

# CHAPTER 6

In this chapter, as before, we have,

**I.** A prophecy of the invading of the land of Judah and the besieging of Jerusalem by the Chaldean army (v. 1-6), with the spoils they should make of the country (v. 9) and the terror which all should be seized with on that occasion (v. 22-26).

**II.** An account of those sins of Judah and Jerusalem which provoked God to bring this desolating judgment upon them. Their oppression (v. 7), their contempt of the word of God (v. 10-12), their worldliness (v. 13), the treachery of their prophets (v. 14), their impudence in sin (v. 15), their obstinacy against reproofs (v. 18, 19), which made their sacrifices unacceptable to him (v. 20), and for which he gave them up to ruin (v. 21), but tried them first (v. 27) and then rejected them as irreclaimable (v. 28-30).

**III.** Good counsel given them in the midst of all this, but in vain (v. 8, 16, 17).

## ☞ JEREMIAH 6:1-8

### JUDGMENTS THREATENED AGAINST ISRAEL

Here is

**I.** Judgment threatened against Judah and Jerusalem. The city and the country were at this time secure and under no apprehension of danger; they saw no cloud gathering, but every thing looked safe and serene: but the prophet tells them that they shall shortly be invaded by a foreign power, an army shall be brought against them *from the north*, which shall lay all waste, and shall cause not only a general consternation, but a general desolation. It is here foretold,

**1.** That the alarm of this should be loud and terrible. This is represented, v. 1. The children of Benjamin, in which tribe part of Jerusalem lay, are here called to shift for their own safety in the country; for the city (to which it was first thought advisable for them to flee, ☞ Jeremiah 4:5, 6) would

soon be made too hot for them, and they would find it the wisest course to flee out of the midst of it. It is common, in public frights, for the people to think any place safer than that in which they are; and therefore those in the city are for shifting into the country, in hopes there to escape out of danger, and those in the country are for shifting into the city, in hopes there to make head against the danger; but it is all in vain when evil pursues sinners with commission. They are told to send the alarm into the country, and to do what they can for their own safety: *Blow the trumpet in Tekoa*, a city which lay twelve miles north from Jerusalem. Let them be stirred up to stand upon their guard: *Set up a sign of fire* (that is, kindle the beacons) *in Beth-haccerem*, the *house of the vineyard*, which lay on a hill between Jerusalem and Tekoa. Prepare to make a vigorous resistance, *for the evil appears out of the north*. This may be taken ironically: “Betake yourselves to the best methods you can think of for your own preservation, but all shall be in vain; for, when you have done your best, it will be a great destruction, for it is in vain to contend with God's judgments.”

2. That the attempt upon them should be bold and formidable and such as they should be a very unequal match for.

(1.) See what *the daughter of Zion* is, on whom the assault is made. She is compared to a *comely and delicate woman* (v. 2), bred up in every thing that is nice and soft, that will not set so much as the sole of *her foot to the ground for tenderness and delicacy* (<sup>(1856)</sup>Deuteronomy 28:56), nor suffer the wind to blow upon her; and, not being accustomed to hardship, she will be the less able either to resist the enemy (for those that make war must *endure hardness*) or to bear the destruction with that patience which is necessary to make it tolerable. The more we indulge ourselves in the pleasures of this life the more we disfit ourselves for the troubles of this life.

(2.) See what the daughter of Babylon is, by whom the assault is made. The generals and their armies are compared to *shepherds* and *their flocks* (v. 3), in such numbers and in such order did they come, the soldiers following their leaders as the sheep their shepherds. The daughter of *Zion dwelt at home* (so some read it), expecting to be courted with love, but was invaded with fury. This comparing of the enemies to shepherds inclines me to embrace another reading, which some give of v. 2, *The daughter of Zion is like a comely pasture-ground and a delicate land*, which invite the shepherds to bring their flocks thither to graze; and as the

shepherds easily make themselves masters of an open field, which (as was then usual in some parts) lies common, owned by none, *pitch their tents* in it, and their flocks quickly eat it bare, so shall the Chaldean army easily break in upon the land of Judah, force for themselves a free quarter where they please, and in a little time devour all. For the further illustration of this he shows,

[1.] How God shall commission them to make this destruction even of the holy land and the holy city, which were his own possession. It is he that says (v. 4), *Prepare you war against her*; for he is the *Lord of hosts*, that has all hosts at his command, and he has said (v. 6), *Hew you down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem*, in order to the attacking of it. The Chaldeans have great power against Judah and Jerusalem, and yet they have no power but what is *given them from above*. God has marked out Jerusalem for destruction. He has said, *“This is the city to be visited, visited in wrath, visited by the divine justice, and this is the time of her visitation.”* The day is coming when those that are careless and secure in sinful ways will certainly be visited.

[2.] How they shall animate themselves and one another to execute that commission. God's counsels being against Jerusalem, which cannot be altered or disannulled, the councils of war which the enemies held are made to agree with his counsels. God having said, *Prepare war against her*, their determinations are made subservient to his; and, notwithstanding the distance of place and the many difficulties that lay in the way, it is soon resolved, *nemine contradicente — unanimously. Arise, and let us go*. Note, It is good to see how the counsel and decree of God are pursued and executed in the devices and designs of men, even theirs that know him not, <sup>206</sup> Isaiah 10:6, 7. In this campaign, *First*, They resolve to be very expeditious. They have no sooner resolved upon it than they address themselves to it; it shall never be said that they left any thing to be done towards it to-morrow which they could do to-day: *Arise, let us go up at noon*, though it be in the heat of the day; nay, (v. 5), *Arise, let us go up at night*, though it be in the dark. Nothing shall hinder them; they are resolved to *lose no time*. They are described as men in care to make despatch (v. 4): *“Woe unto us, for the day goes away, and we are not going on with our work; the shadows of the evening are stretched out, and we sit still, and let slip the opportunity.”* O that we were thus eager in our spiritual work and warfare, thus afraid of losing time, or any opportunity, in taking the *kingdom of heaven by violence!* It is folly to trifle when we

have an eternal salvation to work out, and the enemies of that salvation to fight against. *Secondly*, They confidently expect to be very successful: “*Let us go up*, and let us destroy her palaces and make ourselves masters of the wealth that is in them.” It was not that they might fulfill God’s counsels, but that they might fill their own treasures, that they were thus eager; yet God thereby served his own purposes.

**II.** The cause of this judgment assigned. It is all for their wickedness; they have brought it upon themselves; they must bear it, for they must bear the blame of it. They are thus oppressed because they have been oppressors; they have dealt hardly with one another, each in his turn, as they have had power and advantage, and now the enemy shall come and deal hardly with them all. This sin of oppression, and violence, and wrong-doing, is here charged upon them,

**1.** As a national sin (v. 6): *Therefore this city is to be visited*, it is time to make inquisition, for *she is wholly oppression in the midst of her*. All orders and degrees of men, from the prince on the throne to the meanest master of a shop, were oppressive to those that were under them. Look which way you might, there were causes for complaints of this kind.

**2.** As a sin that had become in a manner natural to them (v. 7): *She casts out wickedness*, in all the instances of malice and mischievousness, *as a fountain casts out her waters*, so plentifully and constantly, the streams bitter and poisonous, like the fountain. The waters out of the fountain will not be restrained, but will find or force their way, nor will they be checked by laws or conscience in their violent proceedings. This is fitly applied to the corrupt heart of man in his natural state; it *casts out wickedness*, one evil imagination or other, as a fountain *casts out her waters*, naturally and easily; it is always flowing, and yet always full.

**3.** As that which had become a constant practice with them; *Violence and spoil are heard in her*. The cry of it had come up before God as that of Sodom: *Before me continually are grief and wounds* — the complaint of those that find themselves aggrieved, being unjustly wounded in their bodies or spirits, in their estates or reputation. Note, He that is the common Parent of mankind regards and resents, and sooner or later will revenge, the mischiefs and wrongs that men do to one another.

**III.** The counsel given them how to prevent this judgment. Fair warning is given now upon the whole matter: “*Be thou instructed, O Jerusalem! v.*

8. Receive the instruction given thee both by the law of God and by the prophets; be wise at length for thyself.” They knew very well what they had been instructed to do; nothing remained but to do it, for till then they could not be said to be instructed. The reason for this counsel is taken from the inevitable ruin they ran upon if they refused to comply with the instructions given them: *Lest my soul depart, or be disjoined, from thee.* This intimates what a tender affection and concern God had had for them; his very soul had been joined to them, and nothing but sin could disjoin it. Note,

**1.** The God of mercy is loth to depart even from a provoking people, and is earnest with them by true repentance and reformation to prevent things coming to that extremity.

**2.** Their case is very miserable from whom God's soul is disjoined; it intimates the loss not only of their outward blessings, but of those comforts and favours which are the more immediate and peculiar tokens of his love and presence. Compare this with that dreadful word (<sup>438</sup>Hebrews 10:38), *If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.*

**3.** Those whom God forsakes are certainly undone; when God's soul departs from Jerusalem she soon becomes desolate and uninhabited, <sup>428</sup>Matthew 23:38.

## ~~240~~ JEREMIAH 6:9-17

### THE UNIVERSAL CORRUPTION OF THE AGE

The heads of this paragraph are the very same with those of the last; for precept must be upon precept and line upon line.

**I.** The ruin of Judah and Jerusalem is here threatened. We had before the haste which the Chaldea army made to the war (v. 4, 5); now here we have the havoc made by the war. How lamentable are the desolations here described! The enemy shall so long quarter among them, and be so insatiable in their thirst after blood and treasure, that they shall seize all they can meet with, and what escapes them at one time shall fall into their hands another (v. 9): *They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as*

a vine; as the *grape-gatherer*, who is resolved to leave none behind, still *turns back his hand into the baskets*, to put more in, till he has gathered all, so that they be picked up by the enemy, though dispersed, though hid, and none of them shall escape their eye and hand. Perhaps the people, being *given to covetousness* (v. 13), had not observed that law of God which forbade them to *glean all their grapes* (<sup>(-1800)</sup>Leviticus 19:10), and now they themselves shall be in like manner *thoroughly gleaned* and shall either fall by the sword or go into captivity. This is explained v. 11, 12, where God's *fury* and his *hand* are said to be *poured out* and *stretched out*, in the fury and by the hand of the Chaldeans; for even wicked men are often made use of as God's hand (<sup>(-1074)</sup>Psalms 17:14), and in their anger we may see God angry. Now see on whom the fury is poured out in full vials — *upon the children abroad, or in the streets*, where they are playing (<sup>(-3885)</sup>Zechariah 8:5) or whither they run out innocently to look about them: the sword of the merciless Chaldeans shall not spare them, <sup>(-2402)</sup>Jeremiah 9:21. The children perish in the calamity which the fathers' sins have procured. The execution shall likewise reach *the assembly of young men*, their merry meetings, their clubs which they keep up to strengthen one another's hands in wickedness; they shall be *cut off together*. Nor shall those only fall into the enemies' hands who meet for lewdness (<sup>(-2482)</sup>Jeremiah 5:7), but *even the husband with the wife shall be taken*, these two in bed together, and neither left, but both taken prisoners. And, as they have no compassion for the weak but fair sex, so they have none for the decrepit but venerable age: *The old with the full of days*, whose deaths can contribute no more to their safety than their lives to their service, who are not in a capacity to do them either good or harm, shall be either cut off or carried off. *Their houses shall then be turned to others* (v. 12); the conquerors shall dwell in their habitations, use their goods, and live upon their stores; their *fields and vines* shall fall *together* into their hands, as was threatened, <sup>(-1830)</sup>Deuteronomy 28:30, etc. For God *stretches out his hand upon the inhabitants of the land*, and none can go out of the reach of it. Now as to this denunciation of God's wrath,

**1.** The prophet justifies himself in preaching thus terribly, for herein he dealt faithfully (v. 11): “*I am full of the fury of the Lord*, full of the thoughts and apprehensions of it, and am carried out with a powerful impulse, by the spirit of prophecy, to speak of it thus vehemently.” He took no delight in threatening, nor was it any pleasure to him with such sermons as these to make those about him uneasy; but he could not

contain himself; he was *wearily with holding in*; he suppressed it as long as he could, as long as he durst, but he was so *full of power by the Spirit of the Lord of hosts* that he must speak, whether they will hear or whether they will forbear. Note, When ministers preach the terrors of the Lord according to the scripture we have no reason to be displeased at them; for they are but messengers, and must deliver their message, pleasing or displeasing.

**2.** He condemns the false prophets who preached plausibly, for therein they flattered people and dealt unfaithfully (v. 13, 14): *The priest and the prophet*, who should be their watchmen and monitors, have *dealt falsely*, have not been true to their trust not told the people their faults and the danger they were in; they should have been their physicians, but they murdered their patients by letting them have their will, by giving them every thing that had a mind to, and flattering them into an opinion that they were in no danger (v. 14): They have *healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly*, or *according to the cure of some slight hurt*, skinning over the wound and never searching it to the bottom, applying lenitives only, when there was need of corrosives, soothing people in their sins, and giving them opiates to make them easy for the present, while the disease was preying upon the vitals. They said, "*Peace peace — all shall be well.*" (if there were some thinking people among them, who were awake, and apprehensive of danger, they soon stopped their mouths with their priestly and prophetic authority, boldly averring that neither church nor state was in any danger), when *there is no peace*, because they went on in their idolatries and daring impieties. Note, Those are to be reckoned our false friends (that is, our worst and most dangerous enemies) who flatter us in a sinful way.

**II.** The sin of Judah and Jerusalem, which provoked God to bring this ruin upon them and justified him in it, is here declared.

**1.** They would by no means bear to be told of their faults, nor of the danger they were in. God bids the prophet give them warning of the judgment coming (v. 9), "but," says he, "*to whom shall I speak and give warning?*" I cannot find out any that will so much as give me a patient hearing. I may give warning long enough, but these is nobody that will take warning. I cannot speak *that they may hear*, cannot speak to any purpose, or with any hope of success; for *their ear is uncircumcised*, it is carnal and fleshly, indisposed to receive the voice of God, so that *they*

*cannot hearken.* They have, as it were, a thick skin grown over the organs of hearing, so that divine things might to as much purpose be spoken to a stone as to them. Nay, they are not only deaf to it, but prejudiced against it; therefore they cannot hear, because they are resolved that they will not: *The word of the Lord is unto them a reproach;* both the reproofs and the threatenings of the word are so;” they reckoned themselves wronged and affronted by both, and resented the prophet's plain-dealing with them as they would the most causeless slander and calumny. This was *kicking against the pricks* (<sup>405</sup>Acts 9:5), as the lawyers against the word of Christ, <sup>415</sup>Luke 11:45, *Thus saying, thou repoachest us also.* Note, Those reproofs that are counted reproaches, and hated as such, will certainly be turned into the heaviest woes. When it is here said, *They have no delight in the word,* more is implied than is expressed; “they have an antipathy to it; their hearts rise at it; it exasperates them, and enrages their corruptions, and they are ready to fly in the face and pull out the eyes of their reprovers.” And how can those expect that the word of the Lord should speak any comfort to them who have no delight in it, but would rather be any where than within hearing of it? 2. They were inordinately set upon the world, and wholly carried away by the love of it (v. 13): “*From the least of them even to the greatest,* old and young, rich and poor, high and low, those of all ranks, professions, and employments, *every one is given to covetousness,* greedy of filthy lucre, all for what they can get, *per fas per nefas — right or wrong;*” and this made them oppressive and violent (v. 6, 7), for of those evils, as well as others, the love of money is the bitter root. Nay, and this hardened their hearts against the word of God and his prophets. It was the covetous Pharisees that derided Christ, <sup>424</sup>Luke 16:14.

**3.** They had become impudent in sin and were past shame. After such a high charge of flagrant crimes proved upon them, it was very proper to ask (v. 15), *Were they ashamed when they had committed all these abominations,* which are such a reproach to their reason and religion? Did they blush at the conviction, and acknowledge that confusion of face belonged to them? If so, there is some hope of them yet. But, alas! there did not appear so much as this colour of virtue among them; their hearts were so hardened that *they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush,* they had so brazened their faces. They even gloried in their wickedness, and openly confronted the convictions which should have humbled them and brought them to repentance. They resolved to face it out against God himself and not to own their guilt. Some refer this to the



priests and prophets, who had healed the people slightly and told them that they should have peace, and yet were not ashamed of their treachery and falsehood, no, not when the event disproved them and gave them the lie. Those that are shameless are graceless and their case is hopeless. But those that will not submit to a penitential shame, nor take that to themselves as their due, shall not escape an utter ruin; for so it follows: *Therefore they shall fall among those that fall*; they shall have their portion with those that are quite undone; and, when God visits the nation in wrath, they shall be sure to be cast down and be made to tremble, because they would not blush. Note, Those that sin and cannot blush for it are in an evil case now, and it will be worse with them shortly. At first they hardened themselves and would not blush, afterwards they were so hardened that they could not. *Quod unum habebant in malis bonum perdunt, peccandi verecundiam — they have lost the only good property which once blended itself with many bad ones, that is, shame for having done amiss.* — Senec. De Vit. Beat.

**III.** They are put in mind of the good counsel which had been often given them, but in vain. They had a great deal said to them to little purpose,

**1.** By way of advice concerning their duty, v. 16. God had been used to say to them, *Stand in the ways and see.* That is,

**(1.)** He would have them to consider, not to proceed rashly, but to do as travellers in the road, who are in care to find the right way which will bring them to their journey's end, and therefore pause and enquire for it. If they have any reason to think that they have missed their way, they are not easy till they have obtained satisfaction. O that men would be thus *wise for their souls*, and would ponder the path of their feet, as those that believe lawful and unlawful are of no less consequence to us than the right way and the wrong are to a traveller!

**(2.)** He would have them to consult antiquity, the observations and experiences of those that went before them: “*Ask for the old paths, enquire of the former age* (<sup>3808</sup>Job 8:8), *ask thy father, thy elders* (<sup>4807</sup>Deuteronomy 32:7), and thou wilt find that the way of godliness and righteousness has always been the way which God has owned and blessed and in which men have prospered. Ask for the *old paths*, the paths prescribed by the law of God, the written word, that true standard of antiquity. Ask for the paths that the patriarchs travelled in before you, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob; and, as you hope to inherit the promises

made to them, tread in their steps. *Ask for the old paths, Where is the good way?*” We must not be guided merely by antiquity, as if the plea of prescription and long usage were alone sufficient to justify our path. No; there is an *old way which wicked men have trodden*, ~~1025~~ Job 22:15. But, when we ask for the old paths, it is only in order to find out the *good way*, the highway of the upright. Note, The way of religion and godliness is a good old way, the way that all the saints in all ages have walked in.

(3.) He would have them to resolve to act according to the result of these enquiries: “When you have found out which is the good way, *walk therein*, practise accordingly, keep closely to that way, proceed, and persevere in it.” Some make this counsel to be given them with reference to the struggles that were between the true and false prophets, between those that said they should have peace and those that told them trouble was at the door; they pretended they knew not which to believe: “*Stand in the way*,” says God, “and see, and enquire, which of these two agrees with the written word and the usual methods of God’s providence, which of these directs you to the good way, and do accordingly.”

(4.) He assures them that, if they do thus, it will secure the welfare and satisfaction of their own souls: “*Walk in the good old way* and you will find your walking in that way will be easy and pleasant; you will enjoy both your God and yourselves, and the way will lead you to true rest. Though it cost you some pains to walk in that way, you will find an abundant recompence at your journey’s end.”

(5.) He laments that this good counsel, which was so rational in itself and so proper for them, could not find acceptance: “*But they said, We will not walk therein*, not only we will not be at the pains to enquire *which is the good way, the good old way*; but when it is told us, and we have nothing to say to the contrary but that it is the right way, yet we will not deny ourselves and our humours so far as to *walk in it*.” Thus multitudes are ruined for ever by downright wilfulness.

2. By way of admonition concerning their danger. Because they would not be ruled by fair reasoning, God takes another method with them; by less judgments he threatens greater, and sends his prophets to give them this explication of them, and to frighten them with an apprehension of the danger they were in (v. 17); *Also I set watchmen over you*. God’s ministers are watchmen, and it is a great mercy to have them set over us in the Lord. Now observe here,

(1.) The fair warning given by these watchmen. This was the burden of their song; they cried again and again, *Hearken to the sound of the trumpet*. God, in his providence, sounds the trumpet (<sup><304></sup>Zechariah 9:14); the watchmen hear it themselves and are affected with it (<sup><2019></sup>Jeremiah 4:19), and they are to call upon others to hearken to it too, to hear the Lord's controversy, to observe the voice of Providence, to improve it, and answer the intentions of it.

(2.) This fair warning slighted: “*But they said, We will not hearken; we will not hear, we will not heed, we will not believe; the prophets may as well save themselves and us the trouble.*” The reason why sinners perish is because they *do not hearken to the sound of the trumpet*; and the reason why they do not is because they will not; and they have no reason to give why they will not but because they will not, that is, they are herein most unreasonable. One may more easily deal with ten men's reasons than one man's will.

## <sup><2168></sup> JEREMIAH 6:18-30

### PUNISHMENT PREDICTED

Here,

**I.** God appeals to all the neighbours, nay, to the whole world, concerning the equity of his proceedings against Judah and Jerusalem (v. 18, 19): “*Hear, you nations, and know particularly, O congregation of the mighty, the great men of the nations, that take cognizance of the affairs of states about you and make remarks upon them. Observe now what is doing among those of Judah and Jerusalem; you hear of the desolations brought upon them, the earth rings of it, trembles under it; you all wonder that I should bring evil upon this people, that are in covenant with me, that profess relation to me, that have worshipped me, and been highly favoured by me; you are ready to ask, Wherefore has the Lord done thus to this land?*” (<sup><5218></sup>Deuteronomy 29:24. Know then,”

**1.** “That it is the natural product of their devices. The evil brought upon them is *the fruit of their thought*. They thought to strengthen themselves by their alliance with foreigners, and by that very thing they weakened and diminished themselves, they betrayed and exposed themselves.”

2. “That it is the just punishment of their disobedience and rebellion. God does but execute upon them the curse of the law for their violation of its commands. It is because *they have not hearkened to my words nor to my law*, nor regarded a word I have said to them, but rejected it all. They would never have been ruined thus by the judgments of God's hand if they had not refused to be ruled by the judgments of his mouth: therefore you cannot say that they have any wrong done them.”

II. God rejects their plea, by which they insisted upon their external services as sufficient to atone for all their sins. Alas! it is a frivolous plea (v. 20): “*To what purpose come there to me incense and sweet cane, to be burnt for a perfume on the golden altar, though it was the best of the kind, and far-fetched? What care I for your burnt-offerings and your sacrifices?*” They not only cannot profit God (no sacrifice does, ~~1809~~ Psalm 50:9), but they do not please him, for none does this but the sacrifice of the upright; that of the wicked is an *abomination to him*. Sacrifice and incense were appointed to excite their repentance, and to direct them to a Mediator, and assist their faith in him. Where this good use was made of them they were acceptable, God had respect to them and to those that offered them. But when they were offered with an opinion that thereby they made God their debtor, and purchased a license to go on in sin, they were so far from being pleasing to God that they were a provocation to him.

III. He foretels the desolation that was now coming upon them.

1. God designs their ruin because they hate to be reformed (v. 21): *I will lay stumbling-blocks before this people*, occasions of falling not into sin, but into trouble. Those whom God has marked for destruction he perplexes and embarrasses in their counsels, and obstructs and retards all the methods they take for their own safety. The parties of the enemy, which they met with wherever they went, were stumbling-blocks to them; in ever corner they stumbled upon them and were dashed to pieces by them: *The fathers and the sons together shall fall upon them*; neither the fathers with their wisdom, nor the sons with their strength and courage, shall escape them, or get over them. The sons that sinned with their fathers fall with them. Even the *neighbour and his friend shall perish* and not be able to help either themselves or one another.

**2.** He will make use of the Chaldeans as instruments of it; for whatever work God has to do he will find out proper instruments for the doing of it. This is a people fetched *from the north, from the sides of the earth*. Babylon itself lay a great way off northward; and some of the countries that were subject to the king of Babylon, out of which his army was levied, lay much further. These must be employed in this service, v. 22, 23. For,

**(1.)** It is a people very numerous, *a great nation*, which will make their invasion the more formidable.

**(2.)** It is a warlike people. *They lay hold on bow and spear*, and at this time know how to use them, for they are used to them. *They ride upon horses*, and therefore they march the more swiftly, and in battle press the harder. No nation had yet brought into the field a better cavalry than the Chaldeans.

**(3.)** It is a barbarous people. *They are cruel and have no mercy*, being greedy of prey and flushed with victory. They take a pride in frightening all about them; their voice *roars like the sea*. And,

**(4.)** They have a particular design upon Judah and Jerusalem, in hopes greatly to enrich themselves with the spoil of that famous country. They are *set in array against thee, O daughter of Zion!* The sins of God's professing people make them an easy prey to those that are God's enemies as well as theirs.

**IV.** He describes the very great consternation which Judah and Jerusalem should be in upon the approach of this formidable enemy, v. 24-26.

**1.** They own themselves in a fright, upon the first intelligence brought them of the approach of the enemy: "*When we have but heard the fame thereof our hands wax feeble*, and we have no heart to make any resistance; *anguish has taken hold of us*, and we are immediately in an extremity of pain, like that of *a woman in travail*." Note, Sense of guilt quite dispirits men, upon the approach of any threatening trouble. What can those hope to do for themselves who have made God their enemy?

**2.** They confine themselves by consent to their houses, not daring to show their heads abroad; for, though they could not but expect that the sword of the enemy would at last find them out there, yet they would rather die tamely and meanly there than run any venture, either by fight or flight, to help themselves. Thus they say one to another, "*Go not forth into the field*,

no not to fetch in your provision thence, *nor walk by the way*; dare not to go to church or market, it is at your peril if you do, for the *sword of the enemy*, and the fear of it, are *on every side*; the *highways are unoccupied*, as in Jael's time," <sup>1086</sup>Judges 5:6. Let this remind us, when we travel the roads in safety and there is none to make us afraid, to bless God for our share in the public tranquillity.

**3.** The prophet calls upon them sadly to lament the desolations that were coming upon them. He was himself the lamenting prophet, and called upon his people to join with him in his lamentations: "*O daughter of my people*, hear they God calling thee to weeping and mourning, and answer his call: do not only put on sackcloth for a day, but gird it on for thy constant wear; do not only put ashes on thy head, but *wallow thyself in ashes*; put thyself into close mourning, and use all the tokens of bitter lamentation, not forced and for show only, but with the greatest sincerity, as parents *mourn for an only son*, and think themselves comfortless because they are childless. Thus do thou lament for *the spoiler that suddenly comes upon us*. Though he has not come yet, he is *coming*, the decree has *gone forth*: let us therefore meet the execution of it with a suitable sadness." As saints may rejoice in hope of God's mercies, though they see them only in the promise, so sinners must mourn for fear of God's judgments, though they see them only in the threatenings.

**V.** He constitutes the prophet a judge over this people that now stand upon their trial: as <sup>200</sup>Jeremiah 1:10, *I have set thee over the nations*; so here, *I have set thee for a tower*, or as a sentinel, or a watchman, upon a tower, *among my people*, as an inspector of their actions, *that thou mayest know, and try their way*, v. 27. Not that God needed any to inform him concerning them; on the contrary, the prophet knew little of them in comparison but by the spirit of prophecy. But thus God appeals to the prophet himself, and his own observation concerning their character, that he might be fully satisfied in the equity of God's proceedings against them and with the more assurance give them warning of the judgments coming. God set him for a tower, conspicuous to all and attacked by many, but made him a *fortress*, a *strong tower*, gave him courage to stem the tide and bear the shock of their displeasure. Those that will be faithful reprovers have need to be firm as fortresses. Now in trying their way he will find two things: —

**1.** That they are wretchedly debauched (v. 28): *They are all grievous revolters, revolters of revolters* (so the word is), the worst of revolters, as a *servant of servants* is the meanest servant. They have a revolting heart, have deeply revolted, and revolt more and more. They seemed to start fair, but they revolt and start back. They *walk with slanders*; they make nothing of belying and backbiting one another, nay, they make a perfect trade of it; it is their constant course, and they govern themselves by the slanders they hear, hating those that they hear ill-spoken of, though ever so unjustly. They are *brass and iron*, base metals, and there is nothing in them that is valuable. They were as silver and gold, but they have degenerated. Nay, as *they are all revolters, so they are all corrupters*, not only debauched themselves, but industrious to debauch others, to corrupt them as they themselves are corrupt; nay, to make them seven times more the children of hell than themselves. It is often so; sinners soon become tempters.

**2.** That they would never be reclaimed and reformed; it was in vain to think of reforming them, for various methods had been tried with them, and all to no purpose, v. 29, 30. He compares them to ore that was supposed to have some good metal in it, and was therefore put into the furnace by the refiner, who used all his art, and took abundance of pains, about it, but it proved all dross, nothing of any value could be extracted out of it. God by his prophets and by his providences had used the most proper means to refine this people and to purify them from their wickedness; but it was all in vain. By the continual preaching of the word, and in a series of afflictions, they had been kept in a constant fire, but all to no purpose. *The bellows* have been still kept so near the fire, to blow it, that they *are burnt* with the heat of it, or they are quite worn out with long use and thrown into the fire as good for nothing. The prophets have preached their throats sore with crying aloud against the sins of Israel, and yet they are not convinced and humbled. The *lead*, which was then used in refining silver, as quicksilver is now, *is consumed of the fire*, and has not done its work. *The founder melts in vain*; his labour is lost, *for the wicked are not plucked away*, no care is taken to separate between the precious and the vile, to purge out the old leaven, to cast out of communion those who, being corrupt themselves, are in danger of infecting others. Or, *Their wickednesses are not removed* (so some read it); they are still as bad as ever, and nothing will prevail to part between them and their sins. They will not be brought off from their idolatries and immoralities by all they have heard, and all they have felt, of the wrath of God against them; and

therefore that doom is passed upon them (v. 30): *Reprobate silver shall they be called*, useless and worthless; they glitter as if they had some silver in them, but there is nothing of real virtue or goodness to be found among them; and for this reason *the Lord has rejected them*. He will no more own them as his people, nor look for any good from them; he will *take them away like dross* (~~3819~~ Psalm 119:119), and prepare a consuming fire for those that would not be purified by a refining fire. By this it appears,

**(1.)** That God has *no pleasure in the death* and ruin of sinners, for he tries all ways and methods with them to prevent their destruction and qualify them for salvation. Both his ordinances and his providences have a tendency this way, to part between them and their sins; and yet with many it is all lost labour. *We have piped unto you, and you have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and you have not wept.* Therefore,

**(2.)** God will be justified in the death of sinners and all the blame will lie upon themselves. He did not reject them till he had used all proper means to reform them; did not cast them off so long as there was any hope of them, nor abandon them as dross till it appeared that they were *reprobate silver*.