

# CHAPTER 54

The death of Christ is the life of the church and of all that truly belong to it; and therefore very fitly, after the prophet had foretold the sufferings of Christ, he foretels the flourishing of the church, which is a part of his glory, and that exaltation of him which was the reward of his humiliation: it was promised him that he should see his seed, and this chapter is an explication of that promise. It may easily be granted that it has a primary reference to the welfare and prosperity of the Jewish church after their return out of Babylon, which (as other things that happened to them) was typical of the glorious liberty of the children of God, which through Christ we are brought into; yet it cannot be denied but that it has a further and principal reference to the gospel church, into which the Gentiles were to be admitted. And the first words being understood by the apostle Paul of the New-Testament Jerusalem (~~4005~~ Galatians 4:26, 27) may serve as a key to the whole chapter and that which follows. It is here promised concerning the Christian church,

- I.** That, though the beginnings of it were small, it should be greatly enlarged by the accession of many to it among the Gentiles, who had been wholly destitute of church privileges (v. 1-5).
- II.** That though sometimes God might seem to withdraw from her, and suspend the tokens of his favour, he would return in mercy and would not return to contend with them any more (v. 6-10).
- III.** That, though for a while she was in sorrow and under oppression, she should at length be advanced to greater honour and splendour than ever (v. 11, 12).
- IV.** That knowledge, righteousness, and peace, should flourish and prevail (v. 13, 14).
- V.** That all attempts against the church should be baffled, and she should be secured from the malice of her enemies (v. 14-17).

## THE PROSPERITY OF THE CHURCH

If we apply this to the state of the Jews after their return out of captivity, it is a prophecy of the increase of their nation after they were settled in their own land. Jerusalem had been in the condition of a wife written childless, or a desolate solitary widow; but now it is promised that the city should be replenished and the country peopled again, that not only the ruins of Jerusalem should be repaired, but the suburbs of it extended on all sides and a great many buildings erected upon new foundations, — that those estates which had for many years been wrongfully held by the Babylonian Gentiles should now return to the right owners. God will again be a husband to them, and the reproach of their captivity, and the small number to which they were then reduced, shall be forgotten. And it is to be observed that, by virtue of the ancient promise made to Abraham of the increase of his seed, when they were restored to God's favour they multiplied greatly. Those that first came out of Babylon were but 42,000 (~~1084~~ Ezra 2:64), about a fifteenth part of their number when they came out of Egypt; many came dropping to them afterwards, but we may suppose that to be the greatest number that ever came in a body; and yet above 500 years after, a little before their destruction by the Romans, a calculation was made by the number of the paschal lambs, and the lowest computation by that rule (allowing only ten to a lamb, whereas they might be twenty) made the nation to be nearly three millions. Josephus says, seven and twenty hundred thousand and odd, *Jewish War* 6.425. But we must apply it to the church of God in general; I mean the kingdom of God among men, God's city in the world, the children of God incorporated. Now observe,

**I.** The low and languishing state of religion in the world for a long time before Christianity was brought in. It was like one *barren, that did not bear*, or travail with child, was like one desolate, that had lost husband and children; the church lay in a little compass, and brought forth little fruit. The Jews were indeed by profession married to God, but few proselytes were added to them, the rising generations were unpromising, and serious godliness manifestly lost ground among them. The Gentiles had less religion among them than the Jews; their proselytes were in a dispersion; and the children of God, like the children of a broken, reduced family,

were *scattered abroad* (<sup>(815)</sup>John 11:52), did not appear nor make any figure.

**II.** Its recovery from this low condition by the preaching of the gospel and the planting of the Christian church.

**1.** Multitudes were converted from idols to the living God. Those were the church's children that were born again, were partakers of a new and divine nature, by the word. *More were the children of the desolate than of the married wife*; there were more good people found in the Gentile church (when that was set up) that had long been afar off, and without God in the world, than ever were found in the Jewish church. God's sealed ones out of the tribes of Israel are numbered (<sup>(816)</sup>Revelation 7:4), and they were but a remnant compared with the thousands of Israel; but those of other nations were so many, and crowded in so thickly, and lay so much scattered in all parts, that no man could number them, v. 9. Sometimes more of the power of religion is found in those places and families that have made little show of it, and have enjoyed but little of the means of grace, than in others that have distinguished themselves by a flourishing profession; and then more are the children of the desolate, more the fruits of their righteousness, than those of the married wife; so the last shall be first. Now this is spoken of as matter of great rejoicing to the church, which is called upon to break forth into singing upon this account. The increase of the church is the joy of all its friends and strengthens their hands. The longer the church has lain desolate the greater will the transports of joy be when it begins to recover the ground it has lost and to gain more. Even in heaven, among the angels of God, there is an uncommon joy for a sinner that repents, much more for a nation that does so. If the barren fig-tree at length bring forth fruit, it is well; it shall rejoice, and others with it.

**2.** The bounds of the church were extended much further than ever before, v. 2, 3.

**(1.)** It is here supposed that the present state of the church is a tabernacle state; it dwells in tents, like the heirs of promise of old (<sup>(817)</sup>Hebrews 11:9); its dwelling is mean and movable, and of no strength against a storm. The city, the continuing city, is reserved for hereafter. A tent is soon taken down and shifted, so the candlestick of church privileges is soon *removed out of its place* (<sup>(818)</sup>Revelation 2:5), and, when God pleases, it is as soon fixed elsewhere.

(2.) Though it be a tabernacle state, it is sometimes very remarkably a growing state; and, if this family increase, no matter though it be in a tent. Thus it was in the first preaching of the gospel; it was the business of the apostles to disciple all nations, to stretch forth the curtains of the church's habitation, to preach the gospel where Christ had not yet been named (<sup><del>ACTS</sup>Romans 15:20), to leaven with the gospel those towns and countries that had hitherto been strangers to it, and so to lengthen the cords of this tabernacle, that more might be enclosed, which would make it necessary to strengthen the stakes proportionably, that they might bear the weight of the enlarged curtains. The more numerous the church grows the more cautious she must be to fortify herself against errors and corruptions, and to support her seven pillars, <sup><del>PROV</sup>Proverbs 9:1.

(3.) It was a proof of divine power going along with the gospel that in all places it *grew and prevailed mightily*, <sup><del>ACTS</sup>Acts 19:20. It broke forth, as the breaking forth of waters — *on the right hand and on the left*, that is, on all hands. The gospel spread itself into all parts of the world; there were eastern and western churches. The church's seed inherited the Gentiles, and the cities that had been desolate (that is, destitute of the knowledge and worship of the true God) came to be inhabited, that is, to have religion set up in them and the name of Christ professed.

3. This was the comfort and honour of the church (v. 4): “*Fear not, for thou shalt not be ashamed*, as formerly, of the straitness of thy borders, and the fewness of thy children, which thy enemies upbraided thee with, but shalt *forget the reproach of thy youth*, because there shall be no more ground for that reproach.” It was the reproach of the Christian religion, in its youth, that none of the rulers or princes of this world embraced it and that it was entertained and professed by a despicable handful of men; but, after awhile, nations were discipled, the empire became Christian, and then this *reproach of its youth was forgotten*.

4. This was owing to the relation in which God stood to his church, as her husband (v. 5): *Thy maker is thy husband*. Believers are said to be married to Christ, that they may *bring forth fruit unto God* (<sup><del>ROM</sup>Romans 7:4); so the church is married to him, that she may bear and bring up a holy seed to God, that shall be accounted to him for a generation. Jesus Christ is the church's Maker, by whom she is formed into a people — her Redeemer, by whom she is brought out of captivity, the bondage of sin, the worst of slaveries. This is he that espoused her to himself; and,

(1.) He is *the Lord of hosts*, who has an irresistible power, an absolute sovereignty, and a universal dominion! Kings who are lords of some hosts, find there are others who are lords of other hosts, as many and mighty as theirs; but God is the Lord of all hosts.

(2.) He is *the Holy One of Israel*, the same that presided in the affairs of the Old-Testament church and was the Mediator of the covenant made with it. The promises made to the New-Testament Israel are as rich and sure as those made to the Old-Testament Israel; for he that is our Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.

(3.) He is and shall be called *the Lord of the whole earth*, as God, and as Mediator, for he is the heir of all things; but *then* he shall be called so, when the ends of the earth shall be made to see his salvation, when all the earth shall call him their God and have an interest in him. Long he had been called, in a peculiar manner, *the God of Israel*; but now, the partition wall between Jew and Gentile being taken down, he shall be called *the God of the whole earth* even where he has been, as at Athens itself, an *unknown God*.

## -250- ISAIAH 54:6-10

### THE PROSPERITY OF THE CHURCH

The seasonable succour and relief which God sent to his captives in Babylon, when they had a discharge from their bondage there, are here foretold, as a type and figure of all those consolations of God which are treasured up for the church in general and all believers in particular, in the covenant of grace.

**I.** Look back to former troubles, and in comparison with them God's favours to his people appear very comfortable, v. 6-8. Observe,

**1.** How sorrowful the church's condition had been. She had been as a woman forsaken, whose husband was dead, or had fallen out with her, though she was *a wife of youth*, upon which account she is grieved in spirit, takes it very ill, frets, and grows melancholy upon it; or she had been as one refused and rejected, and therefore full of discontent. Note, Even those that are espoused to God may yet seem to be refused and

forsaken, and may be grieved in spirit under the apprehensions of being so. Those that shall never be forsaken and left in despair may yet for a time be perplexed and in distress. The similitude is explained (v. 7, 8): *For a small moment have I forsaken thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee.* When God continues his people long in trouble he seems to forsake them; so their enemies construe it (<sup><2911></sup>Psalm 71:11); so they themselves misinterpret it, <sup><2914></sup>Isaiah 49:14. When they are comfortless under their troubles, because their prayers and expectations are not answered, God hides his face from them, as if he regarded them not nor designed them any kindness. God owns that he had done this; for he keeps an account of the afflictions of his people, and, though he never turned his face against them (as against the wicked, <sup><2916></sup>Psalm 34:16), he remembers how often he turned his back upon them. This arose indeed from his displeasure. It was in wrath that he forsook them and hid his face from them (<sup><2917></sup>Isaiah 57:17); yet it was but in a little wrath: not that God's wrath ever is a little thing, or to be made light of (*Who knows the power of his anger?*), but little in comparison with what they had deserved, and what others justly suffer, on whom the full vials of his wrath are poured out. He did not stir up all his wrath. But God's people, though they be sensible of ever so small a degree of God's displeasure, cannot but be grieved in spirit because of it. As for the continuance of it, it was but *for a moment*, a *small moment*; for God does not keep his anger against his people for ever; no, it is soon over. As he is slow to anger, so he is swift to show mercy. The afflictions of God's people, as they are light, so they are but for a moment, a cloud that presently blows over.

**2.** How sweet the returns of mercy would be to them when God should come and comfort them according to the time that he had afflicted them. God called them into covenant with himself when they were forsaken and grieved; he called them out of their afflictions when they were most pressing, v. 6. God's anger endures for a moment, but he will gather his people when they think themselves neglected, will gather them out of their dispersions, that they may return in a body to their own land, — will gather them into his arms, to protect them, embrace them, and bear them up, — and will gather them at last to himself, *will gather the wheat into the barn.* He will have mercy on them. This supposes the turning away of his anger and the admitting of them again into his favour. God's gathering his people takes rise from his mercy, not any merit of others; and it is with *great mercies* (v. 7), *with everlasting kindness*, v. 8. The wrath is little, but

the mercies are great; the wrath is for a moment, but the kindness everlasting. See how one is set over against the other, that we may neither despond under our afflictions nor despair of relief.

**II.** Look forward to future dangers, and in defiance of them God's favours to his people appear very constant, and his kindness everlasting; for it is formed into a covenant, here called a *covenant of peace*, because it is founded in reconciliation and is inclusive of all good. Now,

**1.** This is as firm as the covenant of providence. It is *as the waters of Noah*, that is, as that promise which was made concerning the deluge that there should never be the like again to disturb the course of summer and winter, seed-time and harvest, v. 9. God then contended with the world in great wrath, and for a full year, and yet at length returned in mercy, everlasting mercy; for he gave his word, which was as inviolable as his oath, that Noah's flood should never return, that he would never drown the world again; see <sup><102></sup>Genesis 8:21, 22; 9:11. And God has ever since kept his word, though the world has been very provoking; and he will keep it to the end; for the world that now is is reserved unto fire. And thus inviolable is the covenant of grace: *I have sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, as I have been, and rebuke thee, as I have done. He will not be so angry with them as to cast them off and break his covenant with them* (<sup><104></sup>Psalm 89:34), nor rebuke them as he has rebuked the heathen, to destroy them, and *put out their name for ever and ever*, <sup><105></sup>Psalm 9:5.

**2.** It is more firm than the strongest parts of the visible creation (v. 10): *The mountains shall depart, which are called everlasting mountains, and the hills be removed, though they are called perpetual hills*, <sup><106></sup>Habakkuk 3:6. Sooner shall they remove than God's covenant with his people be broken. Mountains have sometimes been shaken by earthquakes, and removed; but the promises of God were never broken by the shock of any event. The day will come when all *the mountains shall depart* and all *the hills be removed*, not only the tops of them covered, as they were by the waters of Noah, but the roots of them torn up; for the earth and all the works that are therein shall be burned up; but then the covenant of peace between God and believers shall continue in the everlasting bliss of all those who are the children of that covenant. Mountains and hills signify great men, men of bulk and figure. Do these mountains seem to support the skies (as Atlas) and bear them up? They shall depart and be removed. Creature-confidences shall fail us. *In vain is salvation hoped for from*

*those hills and mountains.* But the firmament is firm, and answers to its name, when those who seem to prop it are gone. When our friends fail us our God does not, nor does his kindness depart? Do these mountains threaten, and seem to top the skies, and bid defiance to them, as Pelion and Ossa? Do the kings of the earth, and the rulers, set themselves against the Lord? They shall depart and be removed. Great mountains, that stand in the way of the salvation of the church, shall be *made plain* (<sup>304E</sup>Zechariah 4:7); but God's kindness shall never depart from his people, for whom he loves he loves to the end; nor shall the covenant of his peace ever be removed, for he is the Lord that has mercy on his people. *Therefore* the covenant is immovable and inviolable, because it is built not on our merit, which is a mutable uncertain thing, but on God's mercy, which is from everlasting to everlasting.

## <sup>254E</sup>ISAIAH 54:11-17

### THE PROSPERITY OF ZION

Very precious promises are here made to the church in her low condition, that God would not only continue his love to his people under their troubles as before, but that he would restore them to their former prosperity, nay, that he would raise them to greater prosperity than any they had yet enjoyed. In the foregoing chapter we had the humiliation and exaltation of Christ; here we have the humiliation and exaltation of the church; for, if we suffer with him, we shall reign with him. Observe,

**I.** The distressed state the church is here reduced to by the providence of God (v. 11): “*O thou afflicted, poor, and indigent society, that art tossed with tempests, like a ship driven from her anchors by a storm and hurried into the ocean, where she is ready to be swallowed up by the waves, and in this condition not comforted by any compassionate friend that will sympathize with thee, or suggest to thee any encouraging considerations* (<sup>204E</sup>Ecclesiastes 4:1), not comforted by any allay to thy trouble, or prospect of deliverance out of it.” This was the condition of the Jews in Babylon, and afterwards, for a time, under Antiochus. It is often the condition of Christian churches and of particular believers; without are fightings, within are fears; they are like the disciples in a storm, ready to perish; and where is their faith?



**II.** The glorious state the church is here advanced to by the promise of God. God takes notice of the afflicted distressed state of his church, and comforts her, when she is most disconsolate and has no other comforter. Let the people of God, when they are afflicted and tossed, think they hear God speaking comfortably to them by these words, taking notice of their griefs and fears, what afflictions they are under, what distresses they are in, and what comforts their case calls for. When they bemoan themselves, God bemoans them, and speaks to them with pity: *O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests, and not comforted*; for in all their afflictions he is afflicted. But this is not all; he engages to raise her up out of her affliction, and encourages her with the assurance of the great things he would do for her, both for her prosperity and for the securing of that prosperity to her.

**1.** Whereas now she lay in disgrace, God promises that which would be her beauty and honour, which would make her easy to herself and amiable in the eyes of others.

**(1.)** This is here promised by a similitude taken from a city, and it is an apt similitude, for the church is the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. Whereas now Jerusalem lay in ruins, a heap of rubbish, it shall be not only rebuilt, but beautified, and appear more splendid than ever; the stones shall be laid not only firm, but fine, laid with fair colours; they shall be *glistening stones*, <sup><390></sup>1 Chronicles 29:2. The foundations shall be laid or garnished with *sapphires*, the most precious of the precious stones here mentioned; for Christ (the church's foundation), and the foundation of the apostles and prophets, are precious above any thing else. The windows of this house, city, or temple, shall be made of *agates*, the gates of *carbuncles*, and all the *borders* (the walls that enclose the courts, or the boundaries by which her limits are marked, the mere-stones) shall be *of pleasant stones*, v. 12. Never was this literally true; but it intimates,

**[1.]** That, God having graciously undertaken to build his church, we may expect that to be done for it, that to be wrought in it, which is very great and uncommon.

**[2.]** That the glory of the New-Testament church shall far exceed that of the Jewish church, not in external pomp and splendour, but in those gifts and graces of the Spirit which are infinitely more valuable, that wisdom which is *more precious than rubies* (<sup><405></sup>Proverbs 3:15), than the precious

onyx and the sapphire, and which the *topaz of Ethiopia cannot equal*,  
~~<B>~~Job 28:16, 19.

[3.] That the wealth of this world, and those things of it that are accounted most precious, shall be despised by all the true living members of the church, as having no value, no glory, in comparison with that which far excels. That which the children of this world lay up among their treasures, and too often in their hearts, the children of God make pavements of, and put under their feet, the fittest place of it.

(2.) It is here promised in the particular instances of those things that shall be the beauty and honour of the church, which are knowledge, holiness, and love, the very image of God, in which man was created, renewed, and restored. And these are the sapphires and carbuncles, the precious and pleasant stones, with which the gospel temple shall be enriched and beautified, and these wrought by the power and efficacy of those doctrines which the apostle compares to gold or silver, and precious stones, that are to be *built upon the foundation*, ~~<B>~~1 Corinthians 3:12. Then the church is all glorious,

[1.] When it is full of the knowledge of God, and that is promised here (v. 13): *All thy children shall be taught of the Lord*. The church's children, being born of God, shall be taught of God; being his children by adoption, he will take care of their education. It was promised (v. 1) that the church's children should be many; but lest we should think that being many, as sometimes it happens in numerous families, they will be neglected, and not have instruction given them so carefully as if they were but few, God here takes that work into his own hand: *They shall all be taught of the Lord*; and none teaches like him. *First*, It is a promise of the means of instruction and those means authorized by a divine institution: *They shall all be taught of God*, that is, they shall be taught by those whom God shall appoint and whose labours shall be under his direction and blessing. He will ordain the methods of instruction, and by his word and ordinances will diffuse a much greater light than the Old-Testament church had. Care shall be taken for the teaching of the church's children, that knowledge may be transmitted from generation to generation, and that all may be enriched with it, from the least even to the greatest. *Secondly*, It is a promise of the Spirit of illumination. Our Saviour quotes it with application to gospel grace, and makes it to have its accomplishment in all those that were brought to believe in him (~~<B>~~John 6:45): *It is written in*

*the prophets, They shall be all taught of God*, whence he infers that those, and those only, come to him by faith that have heard and learned of the Father, that are *taught by him as the truth is in Jesus*, <sup><402></sup>Ephesians 4:21. There shall be a plentiful effusion of the Spirit of grace upon Christians, to *teach them all things*, <sup><414></sup>John 14:26.

[2.] When the members of it live in love and unity among themselves: *Great shall be the peace of thy children*. Peace may be taken here for all good. As where no knowledge of God is no good can be expected, so those that are taught of God to know him are in a fair way to prosper for both worlds. *Great peace have those that know and love God's law*, <sup><416></sup>Psalm 119:165. But it is often put for love and unity; and so we may take it. All that are taught of God are taught to *love one another* (<sup><549></sup>1 Thessalonians 4:9) and that will keep peace among the church's children and prevent their falling out by the way.

[3.] When holiness reigns; for that above any thing is the beauty of the church (v. 14): *In righteousness shall thou be established*. The reformation of manners, the restoration of purity, the due administration of public justice, and the prevailing of honesty and fair dealing among men, are the strength and stability of any church or state. The kingdom of God, set up by the gospel of Christ, is not meat and drink, but this righteousness and peace, holiness and love.

2. Whereas now she lay in danger, God promises that which would be her protection and security.

(1.) God engages here that though, in the day of her distress, without were fightings and within were fears, now she shall be safe from both.

[1.] There shall be no fears within (v. 14): *“Thou shalt be far from oppression*. Those that have oppressed thee shall be removed, those that would oppress thee shall be restrained, and therefore thou shalt not fear, but mayest look upon it as a thing at a great distance, that thou art now in no danger of. Thou shalt be far from terror, not only from evil, but from the fear of evil, for it shall not come near thee so as to do thee any hurt or to put thee in any fright.” Note, Those are far from terror that are far from oppression; for it is as great a terror as can fall on a people to have the rod of government turned into the serpent of oppression, because against this there is no fence, nor is there any flight from it.

[2.] There shall be no fightings without. Though attempts should be made upon them to insult them, to invade their country, or besiege their towns, they should all be in vain, and none of them succeed, v. 15. It is granted, *“They shall surely gather together against thee; thou must expect it.”* The confederate force of hell and earth will be renewing their assaults. As long as there is a devil in hell, and a persecutor out of it, God's people must expect frequent alarms; but, *First*, God will not own them, will not give them either commission or countenance; they gather together, hand joins in hand, but it is *not by me*. God gave them no such order as he did to Sennacherib, *to take the spoil, and to take the prey,* <sup><2306></sup>Isaiah 10:6. And therefore, *Secondly*, Their attempt will end in their own ruin: *“Whosoever shall gather together against thee, be they ever so many and ever so mighty, they shall not only be baffled, but they shall fall for thy sake, or they shall fall before thee, which shall be the just punishment of their enmity to thee.”* God will make them to fall for the sake of the love he bears to his church and the care he has of it, in answer to the prayers made by his people, and in pursuance of the promises made to them. *“They shall fall, that thou mayest stand,”* <sup><1270></sup>Psalms 27:2.

(2.) That we may with the greatest assurance depend upon God for the safety of his church, we have here,

[1.] The power of God over the church's enemies asserted, v. 16. The truth is they have *no power but what is given them from above*, and he that gave them their power can limit and restrain them. *Hitherto they shall go, and no further.* *First*, They cannot carry on their design without arms and weapons of war; and the smith that makes those weapons is God's creature, and he gave him his skill to work in iron and brass (<sup><1230></sup>Exodus 31:3, 4) and particularly to make proper instruments for warlike purposes. It is melancholy to think, as if men did not die fast enough of themselves, how ingenious and industrious they are to make instruments of death and to find out ways and means to kill one another. *The smith blows the coals in the fire*, to make his iron malleable, to soften it first, that it may be hardened into steel, and so *he may bring forth an instrument proper for the work of those that seek to destroy*. It is the iron age that is the age of war. But *God has created the smith*, and therefore can tie his hands, so that the project of the enemy shall miscarry (as many a project has done) for want of arms and ammunition. Or the smith that forges the weapons is perhaps put here for the council of war that forms the design, blows the coals of contention, and brings forth the plan of the war; these can do no

more than God will let them. *Secondly*, They cannot carry it on without men, they must have soldiers, and it is *God that created the waster to destroy*. Military men value themselves upon their great offices and splendid titles, and even the common soldiers call themselves *gentlemen*; but God calls them *wasters made to destroy*, for wasting and destruction are their business. They think their own ingenuity, labour, and experience, made them soldiers; but it was God that created them, and gave them strength and spirit for that hazardous employment; and therefore he not only can restrain them, but will serve his own purposes and designs by them.

[2.] The promise of God concerning the church's safety solemnly laid down, as *the heritage of the servants of the Lord* (v. 17), as that which they may depend upon and be confident of, that God will protect them from their adversaries both in camps and courts. *First*, From their field-adversaries, that think to destroy them by force and violence, and dint of sword: “*No weapon that is formed against thee* (though ever so artfully formed by the smith that blows the coals, v. 16, though ever so skilfully managed by the waster that seeks to destroy) *shall prosper*; it shall not prove strong enough to do any harm to the people of God; it shall miss its mark, shall fall out of the hand or perhaps recoil in the face of him that uses it against thee.” It is the happiness of the church that *no weapons formed against it shall prosper* long, and therefore the folly of its enemies will at length be made manifest to all, for they are but preparing instruments of ruin for themselves. *Secondly*, From their law-adversaries, that think to run them down under colour of right and justice. When the weapons of war do not prosper there are tongues that rise in judgment. Both are included in the gates of hell, that seek to destroy the church; for they had their courts of justice, as well as their magazines and military stores, in their gates. The tongues that rise in judgment against the church are as such as either demand a dominion over it, as if God's children were their lawful captives, pretending an authority to oppress their consciences, or they are such as misrepresent them, and falsely accuse them, and by slanders and calumnies endeavour to make them odious to the people and obnoxious to the government. This the enemies of the Jews did, to incense the kings of Persia against them, <sup><1502></sup>Ezra 4:12; <sup><1788></sup>Esther 3:8. “But these insulting threatening tongues thou shalt condemn; thou shalt have wherewith to answer their insolent demands, and to put to silence their malicious reflections. Thou shalt do it *by well-doing* (<sup><4025></sup>1 Peter 2:15), by

doing that which will make thee manifest in the consciences even of thy adversaries, that thou art not what thou art represented to be. *Thou shalt condemn them*, that is, God shall condemn them for thee. *He shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light*, <sup><1376></sup>Psalm 37:6. Thou shalt condemn them as Noah condemned the old world that reproached him, by building the ark, and so saving his house, in contempt of their contempts.” The day is coming when God will reckon with the wicked men for all their hard speeches which they have spoken against him, <sup><115></sup>Jude 1:15.

The last words refer not only to this promise, but to all that go before: *This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord*. God's servants are his sons, for he has provided an inheritance for them, rich, sure, and indefeasible. God's promises are their *heritage for ever* (<sup><1111></sup>Psalm 119:111); *and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord*. God will clear up the righteousness of their cause before men. It is with him, for he knows it; it is with him, for he will plead it. Or their reward for their righteousness, and for all that which they have suffered unrighteously, is of God, that God who judges in the earth, and with whom *verily there is a reward for the righteous*. Or their righteousness itself, all that in them which is good and right, is of God, who works it in them; it is of Christ who is made righteousness to them. In those for whom God designs a heritage hereafter he will work righteousness now.