

# CHAPTER 1

In this chapter,

- I.** The prophet complains to God of the violence done by the abuse of the sword of justice among his own people and the hardships thereby put upon many good people (v. 1-4).
- II.** God by him foretels the punishment of that abuse of power by the sword of war, and the desolations which the army of the Chaldeans should make upon them (v. 5-11).
- III.** Then the prophet complains of that too, and is grieved that the Chaldeans prevail so far (v. 12-17), so that he scarcely knows which is more to be lamented, the sin or the punishment of it, for in both many harmless good people are very great sufferers. It is well that there is a day of judgment, and a future state, before us, in which it shall be eternally well with all the righteous, and with them only, and ill with all the wicked, and them only; so the present seeming disorders of Providence shall be set to rights, and there will remain no matter of complaint whatsoever.

## ☞ HABAKKUK 1:1-4

### THE SINS OF THE PEOPLE

We are told no more in the title of this book (which we have, v. 1) than that the penman was *a prophet*, a man divinely inspired and commissioned, which is enough (if that be so, we need not ask concerning his tribe or family, or the place of his birth), and that the book itself is *the burden which he saw*; he was as sure of the truth of it as if he had seen it with his bodily eyes already accomplished. Here, in these verses, the prophet sadly laments the iniquity of the times, as one sensibly touched with grief for the lamentable decay of religion and righteousness. It is a very melancholy complaint which he here makes to God,

**1.** That no man could call what he had his own; but, in defiance of the most sacred laws of property and equity, he that had power on his side had what he had a mind to, though he had no right on his side: The land was

*full of violence*, as the old world was, <sup><0081></sup>Genesis 6:11. The prophet *cries out of violence* (v. 2), *iniquity* and *grievance*, *spoil* and *violence*. In families and among relations, in neighbour-hoods and among friends, in commerce and in courts of law, every thing was carried with a high hand, and no man made any scruple of doing wrong to his neighbour, so that he could but make a good hand of it for himself. It does not appear that the prophet himself had any great wrong done him (in losing times it fared best with those that had nothing to lose), but it grieved him to see other people wronged, and he could not but mingle his tears with those of the oppressed. Note, Doing wrong to harmless people, as it is an iniquity in itself, so it is a great grievance to all that are concerned for God's Jerusalem, who *sigh and cry for abominations* of this kind. He complains (v. 4) that *the wicked doth compass about the righteous*. One honest man, one honest cause, shall have enemies besetting it on every side; many wicked men, in confederacy against it, run it down; nay, one wicked man (for it is singular) with so many various arts of mischief sets upon a righteous man, that he perfectly besets him.

**2.** That the kingdom was broken into parties and factions that were continually biting and devouring one another. This is a lamentation to all the sons of peace: *There are that raise up strife and contention* (v. 3), that foment divisions, widen breaches, incense men against one another, and sow discord among brethren, by doing the work of him that is the accuser of the brethren. Strifes and contentions that have been laid asleep, and begun to be forgotten, they awake, and industriously raise up again, and blow up the sparks that were hidden under the embers. And, if *blessed are the peace-makers*, cursed are such peace-breakers, that make parties, and so make mischief that spreads further, and lasts longer, than they can imagine. It is sad to see bad men warming their hands at those flames which are devouring all that is good in a nation, and stirring up the fire too.

**3.** That the torrent of violence and strife ran so strongly as to bid defiance to the restraints and regulations of laws and the administration of justice, v. 4. Because God did not appear against them, nobody else would; *therefore the law is slacked*, is silent; it breathes not; *its pulse beats not* (so, it is said, the word signifies); it intermits, *and judgment does not go forth* as it should; no cognizance is taken of those crimes, no justice done upon the criminals; nay, *wrong judgment proceeds*; if appeals be made to the courts of equity, the righteous shall be condemned and the wicked

justified, so that the remedy proves the worst disease. The legislative power takes no care to supply the deficiencies of the law for the obviating of those growing threatening mischiefs; the executive power takes no care to answer the good intentions of the laws that are made; the stream of justice is dried up by violence, and has not its free course.

4. That all this was open and public, and impudently avowed; it was barefaced. The prophet complains that this iniquity was shown him; he *beheld it* which way soever he turned his eyes, nor could he look off it: *Spoiling and violence are before me*. Note, The abounding of wickedness in a nation is a very great eye-sore to good people, and, if they did not see it, they could not believe it to be so bad as it is. Solomon often complains of the vexation of this kind which he *saw under the sun*; and the prophet would therefore gladly turn hermit, that he might not see it, <sup><200></sup>Jeremiah 9:2. But *then we must needs go out of the world*, which *therefore* we should long to do, that we may remove to that world where holiness and love reign eternally, and no spoiling and violence shall be before us.

5. That he complained of this to God, but could not obtain a redress of those grievances: “*Lord,*” says he, “*why dost thou show me iniquity? Why hast thou cast my lot in a time and place when and where it is to be seen, and why do I continue to sojourn in Mesech and Kedar? I cry to thee of this violence; I cry aloud; I have cried long; but thou wilt not hear, thou wilt not save; thou dost not take vengeance on the oppressors, nor do justice to the oppressed, as if thy arm were shortened or thy ear heavy.*” When God seems to connive at the wickedness of the wicked, nay, and to countenance it, by suffering them to prosper in their wickedness, it shocks the faith of good men, and proves a sore temptation to them to say, *We have cleansed our hearts in vain* (<sup><173></sup>Psalm 73:13), and hardens those in their impiety who say, *God has forsaken the earth*. We must not think it strange if wickedness be suffered to prevail far and prosper long. God has reasons, and we are sure they are good reasons, both for the reprieves of bad men and the rebukes of good men; and therefore, though we plead with him, and humbly expostulate concerning his judgments, yet we must say, “He is wise, and righteous, and good, in all,” and must believe the day will come, though it may be long deferred, when the cry of sin will be heard against those that do wrong and the cry of prayer for those that suffer it.

## ~~3015~~ HABAKKUK 1:5-11

### JUDGMENT PREDICTED

We have here an answer to the prophet's complaint, giving him assurance that, though God bore long, he would not bear always with this provoking people; for the day of vengeance was in his heart, and he must tell them so, that they might by repentance and reformation turn away the judgment they were threatened with.

**I.** The preamble to the sentence is very awful (v. 5): *Behold, you among the heathen, and regard.* Since they will not be brought to repentance by the long-suffering of God, he will take another course with them. No resentments are so keen, so deep, as those of abused patience. The Lord will inflict upon them,

**1.** A public punishment, which shall be beheld and regarded among the heathen, which the neighbouring nations shall take notice of and stand amazed at; see ~~5215~~ Deuteronomy 29:24, 25. This will aggravate the desolations of Israel, that they will thereby be made a spectacle to the world.

**2.** An amazing punishment, so strange and surprising, and so much out of the common road of Providence, that it shall not be paralleled among the heathen, shall be sorer and heavier than what God has usually inflicted upon the nations that know him not; nay, it shall not be credited even by those that had the prediction of it from God before it comes, or the report of it from those that were eye-witnesses of it when it comes: *You will not believe it, though it be told you;* it will be thought incredible that so many judgments should combine in one, and every circumstance so strangely concur to enforce and aggravate it, that so great and potent a nation should be so reduced and broken, and that God should deal so severely with a people that had been taken into the bond of the covenant and that he had done so much for. The punishment of God's professing people cannot but be the astonishment of all about them.

**3.** A speedy punishment: *"I will work a work in your days, now quickly; this generation shall not pass till the judgment threatened be accomplished. The sins of former days shall be reckoned for in your days; for now the measure of the iniquity is full,"* ~~4235~~ Matthew 23:36.

**4.** It shall be a punishment in which much of the hand of God shall appear; it shall be a work of his own working, so that all who see it shall say, *This is the Lord's doing*; and it will be found a fearful thing to fall into his hands; woe to those whom he takes to task!

**5.** It shall be such a punishment as will typify the destruction to be brought upon the despisers of Christ and his gospel, for to that these words are applied ~~4434~~ Acts 13:41, *Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish*. The ruin of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans for their idolatry was a figure of their ruin by the Romans for rejecting Christ and his gospel, and it is a very marvellous thing, and almost incredible. *Is there not a strange punishment to the workers of iniquity?*

**II.** The sentence itself is very dreadful and particular (v. 6): *Lo, I raise up the Chaldeans*. There were those that raised up a great deal of strife and contention among them, which was their sin; and now God will raise up the Chaldeans against them, who shall strive and contend with them, which shall be their punishment. Note, When God's professing people quarrel among themselves, snarl at, and devour one another, it is just with God to bring the common enemy upon them, that shall make peace by making a universal devastation. The contending parties in Jerusalem were inveterate one against another, when the Romans came and *took away their place and nation*. The Chaldeans shall be the instruments of the destruction threatened, and, though themselves acting unrighteously, they shall *execute the righteousness of the Lord* and punish the unrighteousness of Israel. Now, here we have,

**1.** A description of the people that shall be raised up against Israel, to be a scourge to them.

**(1.)** They are *a bitter and hasty nation*, cruel and fierce, and what they do is done with violence and fury; they are precipitate in their counsels, vehement in their passions, and push on with resolution in their enterprises; they show no mercy and they spare no pains. Miserable is the case of those that are given up into the hand of these cruel ones.

**(2.)** They are strong, and therefore formidable, and such as there is no standing before, and yet no fleeing from (v. 7): *They are terrible and dreadful*, famed for the gallant troops they bring into the field (v. 8); *their horses are swifter than leopards* to charge and pursue, and *more fierce than the evening wolves*; and wolves are observed to be the most ravenous

towards the evening, after they have been kept hungry all day, waiting for that darkness under the protection of which *all the beasts of the forest creep forth*, <sup>(Psalm 104:20)</sup>. Their squadrons of horse shall be very numerous: “*Their horse-men shall spread themselves a great way, for they shall come from far, from all parts of their own country, and shall be dispersed into all parts of the country they invade, to plunder it, and enrich themselves with the spoil of it. And, in making speed to spoil, they shall hasten to the prey* (as those, <sup>(Isaiah 8:1, margin)</sup>), for they shall *fly as the eagle towards the earth when she hastens to eat and strikes at the prey she has an eye upon.*”

**(3.)** Their own will is a law to them, and, in the fierceness of their pursuits, they will not be governed by any laws of humanity, equity, or honour: *Their judgment and their dignity shall proceed of themselves*, v. 7. Appetite and passion rule them, and not reason nor conscience. Their principle is, *Quicquid libet, licet* — *My will is my law*. And, *Sic volo, sic jubeo; stat pro ratione voluntas* — *This is my wish, this is my command; it shall be done because I choose it*. What favour can be hoped for from such an enemy? Note, Those who have been unjust and unmerciful, among whom *the law is slacked, and judgment doth not go forth*, will justly be paid in their own coin and fall into the hands of those who will deal unjustly and unmercifully with them.

**2.** A prophecy of the terrible execution that shall be made by this terrible nation: *They shall march through the breadth of the earth* (so it may be read); for in a little time the Chaldean forces subdued all the nations in those parts, so that they seemed to have conquered the world; they overran Asia and part of Africa. Or, through the breadth of *the land of Israel*, which was wholly laid waste by them. It is here foretold,

**(1.)** That they shall seize all as their own that they can lay their hands on. They shall come to *possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs*, which they have no right to, but that which their sword gives them.

**(2.)** That they shall push on the war with all possible vigour: *They shall all come for violence* (v. 9), not to determine any disputed right by the sword, but, right or wrong, to enrich themselves with the spoil. *Their faces shall sup up as the east wind*; their very countenances shall be so fierce and frightful that a look will serve to make them masters of all they have a mind to; so that they shall *swallow up* all, as the east wind nips and blasts the buds and flowers. *Their faces shall look towards the east* (so some

read it); they shall still have an eye to their own country, which lay eastward from Judea, and all the spoil they seize they shall remit thither.

(3.) That they shall take a vast number of prisoners, and send them into Babylon: *They shall gather the captivity as the sand* for multitude, and shall never know when they have enough, as long as there are any more to be had.

(4.) That they shall make nothing of the opposition that is given to them, v. 10. Do the distressed Jews depend upon their great men to make a stand, and with their wisdom and courage to give check to the victorious arms of the Chaldeans? Alas! they will make nothing of them. *They shall scoff* (he shall, so it is in the original, meaning Nebuchadnezzar, who being puffed up with his successes, shall scoff) *at the kings* and commanders of the forces that think to make head against him; and *the princes shall be a scorn to them*, so unequal a match shall they appear to be. Do they depend upon their garrisons and fortified towns? *He shall deride every stronghold*, for to him it shall be weak, and *he shall heap dust, and take it*; a little soil, thrown up for ramparts, shall serve to give him all the advantage against them that he can desire; he shall make but a jest of them, and a sport of taking them.

(5.) By all this he shall be puffed up with an intolerable pride, which shall be his destruction (v. 11): *Then shall his mind change* for the worse. The spirit both of the people and of the king shall grow more haughty and insolent. Those that will not be content with their own rights will not be content when they have made themselves masters of other people's rights too; but as the condition rises the mind rises too. This victorious king shall *pass over* all the bounds of reason, equity, and modesty, and break through all their bonds, and thereby *he shall offend*, shall make God his enemy, and so prepare ruin for himself by *imputing this his power to his god*, whereas he had it from the God of Israel. *Bel* and *Nebo* were the gods of the Chaldeans, and to them they gave the glory of their successes; they were hardened in their idolatry, and blasphemously argued that because they had conquered Israel their gods were too strong for the God of Israel. Note, It is a great offence (and the common offence of proud people) to take that glory to ourselves, or to give it to gods of our own making, which is due to the living and true God only. These closing words of the sentence give a glimpse of comfort to the afflicted people of God; it is to be hoped that they will change their minds, and grow better, and ripen for

deliverance; and they did so. However, their enemies will change their minds, and grow worse, and ripen for destruction, which will inevitably come in God's due time; for a haughty spirit, lifted up against God, *goes before a fall.*

## <3112> HABAKKUK 1:12-17

### THE PROPHET'S PLEA AND COMPLAINT

The prophet, having received of the Lord that which he was to deliver to the people, now turns to God, and again addresses himself to him for the ease of his own mind under the burden which he saw. And still he is full of complaints. If he look about him, he sees nothing but violence done by Israel; if he look before him, he sees nothing but violence done against Israel; and it is hard to say which is the more melancholy sight. His thoughts of both he pours out before the Lord. It is our duty to be affected both with the iniquities and with the calamities of the church of God and of the times and places wherein we live; but we must take heed lest we grow peevish in our resentments, and carry them too far, so as to entertain any hard thoughts of God, or lose the comfort of our communion with him. The world is bad, and always was so, and will be so; it is out of our power to mend it; but we are sure that God governs the world, and will bring glory to himself out of all, and therefore we must resolve to make the best of it, must be ourselves better, and long for the better world. The prospect of the prevalence of the Chaldeans drives the prophet to his knees, and he takes the liberty to plead with God concerning it. In his plea we may observe,

**I.** The truths which he lays down, which he resolves to abide by, and with which he endeavours to comfort himself and his friends, under the growing threatening power of the Chaldeans; and they will furnish us with pleasing considerations for our support in the like case.

**1.** However it be, yet God is *the Lord our God, and our Holy One.* The victorious Chaldeans impute their power to their idols, but we are taught to tell them that the *God of Israel is the true God, the living God,*

<2100>Jeremiah 10:10, 11.



(1.) He is *Jehovah*, the fountain of all being, power, and perfection. *Our rock is not as theirs.*

(2.) “He is *my God*.” He speaks in the people's name; every Israelite may say, “He is *mine*. Though we are thus sore broken, and *all this has come upon us, yet have we not forgotten the name of our God*, nor quitted our relation to him, yet have we not disowned him, nor hath he disowned us, <sup><447></sup>Psalm 44:17. We are an offending people; he is an offended God; yet he is ours, and we will not entertain any hard thoughts of him, nor of his service, for all this.”

(3.) “He is *my Holy One*.” This intimates that the prophet loved God as a holy God, loved him for the sake of his holiness. “He is *mine* because he is a *Holy One*; and *therefore* he will be my sanctifier and my Saviour, because he is *my Holy One*. Men are unholy, but *my God is holy*.”

2. Our God is from everlasting. This he pleads with him: *Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God?* It is matter of great and continual comfort to God's people, under the troubles of this present life, that their God is from everlasting. This intimates,

(1.) The eternity of his nature; if he is from everlasting, he will be to everlasting, and we must have recourse to this first principle, when things seen, which are temporal, are discouraging, that we have hope and help sufficient in a god that is not seen, that is eternal. “Art thou not from everlasting, and then wilt thou not make bare thy everlasting arm, in pursuance of thy everlasting counsels, to make unto thyself an everlasting name?”

(2.) The antiquity of his covenant: “Art thou not *from of old*, a God in covenant with thy people” (so some understand it), “and hast thou not done great things for them *in the days of old*, which we have heard with our ears, and which our fathers have told us of; and art thou not the same God still that thou ever wast? Thou art *God, and changest not*.”

3. While the world stands God will have a church in it. Thou art from everlasting, and then *we shall not die*. The Israel of God shall not be extirpated, nor the name of Israel blotted out, though it may sometimes seem to be very near it; like the apostles (<sup><470></sup>2 Corinthians 6:9), *chastened, and not killed; chastened sorely, but not delivered over to death*, <sup><488></sup>Psalm 118:18. See how the prophet infers the perpetuity of the church from the

eternity of God; for Christ has said, *Because I live*, and therefore as long as I live, *you shall live also*, <sup><1419></sup>John 14:19. He is the rock on which the church is so firmly built that the *gates of hell shall not, cannot, prevail against it. We shall not die.*

**4.** Whatever the enemies of the church may do against her, it is according to the counsel of God, and is designed and directed for wise and holy ends: *Thou hast ordained them; thou hast established them.* It was God that gave the Chaldeans their power, made them a formidable people, and in his counsel determined what they should do, nor had they any power against his Israel but what was *given them from above*. He gave them their commission *to take the spoil and to take the prey*, <sup><306></sup>Isaiah 10:6. Herein God appears a mighty God, that the power of mighty men is derived from him, depends upon him, and is under his check; he says concerning it, *Hitherto shall it come, and no further*. Those whom God ordains shall do no more than what God has ordained, which is a great comfort to God's suffering people. Men are God's hand, the rod in his hand, <sup><1714></sup>Psalms 17:14. And he has *ordained them for judgment, and for correction*. God's people need correction, and deserve it; they must expect it; they shall have it; when wicked men are let loose against them, it is not for their destruction, that they may be ruined, but for their correction, that they may be reformed; they are not intended for a sword, to cut them off, but for a rod, to drive out the foolishness that is found in their hearts, though they *mean not so, neither does their heart think so*, <sup><307></sup>Isaiah 10:7. Note, It is matter of great comfort to us, in reference to the troubles and afflictions of the church, that, whatever mischief men design to them, God designs to bring good out of them, and we are sure that *his counsel shall stand*.

**5.** Though the wickedness of the wicked may prosper for a while, yet God is a holy God, and does not approve of that wickedness (v. 13): *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil*. The prophet, observing how very vicious and impious the Chaldeans were, and yet what great success they had against God's Israel, found a temptation arising from it to say that it was vain to serve God, and that it was indifferent to him what men were. But he soon suppresses the thought, by having recourse to his first principle, That God is not, that he cannot be, the author or patron of sin; as he cannot do iniquity himself, so he is *of purer eyes than to behold it* with any allowance or approbation; no, it is that *abominable thing which the Lord hates*. He sees all the sin that is committed in the world, and it is an offence to him, it is odious in his eyes, and those that commit it are

thereby made obnoxious to his justice. There is in the nature of God an antipathy to those dispositions and practices that are contrary to his holy law; and, though an expedient is happily found out for his being reconciled to sinners, yet he never will, nor can, be reconciled to sin. And this principle we must resolve to abide by, though the dispensations of his providence may for a time, and in some instances, seem to be inconsistent with it. Note, God's connivance at sin must never be interpreted into a giving countenance to it; for *he is not a God that has pleasure in wickedness*, <sup>(~~1984~~)</sup> Psalm 5:4, 5. The iniquity which, it is here said, God does not look upon, may be meant especially of the mischief done to God's people by their persecutors; though God sees cause to permit it, yet he does not approve of it; so it agrees with that of Balaam (<sup>(~~0231~~)</sup> Numbers 23:21), *He has not beheld iniquity against Jacob*, nor *seen*, with allowance, *perverseness against Israel*, which is very comfortable to the people of God, in their afflictions by the rage of men, that they cannot infer God's anger from it; though the instruments of their trouble hate them, it does not therefore follow that God does; nay, he loves them, and it is in love that he corrects them.

**II.** The grievances he complains of, and finds hard to reconcile with these truths: "Since we are sure that thou art a holy God, why have atheists temptation given them to question whether thou art so or no? *Wherefore lookest thou upon the Chaldeans that deal treacherously with thy people*, and givest them success in their attempts upon us? Why dost thou suffer thy sworn enemies, who blaspheme thy name, to deal thus cruelly, thus perfidiously, with thy sworn subjects, who desire to fear thy name? What shall we say to this?" This was a temptation to Job (<sup>(~~8207~~)</sup> Job 21:7; 24:1), to David (<sup>(~~0712~~)</sup> Psalm 73:2, 3), to <sup>(~~2101~~)</sup> Jeremiah 12:1, 2.

**1.** That God permitted sin, and was patient with the sinners. He *looked upon them*; he saw all their wicked doings and designs, and did not restrain nor punish them, but suffered them to speed in their purposes, to go on and prosper, and to carry all before them. Nay, his looking upon them intimates that he not only gave them no check or rebuke, but that he gave them encouragement and assistance, as if he smiled upon them and favoured them. He *held his tongue* when they went on in their wicked courses, said nothing against them, gave no orders to stop them. *These things thou hast done, and I kept silence.*

2. That his patience was abused, and, *because sentence* against these evil works and workers *was not executed speedily*, therefore *their hearts* were the more *fully set in them to do evil*.

(1.) They were false and deceitful, and there was no credit to be given them, nor any confidence to be put in them. They deal *treacherously*; under colour of peace and friendship, they prosecute and execute the most mischievous designs, and make no conscience of their word in any thing.

(2.) They hated and persecuted men because they were better than themselves, as Cain hated Abel because *his own works were evil and his brother's righteous*. *The wicked devours the man that is more righteous than he*, for that very reason, because he shames him; they have an ill will to the image of God, and *therefore* devour good men, because they bear that image. Though many of the Jews were as bad as the Chaldeans themselves, and worse, yet there were those among them that were much more righteous, and yet were devoured by them.

(3.) They made no more of killing men than of catching fish. The prophet complains that, Providence having delivered up the weaker to be prey to the stronger, they were, in effect, made as *the fishes of the sea*, v. 14. So they had been among themselves, preying upon one another as the greater fishes do upon the less (v. 3), and they were made so to the common enemy. They were *as the creeping things*, or *swimming things* (for the word is used for *fish*, <sup>Gen 1:20</sup>), *that have no ruler* over them, either to restrain them from devouring one another or to protect them from being devoured by their enemies. They are given up to the Chaldeans as fish to the fishermen. Those proud oppressors make no conscience of killing them, any more than men do of pulling fish out of the water, so small account do they make of human lives. They make no difficulty of killing them, but do it with as much ease as men catch fish, that make no resistance, but are unguarded and unarmed, and it is rather a pastime than any pains to take them. They make no distinction among them, but all is fish that comes to their net; and they reckon every thing their own that they can lay their hands on. They have various ways of spoiling and destroying, as men have of taking fish. Some they *take up with the angle* (v. 15), one by one; others *they catch* in shoals, and by wholesale, *in their net*, and *gather them in their drag*, their enclosing net. Such variety of methods have they to destroy those by whom they hope to enrich themselves.

(4.) They gloried in what they got, and pleased themselves with it, though it was got dishonestly: *Their portion is fat, and their meat plenteous*; they prosper in their oppression and fraud; they have a great deal, and it is of the best; their land is good, and they have abundance of it. And therefore,

[1.] They have great complacency in themselves, and are very pleasant; they live merrily (v. 15): *Therefore they rejoice and are glad*, because their wealth is great, and their projects succeed for the increase of it, ~~<887>~~Job 31:25. *Soul, take thy ease*, ~~<879>~~Luke 12:19.

[2.] They have a great conceit of themselves, and are great admirers of their own ingenuity and management: They *sacrifice to their own net, and burn incense to their own drag*; they applaud themselves for having got so much money, though ever so dishonestly. Note, There is a proneness in us to take the glory of our outward prosperity to ourselves, and to say, *My might, and the power of my hands, have gotten me this wealth*, ~~<887>~~Deuteronomy 8:17. This is idolizing ourselves, sacrificing to the dragnet, because it is our own, which is as absurd a piece of idolatry as sacrificing to Neptune or Dagon. That which makes them adore their net thus is because by it *their portion is fat*. Those that make a god of their money will make a god of their drag-net, if they can but get money by it.

**III.** The prophet, in the close, humbly expresses his hope that God will not suffer these destroyers of mankind always to go on and prosper thus, and expostulates with God concerning it (v. 17): “*Shall they therefore empty their net? Shall they enrich themselves, and fill their own vessels, with that which they have by violence and oppression taken away from their neighbours? Shall they empty their net of what they have caught, that they may cast it into the sea again, to catch more? And wilt thou suffer them to proceed in this wicked course? Shall they not spare continually to slay the nations? Must the numbers and wealth of nations be sacrificed to their net? As if it were a small thing to rob men of their estates, shall they rob God of his glory? Is not God the king of nations, and will he not assert their injured rights? Is he not jealous for his own honour, and will he not maintain that?*” The prophet lodges the matter in God’s hand, and leaves it with him, as the psalmist does. ~~<872>~~Psalm 74:22, *Arise, O God! Plead thy own cause*.