has the conscience and courage to appear in defence of an honest cause, and confront a prosperous fraud and wrong. *The way of peace* is as little regarded as the way of truth; they *know it not*, that is, they never study the things that make for peace, no care is taken to prevent or punish the breaches of the peace and to accommodate matters in difference among neighbours; they are utter strangers to every thing that looks quiet and peaceable, and affect that which is blustering and turbulent. *There is no judgment in their goings*; they have not any sense of justice in their dealings; it is a thing they make no account of at all, but can easily break through all its fences if they stand in the way of their malicious covetous designs.

(5.) In all this they act foolishly, very foolishly, and as much against their interest as against reason and equity. Those that practise iniquity *trust in vanity*, which will certainly deceive them, v. 4. *Their webs*, which they weave with so much art and industry, *shall not become garments, neither*

shall they cover themselves, either for shelter or for ornament, *with their works*, v. 6. They may do hurt to others with their projects, but can never do any real service or kindness to themselves by them. There is nothing to be got by sin, and so it will appear when profit and loss come to be compared. Those paths of iniquity are *crooked paths* (v. 8), which will perplex them, but will never bring them to their journey's end; whoever go therein, though they say that they shall have peace notwithstanding they go on, deceive themselves; for they shall not know peace, as appears by the following verses.

ISAIAH 59:9-15

THE PREVALENCE AND EFFECTS OF SIN

The scope of this paragraph is the same with that of the last, to show that sin is the great mischief-maker; as it is that which keeps good things from us, so it is that which brings evil things upon us. But as *there* it is spoken by the prophet, in God's name, to the people, for their conviction and humiliation, and that God might be justified when he speaks and clear when he judges, so *here* it seems to be spoken by the people to God, as an acknowledgment of that which was there told them and an expression of their humble submission and subscription to the justice and equity of God's proceedings against them. Their uncircumcised hearts here seem to be humbled in some measure, and they are brought to confess (the confession is at least extorted from them), that God had justly walked contrary to them, because they had walked contrary to him.

I. They acknowledge that God had contended with them and had walked contrary to them. Their case was very deplorable, v. 9-11.

1. They were in distress, trampled upon and oppressed by their enemies, unjustly dealt with, and ruled with rigour; and God did not appear for them, to plead their just and injured cause: "*Judgment is far from us, neither does justice overtake us*, v. 9. Though, as to our persecutors, we are sure that we have right on our side; and they are the wrong-doers, yet we are not relieved, we are not righted. We have not done justice to one another, and therefore God suffers our enemies to deal thus unjustly with us, and we are as far as ever from being restored to our right and recovering our property again. Oppression is near us, and judgment is far

from us. Our enemies are far from giving our case its due consideration, but still hurry us on with the violence of their oppressions, and justice does not overtake us, to rescue us out of their hands.”

2. Herein their expectations were sadly disappointed, which made their case the more sad: “*We wait for light* as those that wait for the morning, *but behold obscurity*; we cannot discern the least dawning of the day of our deliverance. *We look for judgment, but there is none* (v. 11); neither God nor man appears for our succour; we look for salvation, because God (we think) has promised it, and we have prayed for it with fasting; we look for it as for brightness, but it is far off from us, as far off as ever for aught we can perceive, and still *we walk in darkness*; and the higher our expectations have been raised the sorer is the disappointment.”

3. They were quite at a loss what to do to help themselves and were at their wits' end (v. 10): “*We grope for the wall like the blind*; we see no way open for our relief, nor know which way to expect it, or what to do in order to it.” If we shut our eyes against the light of divine truth, it is just with God to hide from our eyes the things that belong to our peace; and, if we use not our eyes as we should, it is just with him to let us be as if we had no eyes. Those that will not see their duty shall not see their interest. Those whom God has given up to a judicial blindness are strangely infatuated; they stumble at noon-day as in the night; they see not either those dangers, or those advantages, which all about them see. *Quos Deus vult perdere, eos dementat* — *God infatuates those whom he means to destroy*. Those that love darkness rather than light shall have their doom accordingly.

4. They sunk into despair and were quite overwhelmed with grief, the marks of which appeared in every man's countenance; they grew melancholy upon it, shunned conversation, and affected solitude: *We are in desolate places as dead men*. The state of the Jews in Babylon is represented by *dead and dry bones* (³⁵⁷²Ezekiel 37:12) and the explanation of the comparison there (v. 11) explains this text: *Our hope is lost; we are cut off for our parts*. In this despair the sorrow and anguish of some were loud and noisy: *We roar like bears*; the sorrow of others was silent, and preyed more upon their spirits: “*We mourn sore like doves*, like doves of the valleys; we mourn both *for our iniquities* (³¹⁷⁶Ezekiel 7:16) and for our calamities.” Thus they owned that *the hand of the Lord had gone out against them*.

II. They acknowledge that they had provoked God thus to contend with them, that he had done right, for they had done wickedly, v. 12-15.

1. They owned that they had sinned, and that to this day they were in a great trespass, as Ezra speaks (⁴⁵⁰⁰Ezra 10:10): “*Our transgressions are with us; the guilt of them is upon us, the power of them prevails among us, we are not yet reformed, nor have we parted with our sins, though they have done so much mischief. Nay, our transgressions are multiplied; they are more numerous and more heinous than they have been formerly. Look which way we will, we cannot look off them; all places, all orders and degrees of men, are infected. The sense of our transgression is with us, as David said, My sin is ever before me; it is too plain to be denied or concealed, too bad to be excused or palliated. God is a witness to them: They are multiplied before thee, in thy sight, under thy eye. We are witnesses against ourselves: As for our iniquities, we know them, though we may have foolishly endeavoured to cover them. Nay, they themselves are witnesses: Our sins stare us in the face and testify against us, so many have they been and so deeply aggravated.*”

2. They owned the great evil and malignity of sin, of their sin; it is *transgressing and lying against the Lord*, v. 13. The sins of those that profess themselves God's people, and bear his name, are upon *this* account worse than the sins of others, that in transgressing they *lie against the Lord*, they falsely accuse him, they misrepresent and belie him, as if he had dealt hardly and unfairly with them; or they perfidiously break covenant with him and falsify their most sacred and solemn engagements to him, which is *lying against him: it is departing away from our God*, to whom we are bound as our God and to whom we ought to cleave with purpose of heart; from him we have departed, as the rebellious subject from his allegiance to his rightful prince, and the adulterous wife from the guide of her youth and the covenant of her God.

3. They owned that there was a general decay of moral honesty; and it is not strange that those who were false to their God were unfaithful to one another. They *spoke oppression*, declared openly for that, though it was a revolt from their God and a revolt from the truth, by the sacred bonds of which we should always be tied and held fast. They *conceived and uttered words of falsehood*. Many ill thing is conceived in the mind, yet is prudently stifled there, and not suffered to go any further; but these sinners were so impudent, so daring, that whatever wickedness they conceived,

they gave it an *imprimatur* — a sanction, and made no difficulty of publishing it. To think an ill thing is bad, but to say it is much worse. Many a word of falsehood is uttered in haste, for want of consideration; but these were conceived and uttered, were uttered-deliberately and of malice prepense. They were words of falsehood, and yet they are said to be uttered *from the heart*, because, though they differed from the real sentiments of the heart and therefore were words of falsehood, yet they agreed with the malice and wickedness of the heart, and were the natural language of that; it was a *double heart*, ^{<30>}Psalm 12:2. Those who by the grace of God kept themselves free from these enormous crimes yet put themselves into the confession of sin, because members of that nation which was generally thus corrupted.

4. They owned that that was not done which might have been done to reform the land and to amend what was amiss, v. 14. “*Judgment*, that should go forward, and bear down the opposition that is made to it, that should run in its course like a river, like a mighty stream, *is turned away backward*, a contrary course. The administration of justice has become but a cover to the greatest injustice. Judgment, that should check the proceedings of fraud and violence, is driven back, and so they go on triumphantly. *Justice stands afar off*, even from our courts of judicature, which are so crowded with the patrons of oppression that *equity cannot enter*, cannot have admission into the court, cannot be heard, or at least will not be heeded. Equity enters not into the unrighteous decrees which they decree, ^{<30>}Isaiah 10:1. *Truth is fallen in the street*, and there she may lie to be trampled upon by every foot of pride, and she has never a friend that will lend a hand to help her up; *yea, truth fails* in common conversation, and in dealings between man and man, so that one knows not whom to believe nor whom to trust.”

5. They owned that there was a prevailing enmity in men's minds to those that were good: *He that does evil goes unpunished*, but *he that departs from evil makes himself a prey* to those beasts of prey that were before described. It is crime enough with them for a man not to do as they do, and they treat *him* as an enemy who will not partake with them in their wickedness. *He that departs from evil is accounted mad*; so the margin reads. Sober singularity is branded as folly, and he is thought next door to a madman who swims against the stream that runs so strongly.

6. They owned that all this could not but be very displeasing to the God of heaven. The evil was done in his sight. They knew very well, though they were not willing to acknowledge it, that the Lord saw it; though it was done secretly, and gilded over with specious pretences, yet it could not be concealed from his all-seeing eye. All the wickedness that is in the world is naked and open before the eyes of God; and, as he is of quicker eyes than not to see iniquity, so he is of purer eyes than to behold it with the least approbation or allowance. *He saw it, and it displeased him*, though it was among his own professing people that he saw it. It was evil in his eyes; he saw the sinfulness of all this sin, and that which was most offensive to him was *that there was no judgment*, no reformation; had he seen any signs of repentance, though the sin displeased him, he would soon have been reconciled to the sinners upon their returning from their evil way. *Then* the sin of a nation becomes national, and brings public judgments, when it is not restrained by public justice.

ISAIAH 59:16-21

THE KIND INTERPOSITION OF GOD

How sin abounded we have read, to our great amazement, in the former part of the chapter; how grace does much more abound we read in these verses. And, as sin took occasion from the commandment to become more exceedingly sinful, so grace took occasion from the transgression of the commandment to appear more exceedingly gracious. Observe,

I. Why God wrought salvation for this provoking people, notwithstanding their provocations. It was purely for his own name's sake; because there was nothing in them either to bring it about, or to induce him to bring it about for them, no merit to deserve it, no might to effect it, he would do it himself, would be exalted in his own strength, for his own glory.

1. He took notice of their weakness and wickedness: *He saw that there was no man* that would do any thing for the support of the bleeding cause of religion and virtue among them, not a man that would execute judgment (~~241E~~ Jeremiah 5:1), that would bestir himself in a work of reformation; those that complained of the badness of the times had not zeal and courage enough to appear and act against it; there was a universal corruption of manners, and nothing done to stem the tide; most were wicked, and those

that were not so were yet weak, and durst not attempt any thing in opposition to the wickedness of the wicked. *There was no intercessor*, either none to intercede with God, to stand in the gap by prayer to turn away his wrath (it would have pleased him to be thus met, and he wondered that he was not), or, rather, none to interpose for the support of justice and truth, which were trampled upon and run down (v. 14), no advocate to speak a good word for those who were made a prey of because they kept their integrity, v. 15. They complained that God did not appear for them (²⁸⁸Isaiah 58:3); but God with much more reason complains that they did nothing for themselves, intimating how ready he would have been to do them good if he had found among them the least motion towards a reformation.

2. He engaged his own strength and righteousness for them. They shall be saved, notwithstanding all this; and,

(1.) Because they have no strength of their own, nor any active men that will set to it in good earnest to redress the grievances either of their iniquities or of their calamities, therefore *his own arm shall bring salvation to him*, to his people, or to him whom he would raise up to be the deliverer, Christ, the power of God and arm of the Lord, that man of his right hand whom he made strong for himself. The work of reformation (that is the first and principal article of the salvation) shall be wrought by the immediate influences of the divine grace on men's consciences. Since magistrates and societies for reformation fail of doing their part, one will not do justice nor the other call for it, God will let them know that he can do it without them when his time shall come thus to prepare his people for mercy, and then the work of deliverance shall be wrought by the immediate operations of the divine Providence on men's affections and affairs. When God stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, and brought his people out of Babylon, *not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts*, then his own arm, which is never shortened, brought salvation.

(2.) Because they have no righteousness of their own to merit these favours, and to which God might have an eye in working for them, therefore *his own righteousness sustained him* and bore him out in it. Divine justice, which by their sins they had armed against them, through grace appears for them. Though they can expect no favour as due to them, yet he will be just to himself, to his own purpose and promise, and covenant with his people: he will, in righteousness, punish the enemies of

his people; see ^{<1805>}Deuteronomy 9:5. *Not for thy righteousness, but for the wickedness of these nations* they are driven out. In our redemption by Christ, since we had no righteousness of our own to produce, on which God might proceed in favour to us, he brought in a righteousness by the merit and meditation of his own Son (it is called *the righteousness which is of God by faith*, ^{<1809>}Philippians 3:9), and this righteousness sustained him, and bore him out in all his favours to us, notwithstanding our provocations. *He put on righteousness as a breast-plate*, securing his own honour, as a breast-plate does the vitals, in all his proceedings, by the justice and equity of them; and then he put *a helmet of salvation upon his head*; so sure is he to effect the salvation he intends that he takes salvation itself for his helmet, which therefore must needs be impenetrable, and in which he appears very illustrious, formidable in the eyes of his enemies and amiable in the eyes of his friends. When righteousness is his coat of arms, salvation is his crest. In allusion to this, among the pieces of a Christian's armour we find *the breast-plate of righteousness*, and for a helmet *the hope of salvation* (^{<1814>}Ephesians 6:14-17; ^{<1818>}1 Thessalonians 5:8), and it is called *the armour of God*, because he wore it first and so fitted it for us.

(3.) Because they have no spirit or zeal to do any thing for themselves, God will *put on the garments of vengeance for clothing, and clothe himself with zeal as a cloak*; he will make his justice upon the enemies of his church and people, and his jealousy for his own glory and the honour of religion and virtue among men, to appear evident and conspicuous in the eye of the world; and in these he will show himself great, as a man shows himself in his rich attire or in the distinguishing habit of his office. If men be not zealous against sin, God will, and will take vengeance on it for all the injury it has done to his honour and his people's welfare; and this was the business of Christ in the world, to take away sin and be revenged on it.

II. What the salvation is that shall be wrought out by the righteousness and strength of God himself.

1. There shall be a present temporal salvation wrought out for the Jews in Babylon, or elsewhere in distress and captivity. This is promised (v. 18, 19) as a type of something further. When God's time shall come he will do his own work, though those fail that should forward it. It is here promised,

(1.) That God will reckon with his enemies and will render to them according to their deeds, to the enemies of his people abroad, that have oppressed them, to the enemies of justice and truth at home, that have oppressed them, for they also are God's enemies; and, when the day of vengeance shall have come, he will deal with both as they have deserved, *according to retribution* (so the word is), the law of retributions (²⁶³⁰Revelation 13:10), or *according to former retributions*; as he has rendered to his enemies formerly, accordingly he will now repay, *fury to his adversaries, recompence to his enemies*; his fury shall not exceed the rules of justice, as men's fury commonly does. Even *to the islands*, that lie most remote, if they have appeared against him, *he will repay recompence*; for *his hand shall find out all his enemies* (²⁶⁰⁸Psalm 21:8), and his arrows reach them. Though God's people have behaved so ill that they do not deserve to be delivered, yet his enemies behave so much worse that they do deserve to be destroyed.

(2.) That, whatever attempts the enemies of God's people may afterwards make upon them to disturb their peace, they shall be baffled and brought to nought: *When the enemy shall come in like a flood*, like a high spring-tide, or a land-flood, which threaten to bear down all before them without control, then *the Spirit of the Lord* by some secret undiscerned power *shall lift up a standard against him*, and so (as the margin reads it) *put him to flight*. He that has delivered will still deliver. When God's people are weak and helpless, and have no standard to lift up against the invading power, God will *give a banner to those that fear him* (²⁶⁰⁶Psalm 60:4), will by his Spirit lift up a standard, which will draw multitudes together to appear on the church's behalf. Some read it, *He shall come* (the name of the Lord, and his glory, before foreseen of the Messiah promised) *like a straight river, the Spirit of the Lord lifting him up for an ensign*. Christ by the preaching of his gospel shall cover the earth with the knowledge of God as with the waters of a flood, the *Spirit of the Lord* setting up Christ as a *standard to the Gentiles*, (²³¹⁰Isaiah 11:10).

(3.) That all this should redound to the glory of God and the advancement of religion in the world (v. 19): *So shall they fear the name of the Lord and his glory* in all nations that lie eastward or westward. The deliverance of the Jews out of captivity, and the destruction brought on their oppressors, would awaken multitudes to enquire concerning the God of Israel, and induce them to serve and worship him and enlist themselves under the standard which the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up. God's

appearances for his church shall occasion the accession of many to it. This had its full accomplishment in gospel times, when many came *from the east and west*, to fill up the places of *the children of the kingdom* that were *cast out*, when there were set up eastern and western churches, ^{<401>}Matthew 8:11.

2. There shall be a more glorious salvation wrought out by the Messiah in the fulness of time, which salvation all the prophets, upon all occasions, had in view. We have here the two great promises relating to that salvation: —

(1.) That the Son of God shall come to us to be our Redeemer (v. 20): *Thy Redeemer shall come*; it is applied to Christ, ^{<402>}Romans 9:26. *There shall come the deliverer*. The coming of Christ as the Redeemer is the summary of all the promises both of the Old and New Testament, and this was the redemption in Jerusalem which the believing Jews looked for, ^{<403>}Luke 2:38. Christ is our *God*, our next kinsman, that redeems both the person and the estate of the poor debtor. Observe,

[1.] The place where this Redeemer shall appear: He *shall come to Zion*, for there, on that holy hill, the Lord would set him up as his King, ^{<404>}Psalms 2:6. In Zion the chief corner-stone was to be laid, ^{<405>}1 Peter 2:6. He came to his temple there, ^{<406>}Malachi 3:1. There salvation was to be placed (^{<407>}Isaiah 46:13), for thence the law was to go forth, ^{<408>}Isaiah 2:3. Zion was a type of the gospel church, for which the Redeemer acts in all his appearances: *The Redeemer shall come for the sake of Zion*; so the Septuagint reads it.

[2.] The persons that shall have the comfort of the Redeemer's coming, that shall then lift up their heads, knowing that their redemption draws nigh. He shall come *to those that turn from the ungodliness in Jacob*, to those that are in Jacob, to the praying seed of Jacob, in answer to their prayers; yet not to all that are in Jacob, that are within the pale of the visible church, but to those only that turn from transgression, that repent, and reform, and forsake those sins which Christ came to redeem them from. The sinners in Zion will fare never the better for the Redeemer's coming to Zion if they go on still in their trespasses.

(2.) That the Spirit of God shall come to us to be our sanctifier, v. 21. In the Redeemer there was a new covenant made with us a covenant of promises; and this is the great and comprehensive promise of that

covenant, that God will give and continue his word and Spirit to his church and people throughout all generations. God's giving the *Spirit to those that ask him* includes the giving of them all *good things*, ^{<2113>}Luke 11:13; ^{<4071>}Matthew 7:11. This covenant is here said to *be made with them*, that is, with those that turn from transgression; for those that cease to do evil shall be taught to do well. But the promise is made to a single person — *My Spirit that is upon thee*, being directed either,

[1.] To Christ as the head of the church, who received that he might give. The Spirit promised to the church was first upon him, and from his head that precious ointment descended to the skirts of his garments; and the word of the gospel was first put into his mouth; for *it began to be spoken by the Lord*. And all believers are his seed, in whom he prolongs his days, ^{<2530>}Isaiah 53:10. Or,

[2.] To the church; and so it is a promise of the continuance and perpetuity of the church in the world to the end of time, parallel to those promises that the throne and seed of Christ shall endure for ever, ^{<680>}Psalms 89:29, 36; 22:30. Observe, *First*, How the church shall be kept up, in a succession, as the world of mankind is kept up, by the seed and the seed's seed. As one generation passes away another generation shall come. *Instead of the fathers shall be the children*. *Secondly*, How long it shall be kept up — *henceforth and for ever*, always, even *unto the end of the world*; for, the world being left to stand for the sake of the church, we may be sure that as long as it does stand Christ will have a church in it, though no always visible. *Thirdly*, By what means it shall be kept up; by the constant residence of the word and Spirit in it.

1. The Spirit that was upon Christ shall always continue in the hearts of the faithful; there shall be some in every age on whom he shall work, and in whom he shall dwell, and thus the Comforter shall abide with the church for ever, ^{<6446>}John 14:16.

2. The word of Christ shall always continue in the mouths of the faithful; there shall be some in every age who, *believing with the heart* unto righteousness, shall *with the tongue make confession unto salvation*. The word shall never depart out of the mouth of the church; for there shall still be a seed to speak Christ's holy language and profess his holy religion. Observe, The Spirit and the word go together, and by them the church is kept up. For the word in the mouths of our ministers, nay, the word in our own mouths, will not profit us, unless the Spirit work with the word, and

give us an understanding. But the Spirit does his work by the word and in concurrence with it; and whatever is pretended to be a dictate of the Spirit must be tried by the scriptures. On these foundations the church is built, stands firmly, and shall stand for ever, Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.