

# CHAPTER 9

In this chapter the prophet goes on faithfully to reprove sin and to threaten God's judgments for it, and yet bitterly to lament both, as one that neither rejoiced at iniquity nor was glad at calamities.

**I.** He here expresses his great grief for the miseries of Judah and Jerusalem, and his detestation of their sins, which brought those miseries upon them (v. 1-11).

**II.** He justifies God in the greatness of the destruction brought upon them (v. 9-16).

**III.** He calls upon others to bewail the woeful case of Judah and Jerusalem (v. 17-22).

**IV.** He shows them the folly and vanity of trusting in their own strength or wisdom, or the privileges of their circumcision, or any thing but God only (v. 23-26).

## ~~201~~ JEREMIAH 9:1-11

### THE PROPHET'S LAMENTATION

The prophet, being commissioned both to foretel the destruction coming upon Judah and Jerusalem and to point out the sin for which that destruction was brought upon them, here, as elsewhere, speaks of both very feelingly: what he said of both came from the heart, and therefore one would have thought it would reach to the heart.

**I.** He abandons himself to sorrow in consideration of the calamitous condition of his people, which he sadly laments, a one that preferred Jerusalem before his chief joy and her grievances before his chief sorrows.

**1.** He laments the slaughter of the persons, the blood shed and the lives lost (v. 1): "*O that my head were waters, quite melted and dissolved with grief, that so my eyes might be fountains of tears, weeping abundantly, continually, and without intermission, still sending forth fresh floods of tears as there still occur fresh occasions for them!*" The same word in

Hebrew signifies both *the eye* and a *fountain*, as if in this land of sorrows our eyes were designed rather for weeping than seeing. Jeremiah wept much, and yet wished he could weep more, that he might affect a stupid people and rouse them to a due sense of the hand of God gone out against them. Note, It becomes us, while we are here in this vale of tears, to conform to the temper of the climate and to sow in tears. *Blessed are those that mourn, for they shall be comforted* hereafter; but let them expect that while they are here the *clouds will still return after the rain*. While we find our hearts such fountains of sin, it is fit that our eyes should be fountains of tears. But Jeremiah's grief here is upon the public account: he would *weep day and night*, not so much for the death of his own near relations, but *for the slain of the daughter of his people*, the multitudes of his countrymen that fell by the sword of war. Note, When we hear of the numbers of the slain in great battles and sieges we ought to be much affected with the intelligence, and not to make a light matter of it; yea, though they be not of the daughter of our people, for, whatever people they are of, they are of the same human nature with us, and there are so many precious lives lost, as dear to them as ours to us, and so many precious souls gone into eternity.

**2.** He laments the desolations of the country. This he brings in (v. 10), for impassioned mourners are not often very methodical in their discourses: “Not only for the towns and cities, but *for the mountains, will I take up a weeping and wailing*” (not barren mountains, but the fruitful hills with which Judea abounded), and for *the habitations of the wilderness*, or rather *the pastures of the plain*, that used to be *clothed with flocks* or *covered over with corn*, and a goodly sight it was; but now *they are burnt up* by the Chaldean army (which, according to the custom of war, destroyed to the custom of war, destroyed the forage and carried off all the cattle), so that no one dares to pass through them, for fear of meeting with some parties of the enemy, no one cares to pass through them, every thing looks so melancholy and frightful, no one has any business to pass through them, for they *hear not the voice of the cattle* there as usual, the bleating of the sheep and the lowing of the oxen, that grateful music to the owners; nay, *both the fowl of the heavens* and the *beasts have fled*. either frightened away by the rude noises and terrible fires which the enemies make, or forced away because there is no subsistence for them. Note, God has many ways of turning *a fruitful land into barrenness for the wickedness of those that dwell therein*; and the havoc war makes in a country cannot but be for

a lamentation to all tender spirits, for it is a tragedy which destroys the stage it is acted on.

**II.** He abandons himself to solitude, in consideration of the scandalous character and conduct of his people. Though he dwells in Judah where God is known, in Salem where his tabernacle is, yet he is ready to cry out, *Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech!* <sup><2045></sup>Psalm 120:5. While all his neighbours are fleeing to the defenced cities, and Jerusalem especially, in dread of the enemies' rage (<sup><2045></sup>Jeremiah 4:5, 6) he is contriving to retire into some desert, in detestation of his people's sin (v. 2): "*O that I had in the wilderness a lodging-place of wayfaring men, such a lonely cottage to dwell in as they have in the deserts of Arabia, which are uninhabited, for travellers to repose themselves in, that I might leave my people and go from them!*" Not only because of the ill usage they gave him (he would rather venture himself among the wild beasts of the desert than among such treacherous barbarous people), but principally because his *righteous soul was vexed from day to day*, as Lot's was in Sodom, with the *wickedness of their conversation*, <sup><4017></sup>2 Peter 2:7, 8. This does not imply any intention or resolution that he had thus to retire. God had cut him out work among them, which he must not quit for his own ease. We must not *go out of the world*, bad as it is, before our time. If he could not reform them, he could bear a testimony against them; if he could not do good to many, yet he might to some. but it intimates the temptation he was in to leave them, involves a threatening that they should be deprived of his ministry, and especially expresses the holy indignation he had against their abominable wickedness, which continued notwithstanding all the pains he had taken with them to reclaim them. It made him even weary of his life to see them dishonouring God as they did and destroying themselves. Time was when the place which God had chosen to put his name there was the desire and delight of good men. David, in a wilderness, longed to be again in the courts of God's house; but now Jeremiah, in the courts of God's house (for there he was when he said this), wishes himself in a wilderness. Those have made themselves very miserable that have made God's people and ministers weary of them and willing to get from them. Now, to justify his willingness to leave them, he shows,

**1.** What he himself had observed among them.

**(1.)** He would not think of leaving them because they were poor and in distress, but because they were wicked.

[1.] They were filthy: *They are all adulterers*, that is, the generality of them are, <sup>248B</sup>Jeremiah 5:8. They all either practiced this sin or connived at those that did. Lewdness and uncleanness constituted that crying sin of Sodom at which righteous Lot was vexed in soul, and it is a sin that renders men loathsome in the eyes of God and all good men; it makes men an abomination.

[2.] They were false. This is the sin that is most enlarged upon here. Those that had been unfaithful to their God were so to one another, and it was a part of their punishment as well as their sin, for even those that love to cheat, yet hate to be cheated. *First*, Go into their solemn meetings for the exercises of religion, for the administration of justice, or for commerce — to church, to court, or to the exchange — and they are *an assembly of treacherous men*; they are so by consent, they strengthen one another's hands in doing any thing that is perfidious. There they will cheat deliberately and industriously, with design, with a malicious design, for (v. 3) *they bend their tongues, like their bow, for lies*, with a great deal of craft; their tongues are fitted for lying, as a bow that is bent is for shooting, and are as constantly used for that purpose. Their tongue turns as naturally to a lie as the bow to the strong. *But they are not valiant for the truth upon the earth*. Their tongues are like a bow strung, with which they might do good service if they would use the art and resolution which they are so much masters of in the cause of truth; but they will not do so. They appear not in defence of the truths of God, which were delivered to them by the prophets; but even those that could not deny them to be truths were content to see them run down. In the administration of justice they have not courage to stand by an honest cause that has truth on its side, if greatness and power be on the other side. Those that will be faithful to the truth must be valiant for it, and not be daunted by the opposition given to it, nor fear the face of man. *They are not valiant for the truth in the land*, the land which has truth for the glory of it. Truth has fallen in the land, and they dare not lend a hand to help it up, <sup>254A</sup>Isaiah 59:14, 15. We must answer, another day, not only for our enmity in opposing truth, but for our cowardice in defending it. *Secondly*, Go into their families, and you will find they will cheat their own brethren (*every brother will utterly supplant*); they will trip up one another's heels if they can, for they lie at the catch to seek all advantages against those they hope to make a hand of. Jacob had his name from *supplanting*; it is the word here used; they followed him in his name, but not in his true character, *without guile*. So

very false are they that you cannot *trust in a brother*, but must stand as much upon your guard as if you were dealing with a stranger, with a Canaanite that has *balances of deceit in his hand*. Things have come to an ill pass indeed when a man cannot put confidence in his own brother. *Thirdly*, Go into company and observe both their commerce and their conversation, and you will find there is nothing of sincerity or common honesty among them. *Nec hospes ab hospite tutus — The host and the guest are in danger from each other*. The best advice a wise man can give you is *to take heed every one of his neighbour*, nay, of his *friend* (so some read it), of him whom he has befriended and who pretends friendship to him. No man thinks himself bound to be either grateful or sincere. Take them in their conversation and *every neighbour will walk with slander*; they care not what ill they say one of another, though ever so false; that way that the slander goes they will go; they will *walk with* it. They will walk about from house to house too, carrying slanders along with them, all the ill-natured stories they can pick up or invent to make mischief. Take them in their trading and bargaining, and *they will deceive every one his neighbour*, will say any thing, though they know it to be false, for their own advantage. Nay, they will lie for lying sake, to keep their tongues in use to it, for *they will not speak the truth*, but will tell a deliberate lie and laugh at it when they have done.

(2.) That which aggravates the sin on this false and lying generation is,

[1.] That they are ingenious to sin: *They have taught their tongue to speak lies*, implying that through the reluctances of natural conscience they found it difficult to bring themselves to it. Their tongue would have spoken truth, but they *taught it to speak lies*, and by degrees have made themselves masters of the art of lying, and have got such a habit of it that use has made it a second nature to them. They learnt it when they were young (for *the wicked are estranged from the womb, speaking lies*, ~~CHR~~ Psalm 58:3), and now they have grown dexterous at it.

[2.] That they are industrious to sin: *They weary themselves to commit iniquity*; they put a force upon their consciences to bring themselves to it; they tire out their convictions by offering them continual violence, and they take a great deal of pains, till they have even spent themselves in bringing about their malicious designs. They are wearied with their sinful pursuits and yet not weary of them. The service of sin is a perfect

drudgery; men run themselves out of breath in it, and put themselves to a great deal of toil to damn their own souls.

[3.] That they grow worse and worse (v. 3): *They proceed from evil to evil*, from one sin to another, from one degree of sin to another. They began with less sins. *Nemo repente fit turpissimus* — *No one reaches the height of vice at once*. They began with equivocating and bantering, but at last came to downright lying. And they are now proceeding to greater sins yet, for *they know not me, saith the Lord*; and where men have no knowledge of God, or no consideration of what they have known of him, what good can be expected from them? Men's ignorance of God is the cause of all their ill conduct one towards another.

2. The prophet shows what God had informed him of their wickedness, and what he had determined against them.

(1.) God had marked their sin. He could tell the prophet (and he speaks of it with compassion) what sort of people they were that he had to deal with. *I know thy works, and where thou dwellest,* <sup>(623)</sup> Revelation 2:13. So here (v. 6): *“Thy habitation is in the midst of deceit, all about thee are addicted to it; therefore stand upon thy guard.”* If *all men are liars*, it concerns us to *beware of men,*, and to be *wise as serpents*. They are deceitful men; therefore there is little hope of thy doing any good among them; for, make things ever so plain, they have some trick or other wherewith to shuffle off their convictions. This charge is enlarged upon, v. 8. Their tongue was a *bow bent* (v. 3), plotting and preparing mischief; here it is *an arrow shot out*, putting in execution what they had projected. It is as a *slaying arrow* (so some readings of the original have it); their tongue has been to many an instrument of death. They *speak peaceably to their neighbours*, against whom they are at the same time *lying in wait*; as Joab kissed Abner when he was about to kill him, and Cain, that he might not be suspected of any ill design, *talked with his brother*, freely and familiarly. Note, Fair words, when they are not attended with good intentions, are despicable, but, when they are intended as a cloak and cover for wicked intentions they are abominable. While they did all this injury to one another they put a great contempt upon God: *“Not only they know not me, but (v. 6) through deceit, through the delusions of the false prophets, they refuse to know me;* they are so cheated into a good opinion of their own ways, the ways of their own heart, that they desire not the knowledge of my ways.” Or, *“They are so wedded to this sinful course which they are in, and so*

bewitched with that, and its gains, that they will by no means admit the *knowledge of God*, because that would be a check upon them in their sins.” This is the ruin of sinners: they might be taught the good knowledge of the Lord and they will not learn it; and where no knowledge of God is, what good can be expected? <sup><304></sup>Hosea 4:1.

(2.) He had marked them for ruin, v. 7, 9, 11. Those that will not know God as their lawgiver shall be made to know him as their judge. God determines here to bring his judgments upon them, for the refining of some and the ruining of the rest.

[1.] Some shall be refined (v. 7): “Because they are thus corrupt, *behold I will melt them and try them*, will bring them into trouble and see what that will do towards bringing them to repentance, whether the furnace of affliction will purify them from their dross, and whether, when they are melted, they will be new-cast in a better mould.” He will make trial of less afflictions before he brings upon them utter destruction; for he *desires not the death of sinners*. They shall not be *rejected as reprobate silver till the founder has melted in vain*, <sup><249></sup>Jeremiah 6:29, 30. *For how shall I do for the daughter of my people?* He speaks as one consulting with himself what to do with them that might be for the best, and as one that could not find in his heart to cast them off and give them up to ruin till he had first tried all means likely to bring them to repentance. Or, “*How else shall I do for them?* They have grown so very corrupt that there is no other way with them but to put them into the furnace; what other course can I take with them? <sup><214></sup>Isaiah 5:4, 5. It is *the daughter of my people*, and I must do something to vindicate my own honour, which will be reflected upon if I connive at their wickedness. I must do something to reduce and reform them.” A parent corrects his own children because they are his own. Note, When God afflicts his people, it is with a gracious design to mollify and reform them; it is but when need is and when he knows it is the best method he can use.

[2.] The rest shall be ruined (v. 9): *Shall I not visit for these things?* Fraud and falsehood are sins which God hates and which he will reckon for. “*Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this*, that is so universally corrupt, and, by its impudence in sin, even dares and defies divine vengeance? The sentence is passed, the decree has gone forth (v. 11): *I will make Jerusalem heaps of rubbish*, and lay it in such ruins that it shall be fit for nothing but to be *a den of dragons*; and *the cities of Judah*

shall be a *desolation*.” God makes them so, for he gives the enemy warrant and power to do it: but why is the holy city made a heap? The answer is ready, Because it has become an unholy one?

## ~~2012~~ JEREMIAH 9:12-22

### PUNISHMENT PREDICTED

Two things the prophet designs, in these verses, with reference to the approaching destruction of Judah and Jerusalem: —

- 1.** To convince people of the justice of God in it, that they had by sin brought it upon themselves and that therefore they had no reason to quarrel with God, who did them no wrong at all, but a great deal of reason to fall out with their sins, which did them all this mischief.
- 2.** To affect people with the greatness of the desolation that was coming, and the miserable effects of it, that by a terrible prospect of it they might be awakened to repentance and reformation, which was the only way to prevent it, or, at least, mitigate their own share in it. This being designed,
  - I.** He calls for the thinking men, by them to show people the equity of God's proceedings, though they seemed harsh and severe (v. 12): “*Who, where, is the wise man, or the prophet, to whom the mouth of the Lord hath spoken? You boast of your wisdom, and of the prophets you have among you; produce me any one that has but the free use of human reason or any acquaintance with divine revelation, and he will soon understand this himself, and it will be so clear to him that he will be ready to declare it to others, that there is a just ground of God's controversy with this people.*” Do these wise men enquire, *For what does the land perish?* What is the matter, that such a change is made with this land? It used to be a land that God cared for, and he had his eyes upon it for good (~~48112~~ Deuteronomy 11:12), but it is now a land that he has forsaken and that his face is against. It used to flourish as the garden of the Lord and to be replenished with inhabitants; but now it is burnt up like a wilderness, that *none passeth through* it, much less cares to settle in it. It was supposed, long ago, that it would be asked, when it came to this, *Wherefore has the Lord done thus unto this land? What means the heat of this great anger?*



(~~1524~~ Deuteronomy 29:24), to which question God here gives a full answer, before which all flesh must be silent. He produces out of the record,

**1.** The indictment preferred and proved against them, upon which they had been found guilty, v. 13, 14. It is charged upon them, and it cannot be denied,

**(1.)** That they have revolted from their allegiance to their rightful Sovereign. *Therefore.* God has *forsaken their land*, and justly, because they have *forsaken his law*, which he had so plainly, so fully, so frequently *set before them*, and had not observed his orders, not *obeyed his voice*, nor *walked in the ways* that he had appointed. Here their wickedness began, in the omission of their duty to their God and a contempt of his authority. But it did not end here. It is further charged upon them,

**(2.)** That they have entered themselves into the service of pretenders and usurpers, have not only withdrawn themselves from their obedience to their prince, but have taken up arms against him. For,

**[1.]** They have acted according to the dictates of their own lusts, have set up their own will, the wills of the flesh, and the carnal mind, in competition with, and contradiction to the will of God: *They have walked after the imagination of their own hearts*; they would do as they pleased, whatever God and conscience said to the contrary.

**[2.]** They have worshipped the creatures of their own fancy, the work of their own hands, according to the tradition received from their fathers: *They have walked after Baalim*: the word is plural; they had many Baals, Baal-peor and Baal-berith, the Baal of this place and the Baal of the other place; for they had *lords many*, which *their fathers taught them* to worship, but which the God of their fathers had again and again forbidden. This was it for which *the land perished*. The King of kings never makes war thus upon his own subjects but when they treacherously depart from him and rebel against him, and it has become necessary by this means to chastise their rebellion and reduce them to their allegiance; and they themselves shall at length acknowledge that he is just in all that is brought upon them.

**2.** The judgment given upon this indictment, the sentence upon the convicted rebels, which must now be executed, for it was righteous and

nothing could be moved in arrest of it: *The Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, hath said it* (v. 15, 16), and who can reverse it?

**(1.)** That all their comforts at home shall be poisoned and embittered to them: *I will feed this people with wormwood* (or rather with *wolf's-bane*, for it signifies a herb that is not wholesome, as wormwood is though it be bitter, but some herb that is both nauseous and noxious), *and I will give them water of gall* (or *juice of hemlock* or some other herb that is poisonous) *to drink*. Every thing about them, till it comes to their very meat and drink, shall be a terror and torment to them. God will *curse their blessings*, <sup><302></sup>Malachi 2:2.

**(2.)** That their dispersion abroad shall be their destruction (v. 16): *I will scatter them among the heathen*. They were corrupted and debauched by their intimacy with the heathen, with whom they *mingled and learned their works*; and now they shall lose themselves, where they lost their virtue, *among the heathen*. They set up gods which *neither they nor their fathers had known*, strange gods, new gods (<sup><307></sup>Deuteronomy 32:17); and now God will put them among neighbours whom *neither they nor their fathers have known*, whom they can claim no acquaintance with, and therefore can expect no favour from. And yet, though they are scattered so as that they will not know where to find one another. God will know where to find them all out (<sup><318></sup>Psalms 21:8) with that evil which still pursues impenitent sinners: *I will send a sword after them*, some killing judgment or other, *till I have consumed them*; for when God judges he will overcome, when he pursues he will overtake. And now we see for what the land perishes; all this desolation is the desert of their deeds and the performance of God's words.

**II.** He calls for the mourning women, and engages them, with the arts they practise to affect people and move their passions, to lament these sad calamities that had come or were coming upon them, that the nation might be alarmed to prepare for them: *The Lord of hosts himself says, Call for the mourning women, that they may come*, v. 17. the scope of this is to show how very woeful and lamentable the condition of this people was likely to be.

**1.** Here is work for the counterfeit mourners: *Send for cunning women*, that know how to compose mournful ditties, or at least to sing them in mournful tunes and accents, and therefore are made use of at funerals to

supply the want of true mourners. Let these *take up a wailing* for us, v. 18. The deaths and funerals were so many that people wept for them till they *had no power to weep*, as those, <sup><BR></sup>1 Samuel 30:4. Let those therefore do it now whose trade it is. Or, rather, it intimates the extreme sottishness and stupidity of the people, that laid not to heart the judgments they were under, nor, even when there was so much blood shed, could find in their hearts to shed a tear. *They cry not when God binds them*, <sup><BR></sup>Job 36:13. God sent his mourning prophets to them, to call them to weeping and mourning, but his word in their mouths did not work upon their faith; rather therefore than they shall go laughing to their ruin, let the mourning women come, and try to work upon their fancy, *that their eyes may at length run down with tears, and their eyelids gush out with waters*. First or last, sinners must be weepers.

**2.** Here is work for the real mourners.

**(1.)** There is that which is a lamentation. The present scene is very tragical (v. 19): *A voice of wailing is heard out of Zion*. Some make this to be the song of the mourning women: it is rather an echo to it, returned by those whose affections were moved by their wailings. In Zion the voice of joy and praise used to be heard, while the people kept closely to God. But sin has altered the note; it is now the *voice of lamentation*. It should seem to be the voice of those who fled from all parts of the country to the castle of Zion for protection. Instead of rejoicing that they had got safely thither, they lamented that they were forced to seek for shelter there: “*How are we spoiled! How are we stripped of all our possessions! We are greatly confounded, ashamed of ourselves and our poverty;*” for that is it that they complain of, that is it that they blush at the thoughts of, rather than of their sin: *We are confounded because we have forsaken the land* (forced so to do by the enemy), not because we *have* forsaken the Lord, being drawn aside of *our own lust and enticed* — *because our dwellings have cast us out*, not because our God has cast us off. Thus unhumiliated hearts lament their calamity, but not their iniquity, the procuring cause of it.

**(2.)** There is more still to come which shall be for a lamentation. Things are bad, but they are likely to be worse. Those whose land has *spued them out* (as it did their predecessors the Canaanites, and justly, because they trod in their steps, <sup><BR></sup>Leviticus 18:28) complain that they are driven into the city, but, after a while, those of the city, and they with them, shall be forced thence too: *Yet hear the word of the Lord;* he has something more

to say to you (v. 20); let *the women* hear it, whose tender spirits are apt to receive the impressions of grief and fear, for the men will not heed it, will not give it a patient hearing. The prophets will be glad to preach to a congregation of women that *tremble at God's word*. *Let your ear receive the word of God's mouth*, and bid it welcome, though it be a word of terror. Let the women *teach their daughters wailing*; this intimates that the trouble shall last long, grief shall be entailed upon the generation to come. Young people are apt to love mirth, and expect mirth, and are disposed to be gay and airy; but let the elder women teach the younger to be serious, tell them what a vale of tears they must expect to find this world, and train them up among the mourners in Zion, <sup><small>Titus 2:4, 5</sup>. *Let every one teach her neighbour lamentation*; this intimates that the trouble shall spread far, shall go from house to house. People shall not need to sympathize with their friends; they shall all have cause enough to mourn for themselves. Note, Those that are themselves affected with the terrors of the Lord should endeavour to affect others with them. The judgment here threatened is made to look terrible.

[1.] Multitudes shall be slain, v. 21. Death shall ride in triumph, and there shall be no escaping his arrests when he comes with commission, neither within doors nor without. Not within doors, for let the doors be shut ever so fast, let them be ever so firmly locked and bolted, *death comes up into our windows*, like a thief in the night; it steals upon us ere we are aware. Nor does it thus boldly attack the cottages only, but it has *entered into our palaces*, the palaces of our princes and great men, though ever so stately, ever so strongly built and guarded. Note, No palaces can keep out death. Nor are those more safe that are abroad; death *cuts off even the children from without and the young men from the streets*. The children who might have been spared by the enemy in pity, because they had never been hurtful to them, and the young men who might have been spared in policy, because capable of being serviceable to them, shall fall together by the sword. It is usual now, even in the severest military executions, to put none to the sword. It is usual now, even in the severest military executions, to put none to the sword but those that are found in arms; but then even the boys and girls playing in the streets were sacrificed to the fury of the conqueror.

[2.] Those that are slain shall be left unburied (v. 22): *Speak, Thus saith the Lord* (for the confirmation and aggravation of what was before said), *Even the carcasses of men shall fall as dung*, neglected, and left to be

offensive to the smell, as dung is. Common humanity obliges the survivors to bury the dead, even for their own sake; but here such numbers shall be slain, and those so dispersed all the country over, that it shall be an endless thing to bury them all, nor shall there be hands enough to do it, nor shall the conquerors permit it, and those that should do it shall be overwhelmed with grief, so that they shall have no heart to do it. The dead bodies even of the fairest and strongest, when they have lain awhile, become dung, such vile bodies have we. And here such multitudes shall fall that their bodies shall lie as thick as heaps of dung *in the furrows of the field*, and no more notice shall be taken of them than of the *handfuls* which *the harvestman* drops for the gleaners, for *none shall gather them*, but they shall remain in sight, monuments of divine vengeance, that the eye of the impenitent survivors may affect their heart. *Slay them not, bury them not, lest my people forget,* ~~151~~ Psalm 59:11.

## ~~202~~ JEREMIAH 9:23-26

### PUNISHMENT PREDICTED

The prophet had been endeavouring to possess this people with a holy fear of God and his judgments, to convince them both of sin and wrath; but still they had recourse to some sorry subterfuge or other, under which to shelter themselves from the conviction and with which to excuse themselves in the obstinacy and carelessness. He therefore sets himself here to drive them from these refuges of lies and to show them the insufficiency of them.

**I.** When they were told how inevitable the judgment would be they pleaded the defence of their politics and powers, which, with the help of their wealth and treasure, they thought made their city impregnable. In answer to this he shows them the folly of trusting to and boasting of all these stays, while they have not a God in covenant to stay themselves upon, v. 23, 24. Here he shows,

**1.** What we may not depend upon in a day of distress: *Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom*, as if with the help of that he could outwit or countermine the enemy, or in the greatest extremity find out some evasion or other; for a man's wisdom may fail him when he needs it most, and he may fail him when he needs it most, and he may be taken in his own

craftiness. Ahithophel was befooled, and counsellors are often *led away spoiled*. But, if a man's policies fail him, yet surely he may gain his point by might and dint of courage. No: *Let not the strong man glory in his strength*, for the battle is not always to the strong. David the stripling proves too hard for Goliath the giant. All human force is nothing without God, worse than nothing against him. But may not the *rich man's wealth be his strong city?* (money answers all things) No: *Let not the rich man glory in his riches*, for they may prove so far from sheltering him that they may expose him and make him the fairer mark. Let not the people boast of the *wise men, and mighty men, and rich men* that they have among them, as if they could make their part good against the Chaldeans because they have wise men to advise concerning the war, mighty men to fight their battles, and rich men to bear the charges of the war. Let not particular persons think to escape the common calamity by their wisdom, might, or money; for all these will prove but *vain things for safety*.

2. He shows what we may depend upon in a day of distress.

(1.) Our only comfort in trouble will be that we have done our duty. Those that *refused to know God* (v. 6) will boast in vain of their wisdom and wealth; but those that *know God*, intelligently, that *understand aright that he is the Lord*, that have not only right apprehensions concerning his nature, and attributes, and relations to man, but receive and retain the impressions of them, may *glory in this* it will be their rejoicing in the day of evil.

(2.) Our only confidence in trouble will be that, having through grace in some measure done our duty, we shall find God a God all-sufficient to us. We may *glory in this*, that, wherever we are, we have an acquaintance with an interest in a God that *exercises lovingkindness, and judgment, and righteousness in the earth*, that is not only just to all his creatures and will do no wrong to any of them, but kind to all his children and will protect them and provide for them. *For in these things I delight*. God delights to show kindness and to execute judgment himself, and is pleased with those who herein are *followers of him as dear children*. Those that have such knowledge of the glory of God as to be changed into the same image, and to partake of his holiness, find it to be their perfection and glory; and the God they thus faithfully conform to they may cheerfully confide in, in their greatest straits. But the prophet intimates that the generality of this people took no care about this. Their wisdom, and might, and riches, were

their joy and hope, which would end in grief and despair. But those few among them that had the knowledge of God might please themselves with it, and boast themselves of it; it would stand them in better stead than *thousands of gold and silver*.

**II.** When they were told how provoking their sins were to God they vainly pleaded the covenant of their circumcision. They were undoubtedly the people of God; as they had the temple of the Lord in their city, so they had the mark of his children in their flesh. "It is true that Chaldean army has laid such and such nations waste, because they were uncircumcised, and therefore not under the protection of the divine providence, as we are." To this the prophet answers, That the days of visitation were now at hand, in which God would punish all wicked people, without making any distinction between the circumcised and uncircumcised, v. 25, 26. They had by sin profaned the crown of their peculiarity, and lived in common with the uncircumcised nations, and so had forfeited the benefit of that peculiarity and must expect to fare never the better for it. God will *punish the circumcised with the uncircumcised*. As the ignorance of the uncircumcised shall not excuse their wickedness, so neither shall the privileges of the circumcised excuse theirs, but they shall be punished together. Note, The Judge of all the earth is impartial, and none shall fare the better at his bar for any external advantages, but he will render to every man, circumcised or uncircumcised, according to his works. The condemnation of impenitent sinners that are baptized will be as sure as, nay, and more severe than, that of impenitent sinners that are unbaptized. It would affect one to find here Judah industriously put between Egypt and Edom, as standing upon a level with them and under the same doom, v. 26. These nations were forbidden a share in the Jews' privileges (<sup>421B</sup>Deuteronomy 23:3); but the Jews are here told that they shall share in their punishments. Those *in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness*, are supposed to be the Kedarenes and those of the kingdoms of Hazor, as appears by comparing <sup>241B</sup>Jeremiah 49:28-32. Some think they are so called because they dwelt as it were in a corner of the world, others because they had *the hair of their head polled into corners*. However that was, they were of those nations that were uncircumcised in flesh, and the Jews are ranked with them and are as near to ruin for their sins as they; for *all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart*: they have the sign, but not the thing signified, <sup>240B</sup>Jeremiah 4:4. They are heathens in their hearts, strangers to God, and enemies in their minds by wicked works.

Their hearts are disposed to idols, as the hearts of the uncircumcised Gentiles are. Note, The seals of the covenant, though they dignify us, and lay us under obligations, will not save us, unless the temper of our minds and the tenour of our lives agree with the covenant. That only is circumcision, and that baptism, which is *of the heart*, ~~4128~~ Romans 2:28, 29.