

CHAPTER 42

The prophet seems here to launch out yet further into the prophecy of the Messiah and his kingdom under the type of Cyrus; and, having the great work of man's salvation by him yet more in view, he almost forgets the occasion that led him into it and drops the return out of Babylon; for indeed the prospect of this would be a greater comfort and support to the believing pious Jews, in their captivity, than the hope of that. And (as Mr. Gataker well observes) in this and similar prophecies of Christ, that are couched in types, as of David and Solomon, some passages agree to the type and not to the truth, other to the truth and not to the type, and many to the type in one sense and the truth in another. Here is,

- I.** A prophecy of the Messiah's coming with meekness, and yet with power, to do the Redeemer's work (v. 1-4).
- II.** His commission opened, which he received from the Father (v. 5-9).
- III.** The joy and rejoicing with which the glad tidings of this should be received (v. 10-12).
- IV.** The wonderful success of the gospel, for the overthrow of the devil's kingdom (v. 13-17).
- V.** The rejection and ruin of the Jews for their unbelief (v. 18-25).

ISAIAH 42:1-4

THE MESSIAH'S APPROACH

We are sure that these verses are to be understood of Christ, for the evangelist tells us expressly that in him this prophecy was fulfilled, ^{<4127>}Matthew 12:17-21. *Behold* with an eye of faith, behold and observe, behold and admire, *my servant, whom I uphold*. Let the Old-Testament saints behold and remember him. Now what must we behold and consider concerning him?

I. The Father's concern for him and relation to him, the confidence he put and the complacency he took in him. This put an honour upon him, and made him remarkable, above any other circumstance, v. 1.

1. God owns him as one employed for him: He is *my servant*. Though he was a Son, yet, as a Mediator, he *took upon him the form of a servant*, learned obedience to the will of God and practised it, and laid out himself to advance the interests of God's kingdom, and so he was God's servant.

2. As one chosen by him: He is *my elect*. He did not thrust himself into the service, but was called of God, and pitched upon as the fittest person for it. Infinite Wisdom made the choice and then avowed it.

3. As one he put a confidence in: He is *my servant on whom I lean*; so some read it. The Father put a confidence in him that he would go through with his undertaking, and, in that confidence, brought many sons to glory. It was a great trust which the Father reposed in the Son, but he knew him to be *par negotioequal to it*, both able and faithful.

4. As one he took care of: He is *my servant whom I uphold*; so we read it. The Father bore him up, and bore him out, in his upholding him; he stood by him and strengthened him.

5. As one whom he took an entire complacency in: *My elect, in whom my soul delights*. His delight was in him from eternity, when he was *by him as one brought up with him*, ⁽²⁰⁸⁰⁾Proverbs 8:30. He had a particular satisfaction in his undertaking: he declared himself *well pleased in him* (⁽⁴⁰⁸⁷⁾Matthew 3:17; 17:5), and *therefore* loved him, because he laid down his life for the sheep. Let our souls delight in Christ, rely on him, and rejoice in him; and thus let us be united to him, and then, for his sake, the Father will be well pleased with us.

II. The qualification of him for his office: *I have put my Spirit upon him*, to enable him to go through his undertaking, ⁽²⁰⁰¹⁾Isaiah 61:1. The Spirit did not only come, but rest, upon him (⁽²⁰¹²⁾Isaiah 11:2), not by measure, as on others of God's servants, but without measure. Those whom God employs as his servants; as he will uphold them and be well pleased with them, so he will put his Spirit upon them.

III. The work to which he is appointed; it is to *bring forth judgment to the Gentiles*, that is, in infinite wisdom, holiness, and equity, to set up a

religion in the world under the bonds of which the Gentiles should come and the blessings of which they should enjoy. The judgments of the Lord, which had been hidden from the Gentiles (~~1970~~ Psalm 147:20), he came to bring forth to the Gentiles, for he was *to be a light to lighten them*.

IV. The mildness and tenderness with which he should pursue this undertaking, v. 2, 3. He shall carry it on,

1. In silence, and without noise: *He shall not strive nor cry*. It shall not be proclaimed, *Lo, here, is Christ* or *Lo, he is there*; as when great princes ride in progress or make a public entry. He shall have no trumpet sounded before him, nor any noisy retinue to follow him. The opposition he meets with he shall not strive against, but patiently *endure the contradiction of sinners against himself*. His kingdom is spiritual, and therefore its weapons are not carnal, nor is its appearance pompous; it comes not with observation.

2. Gently, and without rigour. Those that are wicked he will be patient with; when he has begun to crush them, so that they are as bruised reeds, he will give them space to repent and not immediately break them; though they are very offensive, as smoking flax (~~2115~~ Isaiah 65:5), yet he will bear with them, as he did with Jerusalem. Those that are weak he will be tender of; those that have but a little life, a little heat, that are weak as a reed, oppressed with doubts and fears, *as a bruised reed*, that are *as smoking flax*, as the wick of a candle newly lighted, which is ready to go out again, he will not despise them, will not plead against them with his great power, nor lay upon them more work or more suffering than they can bear, which would break and quench them, but will graciously consider their frame. More is implied than is expressed. *He will not break the bruised reed*, but will strengthen it, that it may become a cedar in the courts of our God. *He will not quench the smoking flax*, but blow it up into a flame. Note, Jesus Christ is very tender toward those that have true grace, though they are but weak in it, and accepts the willingness of the spirit, pardoning and passing by the weakness of the flesh.

V. The courage and constancy with which he should persevere in this undertaking, so as to carry his point at last (v. 4): *He shall not fail nor be discouraged*. Though he meets with hard service and much opposition, and foresees how ungrateful the world will be, yet he goes on with his part of the work, till he is able to say, *Is is finished*; and he enables his apostles

and ministers to go on with theirs too, and not to fail nor be discouraged, till they also have finished their testimony. And thus he accomplishes what he undertook.

1. *He brings forth judgment unto truth.* By a long course of miracles, and his resurrection at last, he shall fully evince the truth of his doctrine and the divine origin and authority of that holy religion which he came to establish.

2. *He sets judgment in the earth.* He erects his government in the world, a church for himself among men, reforms the world, and by the power of his gospel and grace fixes such principles in the minds of men as tend to make them wise and just.

3. *The isles of the Gentiles wait for his law,* wait for his gospel, that is, bid it welcome as if it had been a thing they had long waited for. They shall become his disciples, shall sit at his feet, and be ready to receive the law from his mouth. *What wilt thou have us to do?*

ISAIAH 42:5-12

THE MESSIAH'S APPROACH

Here is

I. The covenant God made with and the commission he gave to the Messiah, v. 57, which are an exposition of v. 1, *Behold my servant, whom I uphold.*

1. The royal titles by which the great God here makes himself known, and distinguishes himself from all pretenders, speak very much his glory (v. 5): *Thus saith God the Lord.* And who are thou, Lord? Why, he is the fountain of all being and therefore the fountain of all power. He is the fountain of being,

1. In the upper world; for *he created the heavens and stretched them out* (²⁴¹²Isaiah 40:22), and keeps the vast expanse still upon the stretch.

2. In the lower world: for *he spread forth the earth,* and made it a capacious habitation, *and that which comes out of it* is produced by his power.

3. In the world of mankind: *He gives breath to the people upon it*, not only air to breathe in, but the breath of life itself and organs to breathe with; nay, he gives *spirit*, the powers and faculties of a rational soul, to those that walk therein. Now this is prefixed to God's covenant with the Messiah, and the commission given him, not only to show that he has authority to make such a covenant and give such a commission, and had power sufficient to bear him out, but that the design of the work of redemption was to maintain the honour of the Creator, and to restore man to the allegiance he owes to God as his Maker.

2. The assurances which he gives to the Messiah of his presence with him in all he did pursuant to his undertaking speak much encouragement to him, v. 6.

(1.) God owns that the Messiah did not take the honour of being Mediator to himself, but was called of God, that he was no intruder, no usurper, but was fairly brought to it (³⁰⁰⁴ Hebrews 5:4): *I have called thee in righteousness*. God not only did him no wrong in calling him to this hard service, he having voluntarily offered himself to it, but did himself right in providing for his own honour and performing the word which he had spoken.

(2.) He promises to stand by him and strengthen him in it, to hold his hand, not only to his work, but in it, to hold his hand, that it might not shake, that it might not fail, and so to keep him. When an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him in his agonies, and the Father himself was with him, then this promise was fulfilled. Note, Those whom God calls he will own and help, and will hold their hands.

3. The great intentions of this commission speak abundance of comfort to the children of men. He was given *for a covenant of the people*, for a mediator, or guarantee, of the covenant of grace, which is all summed up in him. God, in giving us Christ, has with him freely given us all the blessings of the new covenant. Two glorious blessings Christ, in his gospel, brings with him to the Gentile worldlight and liberty.

(1.) He is given *for a light to the Gentiles*, not only to reveal to them what they were concerned to know, and which otherwise they could not have known, but to open the blind eyes, that they might know it. By his Spirit in the word he presents the object; by his Spirit in the heart he prepared the organ. When the gospel came light came, a great light, to those that sat in

darkness, ^{<1015>}Matthew 4:16; ^{<1189>}John 3:19. And St. Paul was sent to the Gentiles *to open their eyes*, ^{<488>}Acts 26:18. Christ is the light of the world.

(2.) He is sent to proclaim liberty to the captives, as Cyrus did, *to bring out the prisoners*; not only to open the prison-doors, and give them leave to go out, which was all that Cyrus could do, but to bring them out, to induce and enable them to make use of their liberty, which none did but those whose spirits God stirred up. This Christ does by his grace.

II. The ratification and confirmation of this grant. That we may be assured of the validity of it consider,

1. The authority of him that makes the promise (v. 8): *I am the Lord, Jehovah, that is my name*, and that was the name by which he made himself known when he began to perform the promise made to the patriarchs; whereas, before, he manifested himself by the name of God Almighty, ^{<1068>}Exodus 6:3. If he is the Lord that gives being and birth to all things, he will give being and birth to this promise. If his name be *Jehovah*, which speaks him God alone, we may be sure his name is *jealous*, and he *will not give his glory to another*, whoever it is that stands in competition with him, especially not to *graven images*. He will send the Messiah to open men's eyes, that so he may turn them from the service of dumb idols to serve the living God, because, though he has long winked at the times of ignorance, he will now maintain his prerogative, and will not give his glory to graven images. He will perform his word because he will not lose the honour of being true to it, nor be ever charged with falsehood by the worshippers of false gods. He will deliver his people from under the power of idolaters because it looks as if he had given his praise to graven images when he gives up his own worshippers to be worshippers of images.

2. The accomplishment of the promises he had formerly made concerning his church, which are proofs of the truth of his word and the kindness he bears to his people (v. 9): "*Behold, the former things have come to pass*; hitherto the Lord has helped his church, has supported her under former burdens, relieved her in former straits; and this in performance of the promises made to the fathers. *There has not failed one word*, ^{<1185>}1 Kings 8:56. *And now new things do I declare*. Now I will make new promises, which shall as certainly be fulfilled in their season as old ones were; now I will bestow new favours, such as have not been conferred formerly. Old-

Testament blessings you have had abundantly; now I declare New-Testament blessings, not a fruitful country and dominion over your neighbours, but *spiritual blessings in heavenly things*. *Before they spring forth* in the preaching of the gospel *I tell you of them*, under the type and figure of the former things.” Note, The receipt of former mercies may encourage us to hope for further mercies; for God is constant in his care for his people, and his compassions are still new.

III. The song of joy and praise which should be sung hereupon to the glory of God (v. 10): *Sing unto the Lord a new song*, a New-Testament song. The giving of Christ for *a light to the Gentiles* (v. 6) was a new thing, and very surprising. The apostle speaks of it as a mystery which, in other ages, was not made known, as it is now revealed, *that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs*, ^{<4085>}Ephesians 3:5, 6. Now, this being the new thing which God declares, the newness of the song which is to be sung on this occasion is this, that whereas, before, the songs of the Lord were very much confined to the temple at Jerusalem (David's psalms were in the language of the Jews only, and sung by them in their own country only; for, when they were in a strange land, they hung their harps on the willow-trees and could not sing the Lord's song, as we find, ^{<4102>}Psalms 137:24), now the songs of holy joy and praise shall be sung all the world over. The Gentile nations shall share equally with the Jews in New-Testament blessings, and therefore shall join in New-Testament praises and acts of worship. There shall be churches set up in Gentile nations and they shall sing a new song. The conversion of the Gentiles is often foretold under this notion, as appears, ^{<4119>}Romans 15:9-11. It is here promised that the praises of God's grace shall be sung with joy and thankfulness,

1. By those that live in *the end of the earth*, in countries that lie most remote from Jerusalem. *From the uttermost parts of the earth have we heard songs*, ^{<2346>}Isaiah 24:16. This was fulfilled when Christianity was planted in our land.

2. By mariners and merchants, and those that *go down to the sea*, that do business in great waters, and suck the riches of the sea, and so make themselves masters of the fulness thereof and all that is therein, with which they shall praise God, and justly, for it is his, ^{<4201>}Psalms 24:1; 95:5. The Jews traded little at sea; if therefore God's praises be sung by those that go down to the sea, it must be by Gentiles. Sea-faring men are called upon to praise God, ^{<4473>}Psalms 107:23.

3. *By the islands and the inhabitants thereof*, v. 10, and again, v. 12. Let them *declare his praise in the islands*, the isles of the Gentiles, probably referring to the islands of Greece.

4. *By the wilderness and the cities thereof, and the villages of Kedar*. These lay east from Jerusalem, as the islands lay west, so that the gospel songs should be sung from the rising of the sun to the going down of the same. The whole Gentile world had been like an island, cut off from communication with God's church, and like a wilderness, uncultivated and bringing forth no fruit to God; but now the islands and the wilderness shall praise God.

5. *By the inhabitants of the rock*, and those that dwell *on the tops of the mountains*, not only the Gentiles, but the poorest and meanest and most despicable, those that dwell in cottages, as well as those that inhabit cities and villages. The rude and most barbarous, as the mountaineers commonly are, shall be civilized by the gospel. Or by the inhabitants of the rock may be meant the inhabitants of that part of Arabia which is called *Petraeathe rocky*. Perhaps the neighbouring countries shared in the joy of the Israelites when they returned out of Babylon and some of them came and joined with them in their praises; but we find not that it was to any such degree as might fully answer this illustrious prophecy, and must conclude that it reaches further, and was fulfilled in that which many other prophecies of the joy of the nations are said in the New-Testament to be fulfilled in, the conversion of the Gentiles to the faith of Christ. When they are brought into the church they are brought to give glory to the Lord; then they are to him for a name and a praise, and they make it their business to praise him. He is glorified in them and by them.

ISAIAH 42:13-17

JUDGMENT AND MERCY

It comes all to one whether we make these verses (as some do) the song itself that is to be sung by the Gentile world or a prophecy of what God will do to make way for the singing of that song, that evangelical new song.

I. He will appear in his power and glory more than ever. So he did in the preaching of his gospel, in the divine power and energy which went along with it, and in the wonderful success it had in the *pulling down of Satan's stronghold*, v. 13, 14. *He had long held his peace, and been still, and refrained himself, while he winked at the times of the ignorance of the Gentile world* (^{<417D>}Acts 17:30), and *suffered all nations to walk in their own ways* (^{<414E>}Acts 14:16); but now *he shall go forth as a mighty man, as a man of war*, to attack the devil's kingdom and give it a fatal blow. The going forth of the gospel is thus represented, (^{<60D>}Revelation 6:2. Christ, in it, went forth conquering and to conquer. The ministry of the apostles is called their *warfare*; and they were the soldiers of Jesus Christ. *He shall stir up jealousy*, shall appear more jealous than ever for the glory of his own name and against idolatry.

1. *He shall cry*, in the preaching of his word, *cry like a travailing woman*; for the ministers of Christ preached as men in earnest, and that travailed in birth again till they saw Christ formed in the souls of the people, (^{<60E>}Galatians 4:19. *He shall cry, yea, roar*, in the gospel woes, which are more terrible than the roaring of a lion, and which must be preached along with gospel blessings to awaken a sleeping world.

2. He shall conquer by the power of his Spirit: *He shall prevail against his enemies*, shall prevail to make them friends, (^{<60D>}Colossians 1:21. Those that contradict and blaspheme his gospel, he shall prevail to put them to silence and shame. He will destroy and devour at once all the oppositions of the powers of darkness. Satan shall fall as lightning from heaven, and he that had the power of death shall be destroyed. As a type and figure of this, to make way for the redemption of the Jews out of Babylon, God will humble the pride, and break the power, of their oppressors, and *will at once destroy and devour* the Babylonian monarchy. In accomplishing this destruction of Babylon by the Persian army under the command of Cyrus, *he will make waste mountains and hills*, level the country, and *dry up all their herbs*. The army, as usual, shall either carry off the forage or destroy it, and by laying bridges of boats over rivers shall turn them into islands, and so drain the fens and low grounds, to make way for the march of their army, that the pools shall be dried up. Thus, when the gospel shall be preached, it shall have a free course, and that which hinders the progress of it shall be taken out of the way.

II. He will manifest his favour and grace towards those whose spirits he had stirred up to follow him, as ⁴¹⁸⁵Ezra 1:5. Those who ask the way to Zion he will show the way, and lead in it, v. 16. Those who by nature were blind, and those who, being under convictions of sin and wrath are quite at a loss and know not what to do with themselves, God will *lead by a way that they knew not*, will show them the way to life and happiness by Jesus Christ, who is the way, and will conduct and carry them on in that way, which before they were strangers to. Thus, in the conversion of Paul, he was struck blind first, and then God revealed his Son in him, and made the scales to fall from his eyes. They are weak in knowledge, and the truths of God at first seem unintelligible; but God will *make darkness light before them*, and knowledge shall be easy to them. They are weak in duty, the commands of God seem impracticable, and insuperable difficulties are in the way of their obedience; but God will *make crooked things straight*; their way shall be plain, and the yoke easy. Those whom God brings into the right way he will guide in it. As a type of this, he will lead the Jews, when they return out of captivity, in a ready road to their own land again, and nothing shall occur to perplex or embarrass them in their journey. These are great things, and kind things, very great and very kind; but lest any should say, “They are too great, too kind, to be expected from God by such an undeserving people as that of the Jews, such an undeserving world as that of the Gentiles,” he adds, *These things will I do unto them*, take my word for it I will, and *I will not forsake them*; he that begins to show this great mercy will go on to do them good.

III. He will particularly put those to confusion who adhere to idols notwithstanding the attempts made by the preaching of the gospel to turn them from idols (v. 17): *They shall be turned back, and greatly ashamed, that trust in graven images*. The Babylonians shall when they see how the Jews, who despise their images, are owned and delivered by the God they worship without images, and the Gentiles when they see how idolatry falls before the preaching of the gospel, is scattered like darkness before the light of the sun, and melts like snow before its heat. They shall be ashamed that ever they said to these molten images, *You are our gods*; for how can those help their worshippers who cannot help themselves, nor save themselves from falling into contempt? In times of reformation, when many turn from iniquity, and sin, being generally deserted, becomes unfashionable, it may be hoped that those who will not otherwise be reclaimed will be wrought upon by that consideration to be ashamed of it.

THE BLINDNESS OF THE JEWS

The prophet, having spoken by way of comfort and encouragement to the believing Jews who waited for the consolation of Israel, here turns to those among them who were unbelieving, for their conviction and humiliation. Among those who were in captivity in Babylon there were some who were as the evil figs in Jeremiah's vision, who were sent thither *for their hurt, to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth, for a reproach and a proverb*, ⁽²²¹⁹⁾Jeremiah 24:9. In them there was a type of the Jews who rejected Christ and were rejected by him, and then fell more than ever under the curse, when those who believed were inheriting the blessing; for they were broken, and ruined, and remain dispersed unto this day. Observe,

I. The call that is given to this people (v. 18): “*Hear, you deaf, and attend to the joyful sound, and look you blind, that you may see the joyful light.*” There is no absurdity in this command, nor is it unbecoming the wisdom and goodness of God to call us to do that good which yet of ourselves we are not sufficient for; for those have natural powers which they may employ so as to do better than they do, and may have supernatural grace if it be not their own fault, who yet labour under a moral impotency to that which is good. This call to the deaf to hear and the blind to see is like the command given to the man that had the withered hand to stretch it forth; though he could not do this, because it was withered, yet, if he had not attempted to do it, he would not have been healed, and his being healed thereupon was owing, not to his act, but to the divine power.

II. The character that is given of them (v. 19, 20): *Who is blind, but my servant, or deaf as my messenger?* The people of the Jews were in profession God's servants, and their priests and elders his messengers (⁽³⁰¹⁷⁾Malachi 2:7); but they were deaf and blind. The verse before may be understood as spoken to the Gentile idolaters, whom he calls *deaf and blind*, because they worshipped gods that were so. “But,” says he, “no wonder you are deaf and blind when my own people are as bad as you, and many of them as much set upon idolatry.”

1. He complains of their sottishness they are blind; and of their stubbornness they are deaf. They were even worse than the Gentiles themselves. *Corruptio optimi est pessima* What is best becomes, when corrupted, the worst. “Who is so wilfully, so scandalously, blind and deaf as my servant and my messenger, as Jacob who is my servant (^{<2418>} Isaiah 41:8), and as their prophets and teachers who are my messengers? Who is blind as he that in profession and pretension is perfect, that should come nearer to perfection than other people, their priests and prophets? The one prophesies falsely, and the other bears rule by their means; and who so blind as those that will not see when they have the light shining in their faces?” Note,

(1.) It is a common thing, but a very sad thing, for those that in profession are God's servants and messengers to be themselves blind and deaf in spiritual things, ignorant, erroneous, and very careless.

(2.) Blindness and deafness in spiritual things are worse in those that profess themselves to be God's servants and messengers than in others. It is in them the greater sin and shame, the greater dishonour to God, and to themselves a greater damnation.

2. The prophet goes on (v. 20) to describe the blindness and obstinacy of the Jewish nation, just as our Saviour describes it in his time (^{<4134>} Matthew 13:14, 15): *Seeing many things, but thou observest not.* Multitudes are ruined for want of observing that which they cannot but see; they perish, not through ignorance, but mere carelessness. The Jews in our Saviour's time saw many proofs of his divine mission, but they did not observe them; they seemed to open their ears to him, but they did not hear, that is, they did not heed, did not understand, or believe, or obey, and then it was all one as if they had not heard.

III. The care God will take of the honour of his own name, notwithstanding their blindness and deafness, especially of his word, which he has magnified above all his name. *Shall the unbelief and obstinacy of men make the promise of God of no effect? God forbid,* ^{<4133>} Romans 3:3, 4. No, though they are blind and deaf, God will be no loser in his glory (v. 21): *The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness' sake;* not well pleased with their sin, but well pleased in the manifestation of his own righteousness, in rejecting them for rejecting the great salvation. He speaks as one well pleased, ^{<2124>} Isaiah 1:24: *Ah! I will ease*

me of my adversaries; and ^{<365B>}Ezekiel 5:13, *I will be comforted*. The scripture was fulfilled in the casting off of the Jews as well as in the calling in of the Gentiles, and therein the Lord will be well pleased. *He will magnify the law* (divine revelation in all the parts of it) *and will make it honourable*. The law is truly honourable, and the things of it are great things; and, if men will not magnify it by their obedience to it, God will magnify it himself by punishing them for their disobedience. He will magnify the law by accomplishing what is written in it, will magnify its authority, its efficacy, its equity. He will do it at last, when all men shall be judged by the law of liberty, ^{<30D2>}James 2:12. He is doing it every day. What is it that God is doing in the world, but magnifying the law and making it honourable?

IV. The calamities God will bring upon the Jewish nation for their wilful blindness and deafness, v. 22. They are *robbed and spoiled*. Those that were impenitent and unreformed in Babylon were sentenced to perpetual captivity. It was for their sins that they were spoiled of all their possessions, not only in their own land, but in the land of their enemies. They were some of them *snared in holes*, and others *hidden in prison-houses*. They cannot help themselves, for they are snared. Their friends cannot help them, for they are hidden; and their enemies have forgotten them in their prisons. They, and all they have, are for a prey and for a spoil; and there is none that delivers either by force or ransom, nor any that dares say to the proud oppressors, *Restore*. There they lie, and there they are likely to lie. This had its full accomplishment in the final destruction of the Jewish nation by the Romans, which God brought upon them for rejecting the gospel of Christ.

V. The counsel given them in order to their relief; for, though their case be sad, it is not desperate.

1. The generality of them are deaf; they will not hearken to the voice of God's word. He will therefore try his rod, and see *who among them will give ear to that*, v. 23. We must not despair concerning those who have been long reasoned with in vain; some of them may, at length, give ear and hearken. If one method not take effect, another may, and sinners shall be left inexcusable. Observe,

(1.) We may all of us, if we will, hear the voice of God, and we are called and invited to hear it.

- (2.) It is worth while to enquire who they are that perceive God speaking to them and are willing to hear him.
- (3.) Of the many that hear the voice of God there are very few that hearken to it or heed it, that hear it with attention and application.
- (4.) In hearing the word we must have an eye to the time to come. We must hear for hereafter, for what may occur between us and the grave; we must especially hear for eternity. We must hear the word with another world in our eye.

2. The counsel is,

(1.) To acknowledge the hand of God in their afflictions, and, whoever were the instruments, to have an eye to him as the principal agent (v. 24): “*Who gave Jacob and Israel, that people that used to have such an interest in heaven and such a dominion on earth, who gave them for a spoil to the robbers, as they are now to the Babylonians and to the Romans? Did not the Lord? You know he did; consider it then, and hear his voice in these judgments.*”

(2.) To acknowledge that they had provoked God thus to abandon them, and had brought all these calamities upon themselves.

[1.] These punishments were first inflicted on them for their disobedience to the laws of God: It is he *against whom we have sinned*; the prophet puts himself into the number of the sinners, As ~~the~~ Daniel 9:7, 8. “*We have sinned*; we have all brought fuel to the fire; and there are those among us that have wilfully refused to walk in his ways.” Jacob and Israel would never have been given up to the robbers if they had not by their iniquities sold themselves. *Therefore* it is, because they have violated the commands of the law, that God has brought upon them the curses of the law; he has not dropped, but *poured upon him the fury of his anger and the strength of battle*, all the desolations of war, which have *set him on fire round about*; for God surrounds the wicked with his favours. See the power of God's anger; there is no resisting it, no escaping it. See the mischief that sin makes; it provokes God to anger against a people, and so kindles a universal conflagration, sets all on fire.

[2.] These judgments were continued upon them for their senselessness and incorrigibleness under the rod of God. The fire of God's wrath kindled upon him, and *he knew it not*, was not aware of it, took no notice of the

judgments, at least not of the hand of God in them. Nay, *it burned him*, and, though he could not then but know it and feel it, yet he *laid it not to heart*, was not awakened by the fiery rebukes he was under nor at all affected with them. Those who are not humbled by less judgments must expect greater; for when God judges he will overcome.