

CHAPTER 20

Such plain dealing as Jeremiah used in the foregoing chapter, one might easily foresee, if it did not convince and humble men, would provoke and exasperate them; and so it did; for here we find,

I. Jeremiah persecuted by Pashur for preaching that sermon (v. 1, 2).

II. Pashur threatened for so doing, and the word which Jeremiah had preached confirmed (v. 3-6).

III. Jeremiah complaining to God concerning it, and the other instances of hard measure that he had since he began to be a prophet, and the grievous temptations he had struggled with (v. 7-10), encouraging himself in God, lodging his appeal with him, not doubting but that he shall yet praise him, by which it appears that he had much grace (v. 11-13) and yet peevishly cursing the day of his birth (v. 14-18), by which it appears that he had sad remainders of corruption in him too, and was a man subject to like passions as we are.

~~201~~ JEREMIAH 20:1-6

THE SIN AND DOOM OF PASHUR

Here is,

I. Pashur's unjust displeasure against Jeremiah, and the fruits of that displeasure, v. 1, 2. This Pashur was a priest, and therefore, one would think, should have protected Jeremiah, who was of his own order, a priest too, and the more because he was a prophet of the Lord, whose interests the priests, his ministers, ought to consult. But this priest was a persecutor of him whom he should have patronized. He was *the son of Immer*; that is, he was of the sixteenth course of the priests, of which Immer, when these courses were first settled by David, was father (~~1244~~ 1 Chronicles 24:14), as Zechariah was of the order of Abiah, ~~4005~~ Luke 1:5. Thus this Pashur is distinguished from another of the same name mentioned ~~201~~ Jeremiah 21:1, who was of the fifth course. This Pashur was *chief governor in the temple*;

perhaps he was only so *pro tempore* — for a short period, the course he was head of being now in waiting, or he was suffragan to the high priest, or perhaps captain of the temple or of the guards about it. ^{<401>}Acts 4:1. This was Jeremiah's great enemy. The greatest malignity to God's prophets was found among those that professed sanctity and concern for God and the church. We cannot suppose that Pashur was one of those ancients of the priests that went with Jeremiah to the valley of Tophet to hear him prophesy, unless it were with a malicious design to take advantage against him; but, when he came into the courts of the Lord's house, it is probable that he was himself a witness of what he said, and so it may be read (v. 1), *He heard Jeremiah prophesying these things*. As we read it, the information was brought to him by others, whose examinations he took: *He heard that Jeremiah prophesied these things*, and could not bear it, especially that he should dare to preach in the courts of the Lord's house, where he was *chief governor*, without his leave. When power in the church is abused, it is the most dangerous power that can be employed against it. Being incensed at Jeremiah,

1. He *smote* him, struck him with his hand or staff of authority. Perhaps it was a blow intended only to disgrace him, like that which the high priest ordered to be given to Paul (^{<402>}Acts 23:2), he struck him on the mouth, and bade him hold his prating. Or perhaps he gave him many blows intended to hurt him; he beat him severely, as a malefactor. It is charged upon the husbandmen (^{<403>}Matthew 21:35) that they beat the servants. The method of proceeding here was illegal; the high priest, and the rest of the priests, ought to have been consulted, Jeremiah's credentials examined, and the matter enquired into, whether he had an authority to say what he said. But these rules of justice are set aside and despised, as mere formalities; right or wrong, Jeremiah must be run down. The enemies of piety would never suffer themselves to be bound by the laws of equity.

2. He *put him in the stocks*. Some make it only a place of confinement; he imprisoned him. It rather seems to be an instrument of closer restraint, and intended to put him both to pain and shame. Some think it was a pillory for his neck and arms; others (as we) a pair of stocks for his legs: whatever engine it was, he continued in it all night, and in a public place too, *in the high gate of Benjamin, which was in, or by, the house of the Lord*, probably a gate through which they passed between the city and the temple. Pashur intended thus to chastise him, that he might deter him from prophesying; and thus to expose him to contempt and render him odious,

that he might not be regarded if he did prophesy. Thus have the best men met with the worst treatment from this ungracious ungrateful world; and the greatest blessings of their age have been counted as the *off-scouring of all things*. Would it not raise a pious indignation to see such a man as Pashur upon the bench and such a man as Jeremiah in the stocks? It is well that there is another life after this, when persons and things will appear with another face.

II. God's just displeasure against Pashur, and the tokens of it. *On the morrow Pashur gave Jeremiah his discharge, brought him out of the stocks* (v. 3); it is probable that he continued him there, in little-ease, as long as was usual to continue any in that punishment. And now Jeremiah has a message from God to him. We do not find that, when Pashur put Jeremiah in the stocks, the latter gave him any check for which he did; he appears to have quietly and silently submitted to the abuse; *when he suffered, he threatened not*. But, when he brought him out of the stocks, then God put a word into the prophet's mouth, which would awaken his conscience, if he had any. For, when the prophet of the Lord was bound, *the word of the Lord was not*. What can we think Pashur aimed at in smiting and abusing Jeremiah? Whatever it is, we shall see by what God says to him that he is disappointed.

1. Did he aim to establish himself, and make himself easy, by silencing one that told him of his faults and would be likely to lessen his reputation with the people? He shall not gain this point; for,

(1.) Though the prophet should be silent, his own conscience shall fly in his face and make him always uneasy. To confirm this he shall have a name given him, *Magor-missabib* — *Terror round about*, or *Fear on every side*. God himself shall give him this name, whose calling him so will make him so. It seems to be a proverbial expression, bespeaking a man not only in distress but in despair, not only in danger on every side (that a man may be and yet by faith may be in no terror, as David, ^{<906>}Psalm 3:6, 27:3), but in fear on every side, and that a man may be when there appears no danger. *The wicked flee when no man pursues, are in great gear where no fear is*. This shall be Pashur's case (v. 4): "*Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself*"; that is, thou shalt be subject to continual frights, and thy own fancy and imagination shall create thee a constant uneasiness." Note, God can make the most daring sinner a terror to himself, and will find out a way to frighten those that frighten his people from doing their duty. And

those that will not hear of their faults from God's prophets, that are reprovers in the gate, shall be made to hear of them from conscience, which is a reprovor in their own bosoms that will not be daunted nor silenced. And miserable is the man that is thus made a terror to himself. Yet this is not all; some are very much a terror to themselves, but they conceal it and seem to others to be pleasant; but, "*I will make thee a terror to all thy friends*"; thou shalt, upon all occasions, express thyself with so much horror and amazement that all thy friends shall be afraid of conversing with thee and shall choose to stand aloof from thy torment." Persons in deep melancholy and distraction are a terror to themselves and all about them, which is a good reason why we should be very thankful, so long as God continues to us the use of our reason and the peace of our consciences.

(2.) His friends, whom he put a confidence in and perhaps studied to oblige in what he did against Jeremiah, shall all fail him. God does not presently strike him dead for what he did against Jeremiah, but lets him live miserably, like Cain in the *land of shaking*, in such a continual consternation that wherever he goes he shall be a monument of divine justice; and, when it is asked, "What makes this man in such a continual terror?" it shall be answered, "It is God's hand upon him for putting Jeremiah in the stocks." His friends, who should encourage him, shall all be cut off; they shall *fall by the sword of the enemy*, and *his eyes shall behold it*, which dreadful sight shall increase his terror.

(3.) He shall find, in the issue, that his terror is not causeless, but that divine vengeance is waiting for him (v. 6); he and his family shall *go into captivity*, even to *Babylon*; he shall neither die before the evil comes, as Josiah, nor live to survive it, as some did, but he shall die a captive, and shall in effect be buried in his chains, he *and all his friends*. Thus far is the doom of Pashur. Let persecutors read it, and tremble; tremble to repentance before they be made to tremble to their ruin.

2. Did he aim to keep the people easy, to prevent the destruction that Jeremiah prophesied of, and by sinking his reputation to make his words fall to the ground? It is probable that he did; for it appears by v. 6 that he did himself set up for a prophet, and told the people that they should have peace. He *prophesied lies to them*; and because Jeremiah's prophecy contradicted his, and tended to awaken those whom he endeavoured to rock asleep in their sins, therefore he set himself against him. But could he

gain his point? No; Jeremiah stands to what he has said against Judah and Jerusalem, and God by his mouth repeats it. Men get nothing by silencing those who reprove and warn them, for the word will have its course; so it had here.

(1.) The country shall be ruined (v. 4): *I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon.* It had long been God's own land, but he will now transfer his title to it to Nebuchadnezzar, he shall be master of the country and dispose of the inhabitants some to the sword and some to captivity, as he pleases, but none shall escape him.

(2.) The city shall be ruined too, v. 5. The king of Babylon shall spoil that, and carry all that is valuable in it to Babylon.

[1.] He shall seize their magazines and military stores (here called *the strength of this city*) and turn them against them. These they trusted to as their strength; but what stead could they stand them in when they had thrown themselves out of God's protection, and when he who was indeed their strength had departed from them?

[2.] He shall carry off all their stock in trade, their wares and merchandises, here called *their labours*, because it was what they laboured about and got by their labour.

[3.] He shall plunder their fine houses, and take away their rich furniture, here called their *precious things*, because they valued them and set their hearts so much upon them. Happy are those who have secured to themselves precious things in God's precious promises, which are out of the reach of soldiers.

[4.] He shall rifle the exchequer, and take away the jewels of the crown and *all the treasures of the kings of Judah.* This was that instance of the calamity which was first of all threatened to Hezekiah long ago as his punishment for showing his treasures to the king of Babylon's ambassadors, ²³⁰⁶Isaiah 39:6. The treasury, they thought, was their defence; but that betrayed them, and became an easy prey to the enemy.

THE PROPHET'S IMPATIENT APPEAL

Pashur's doom was to be a *terror to himself*; Jeremiah, even now, in this hour of temptation, is far from being so; and yet it cannot be denied but that he is here, through the infirmity of the flesh, strangely agitated within himself. Good men are but men at the best. God is not extreme to mark what they say and do amiss, and therefore we must not be so, but make the best of it. In these verses it appears that, upon occasion of the great indignation and injury that Pashur did to Jeremiah, there was a struggle in his breast between his graces and his corruptions. His discourse with himself and with his God, upon this occasion, was somewhat perplexed; let us try to methodize it.

I. Here is a sad representation of the wrong that was done him and the affronts that were put upon him; and this representation, no doubt, was according to truth, and deserves no blame, but was very justly and very fitly made to him that sent him, and no doubt would bear him out. He complains,

1. That he was ridiculed and laughed at; they made a jest of every thing he said and did; and this cannot but be a great grievance to an ingenuous mind (v. 7, 8): *I am in derision; I am mocked*. They played upon him, and made themselves and one another merry with him, as if he had been a fool, good for nothing but to make sport. Thus he was continually: *I was in derision daily*. Thus he was universally: *Every one mocks me*; the greatest so far forget their own gravity, and the meanest so far forget mine. Thus our Lord Jesus, on the cross, was reviled both by priests and people; and the revilings of each had their peculiar aggravation. And what was it that thus exposed him to contempt and scorn? It was nothing but his faithful and zealous discharge of the duty of his office, v. 8. They could find nothing for which to deride him but his preaching; it was *the word of the Lord* that *was made a reproach*. That for which they should have honoured and respected him — that he was entrusted to deliver the *word of the Lord* to them was the very thing for which they reproached and reviled him. He never preached a sermon, but, though he kept as closely as possible to his instructions, they found something or other in it for which to banter and abuse him. Note, It is sad to think that, though divine

revelation be one of the greatest blessings and honours that ever was bestowed upon the world, yet it has been turned very much to the reproach of the most zealous preachers and believers of it. Two things they derided him for: —

(1.) The manner of his preaching: *Since he spoke, he cried out.* He had always been a lively affectionate preacher, and since he began to speak in God's name he always spoke as a man in earnest; he *cried aloud and did not spare*, spared neither himself nor those to whom he preached; and this was enough for those to laugh at who hated to be serious. It is common for those that are unaffected with and disaffected to, the things of God themselves, to ridicule those that are much affected with them. Lively preachers are the scorn of careless unbelieving hearers.

(2.) The matter of his preaching: *He cried violence and spoil.* He reproved them for the violence and spoil which they were guilty of towards one another; and he prophesied of the violence and spoil which should be brought upon them as the punishment of that sin; for the former they ridiculed him as over-precise, for the latter as over-credulous; in both he was provoking to them, and therefore they resolved to run him down. This was bad enough, yet he complains further.

2. That he was plotted against and his ruin contrived; he was not only ridiculed as a weak man, but reproached and misrepresented as a bad man and dangerous to the government. This he laments as his grievance, v. 10. Being laughed at, though it touches a man in point of honour, is yet a thing that may be easily laughed at again; for, as it has been well observed, it is no shame to be laughed at, but to deserve to be so. But there were those that acted a more spiteful part, and with more subtlety.

(1.) They spoke ill of him behind his back, when he had no opportunity of clearing himself, and were industrious to spread false reports concerning him: *I heard, at second hand, the defaming of many, fear on every side (of many Magor-missabibs, so some read it), of many such men as Pashur was, and who may therefore expect his doom.* Or this was the matter of their defamation; they represented Jeremiah as a man that instilled fears and jealousies on every side into the minds of the people, and so made them uneasy under the government, and disposed them to a rebellion. Or he perceived them to be so malicious against him that he could not but be *afraid on every side*; wherever he was he had reason to fear informers; so that they made him almost a *Magor-missabib*. These words are found in

the original, *verbatim*, the same, ^{<4813>}Psalm 31:13, *I have heard the slander or defaming of many, fear on every side*. Jeremiah, in his complaint, chooses to make use of the same words that David had made use of before him, that it might be a comfort to him to think that other good men had suffered similar abuses before him, and to teach us to make use of David's psalms with application to ourselves, as there is occasion. Whatever we have to say, we may thence take with us words. See how Jeremiah's enemies contrived the matter: *Report, say they, and we will report it*. They resolve to cast an odium upon him, and this is the method they take: "Let some very bad thing be said of him, which may render him obnoxious to the government, and, though it be ever so false, we will second it, and spread it, and add to it." (For the reproaches of good men lose nothing by the carriage.) "Do you that frame a story plausibly, or you that can pretend to some acquaintance with him, report it once, and we will all report it from you, in all companies, that we come into. Do you say it, and we will swear it; do you set it a going, and we will follow it." And thus both are equally guilty, those that raise and those that propagate the false report. The receiver is as bad as the thief.

(2.) They flattered him to his face, that they might get something from him on which to ground an accusation, as the spies that came to Christ feigning themselves to be just men, ^{<4710>}Luke 20:20; 11:53, 54. His familiars, that he conversed freely with and put a confidence in, *watched for his halting*, observed what he said, which they could by any strained *innuendo* put a bad construction upon, and carried it to his enemies. His case was very sad when those betrayed him whom he took to be his friends. They said among themselves, "If we accost him kindly, and insinuate ourselves into his acquaintance, per-adventure he will be enticed to own that he is in confederacy with the enemy and a pensioner to the king of Babylon, or we shall wheedle him to speak some treasonable words; and then *we shall prevail against him, and take our revenge upon him* for telling us of our faults and threatening us with the judgments of God." Note, Neither the innocence of the dove, no, nor the prudence of the serpent to help it, can secure men from unjust censure and false accusation.

II. Here is an account of the temptation he was in under this affliction; his *feet were almost gone*, as the psalmist's, ^{<4710>}Psalm 73:2. And this is that which is most to be dreaded in affliction, being driven by it to sin, ^{<4813>}Nehemiah 6:13.

1. He was tempted to quarrel with God for making him a prophet. This he begins with (v. 7): *O Lord! thou hast deceived me, and I was deceived.* This as we read it, sounds very harshly. God's servants have been always ready to own that he is a faithful Master and never cheated them; and therefore this is the language of Jeremiah's folly and corruption. If, when God called him to be a prophet and told him he would *set him over the kingdoms* (²⁰¹¹Jeremiah 1:10) and *make him a defenced city*, he flattered himself with an expectation of having universal respect paid to him as a messenger from heaven, and living safe and easy, and afterwards it proved otherwise, he must not say that God had deceived him, but that he had deceived himself; for he knew how the prophets before him had been persecuted, and had no reason to expect better treatment. Nay, God had expressly told him that all the *princes, priests, and people of the land would fight against him* (²⁰¹⁸Jeremiah 1:18, 19), which he had forgotten, else he would not have laid the blame on God thus. Christ thus told his disciples what opposition they should meet with, *that they might not be offended*, (²⁰¹¹John 16:1, 2. But the words may very well be read thus: *Thou hast persuaded me, and I was persuaded*; it is the same word that was used, (¹⁰²⁷Genesis 9:27, margin, *God shall persuade Japhet.* And ¹⁰⁵⁵Proverbs 25:15, *By much forbearance is a prince persuaded.* And ³⁰¹⁴Hosea 2:14, *I will allure her.* And this agrees best with what follows: “*Thou wast stronger than I, didst over-persuade me with argument; nay, didst overpower me, by the influence of thy Spirit upon me, and thou hast prevailed.*” Jeremiah was very backward to undertake the prophetic office; he pleaded that he was under age and unfit for the service; but God overruled his pleas, and told him that *he must go*, (²⁰¹⁶Jeremiah 1:6, 7. “Now, Lord,” says he, “since thou hast put this office upon me, why dost thou not stand by me in it? Had I thrust myself upon it, I might justly have been in derision; but why am I so when thou didst thrust me into it?” It was Jeremiah's infirmity to complain thus of God as putting a hardship upon him in calling him to be a prophet, which he would not have done had he considered the lasting honour thereby done him, sufficient to counterbalance the present contempt he was under. Note, As long as we see ourselves in the way of God and duty it is weakness and folly, when we meet with difficulties and discouragements in it, to wish we had never set out in it.

2. He was tempted to quit his work and give it over, partly because he himself met with so much hardship in it and partly because those to whom

he was sent, instead of being edified and made better, were exasperated and made worse (v. 9): “*Then I said, Since by prophesying in the name of the Lord I gain nothing to him or myself but dishonour and disgrace, I will not make mention of him as my author for any thing I say, nor speak any more in his name; since my enemies do all they can to silence me, I will even silence myself, and speak no more, for I may as well speak to the stones as to them.*” Note, It is a strong temptation to poor ministers to resolve that they will preach no more when they see their preaching slighted and wholly ineffectual. But let people dread putting their ministers into this temptation. Let not their labour be in vain with us, lest we provoke them to say that they will take no more pains with us, and provoke God to say, They shall take no more. Yet let not ministers hearken to this temptation, but go on in their duty, notwithstanding their discouragements, for this is the more thankworthy; and, *though Israel be not gathered, yet they shall be glorious.*

III. Here is an account of his faithful adherence to his work and cheerful dependence on his God notwithstanding.


1. He found the grace of God mighty in him to keep him to this business, notwithstanding the temptation he was in to throw it up: “*I said, in my haste, I will speak no more in his name; what I have in my heart to deliver I will stifle and suppress. But I soon found it was in my heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, which glowed inwardly, and must have vent; it was impossible to smother it; I was like a man in a burning fever, uneasy and in a continual agitation; while I kept silence from good my heart was hot within me, it was pain and grief to me, and I must speak, that I might be refreshed;*” ^{<49D>}Psalm 29:2, 3; ^{<82D>}Job 32:20. *While I kept silence, my bones waxed old,* ^{<48B>}Psalm 32:3. See the power of the spirit of prophecy in those that were actuated by it; and thus will a holy zeal for God even eat men up, and make them forget themselves. *I believed, therefore have I spoken.* Jeremiah was soon weary with forbearing to preach, and could not contain himself; nothing puts faithful ministers to pain so much as being silenced, nor to terror so much as silencing themselves. Their convictions will soon triumph over temptations of that kind; for *woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel, whatever it cost me,* ^{<49G>}1 Corinthians 9:16. And it is really a mercy to have the word of God thus mighty in us to overpower our corruptions.

2. He was assured of God's presence with him, which would be sufficient to baffle all the attempts of his enemies against him (v. 11): "They say, *We shall prevail against him*; the day will undoubtedly be our own. But I am sure that *they shall not prevail, they shall not prosper*. I can safely set them all at defiance, for *the Lord is with me*, is on my side, to take my part against them (⁴⁸⁸Romans 8:31), to protect me from all their malicious designs upon me. He is with me to support me and bear me up under the burden which now presses me down. He is with me to make the word I preach answer the end he designs, though not the end I desire. He is with me as a mighty terrible one, to strike a terror upon them, and so to overcome them." Note, Even that in God which is terrible is really comfortable to his servants that trust in him, for it shall be turned against those that seek to terrify his people. God's being a mighty God bespeaks him a terrible God to all those that take up arms against him or any one that, like Jeremiah, was commissioned by him. How terrible will the wrath of God be to those that think to daunt all about them and will themselves be daunted by nothing! The most formidable enemies that act against us appear despicable when we see the Lord for us as a *mighty terrible one*, (⁴⁹⁰Nehemiah 4:14. Jeremiah speaks now with a good assurance: "If *the Lord be with me, my persecutors shall stumble*, so that, when they pursue me, they shall not overtake me (⁴⁹²Psalms 27:2), and then *they shall be greatly ashamed* of their impotent malice and fruitless attempts. Nay, *their everlasting confusion and infamy shall never be forgotten*; they shall not forget it themselves, but it shall be to them a constant and lasting vexation, whenever they think of it; others shall not forget it, but it shall leave upon them an indelible reproach."

3. He appeals to God against them as a righteous Judge, and prays judgment upon his cause, v. 12. He looks upon God as the God that *tries the righteous*, takes cognizance of them, and of every cause that they are interested in. He does not judge in favour of them with partiality, but *tries them*, and finding that they have right on their side, and that their persecutors wrong them and are injurious to them, he gives sentence for them. He that tries the righteous tries the unrighteous too, and he is very well qualified to do both; for he *sees the reins and the heart*, he certainly knows men's thoughts and affections, their aims and intentions, and therefore can pass an unerring judgment on their words and actions. Now this is the God,

(1.) To whom the prophet here refers himself, and in whose court he lodges his appeal: *Unto thee have I opened my cause*. Not but that God perfectly knew his cause, and all the merits of it, without his opening; but the cause we commit to God we must spread before him. He knows it, but he will know it from us, and allows us to be particular in the opening of it, not to affect him, but to affect ourselves. Note, It will be an ease to our spirits, when we are oppressed and burdened, to open our cause to God and pour out our complaints before him.

(2.) By whom he expects to be righted; “*Let me see thy vengeance on them*, such vengeance as thou thinkest fit to take for their conviction and my vindication, the vengeance thou usest to take on persecutors.” Note, Whatever injuries are done us, we must not study to avenge ourselves, but must leave it to that God to do it *to whom vengeance belongs*, and who hath said, *I will repay*.

4. He greatly rejoices and praises God, in a full confidence that God would appear for his deliverance, v. 13. So full is he of the comfort of God's presence with him, the divine protection he is under, and the divine promise he has to depend upon, that in a transport of joy he stirs up himself and others to give God the glory of it: *Sing unto the Lord, praise you the Lord*. Here appears a great change with him since he began this discourse; the clouds are blown over, his complaints all silenced and turned into thanksgivings. He has now an entire confidence in that God whom (v. 7) he was distrusting; he stirs up himself to praise that name which (v. 9) he was resolving no more to make mention of. It was the lively exercise of faith that made this happy change, that turned his sighs into songs and his tremblings into triumphs. It is proper to express our hope in God by our praising him, and our praising God by our singing to him. That which is the matter of the praise is, *He hath delivered the soul of the poor from the hand of the evil-doers*; he means especially himself, his own poor soul. “He hath delivered me formerly when I was in distress, and now of late out of the hand of Pashur, and he will continue to deliver me,  2 Corinthians 1:10. He will deliver my soul from the sin that I am in danger of falling into when I am thus persecuted. He hath *delivered me from the hand of evil-doers*, so that they have not gained their point, nor had their will.” Note, Those that are faithful in well-doing need not fear those that are spiteful in evil-doing, for they have a God to trust to who has well-doers under the hand of his protection and evil-doers under the hand of his restraint.

~~201~~ JEREMIAH 20:14-18

THE PROPHET'S IMPATIENT APPEAL

What is the meaning of this? Does there *proceed out of the same mouth blessing and cursing*? Could he that said so cheerfully (v. 13), *Sing unto the Lord, praise you the Lord*, say so passionately (v. 14), *Cursed be the day wherein I was born*? How shall we reconcile these? What we have in these verses the prophet records, I suppose, to his own shame, as he had recorded that in the foregoing verses to God's glory. It seems to be a relation of the ferment he had been in while he was in the stocks, out of which by faith and hope he had recovered himself, rather than a new temptation which he afterwards fell into, and it should come in like that of David (~~1812~~ Psalm 31:22), *I said in my haste, I am cut off*; this is also implied, ~~1970~~ Psalm 77:7. When grace has got the victory it is good to remember the struggles of corruption, that we may be ashamed of ourselves and our own folly, may admire the goodness of God in not taking us at our word, and may be warned by it to double our guard upon our spirits another time. See here how strong the temptation was which the prophet, by divine assistance, got the victory over, and how far he yielded to it, that we may not despair if we through the weakness of the flesh be at any time thus tempted. Let us see here,

I. What the prophet's language was in this temptation.

1. He fastened a brand of infamy upon his birth-day, as Job did in a heat (~~1811~~ Job 3:1): "*Cursed be the day wherein I was born*. It was an ill day to me (v. 14), because it was the beginning of sorrows, and an inlet to all this misery." It is a wish that he had never been born. Judas in hell has reason to wish so (~~1821~~ Matthew 26:24), but no man on earth has reason to wish so, because he knows not but he may yet become a vessel of mercy, much less has any good man reason to wish so. Whereas some keep their birth-day, at the return of the year with gladness, he will look upon his birth-day as a melancholy day, and will solemnize it with sorrow, and will have it looked upon as an ominous day.

2. He wished ill to the messenger that brought his father the news of his birth, v. 15. It made his father very glad to hear that he had a child born (perhaps it was his first-born), especially that it was a man-child, for then,

being of the family of the priests, he might live to have the honour of serving God's altar; and yet he is ready to curse the man that brought him the tidings, when perhaps the father to whom they were brought gave him a gratuity for it. Here Mr. Gataker well observes, "That parents are often much rejoiced at the birth of their children when, if they did but foresee what misery they are born to, they would rather lament over them than rejoice in them." He is very free and very fierce in the curses he pronounces upon the messenger of his birth (v. 16): "*Let him be at the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, which the Lord utterly overthrew, and repented not, did not in the least mitigate or alleviate their misery. Let him hear the cry of the invading besieging enemy in the morning, as soon as he is stirring; then let him take the alarm, and by noon let him hear their shouting for victory. And thus let him live in constant terror.*"

3. He is angry that the fate of the Hebrews' children in Egypt was not his, that he was not *slain from the womb*, that his first breath was not his last, and that he was not strangled as soon as he came into the world, v. 17. He wishes the messenger of his birth had been better employed and had been his murderer; nay, that his mother of whom he was born had been, to her great misery, always with child of him, and so the womb in which he was conceived would have served, without more ado, as a grave for him to be buried in. Job intimates a near alliance and resemblance between the womb and the grave, ^{<81>}Job 1:21. *Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither.*

4. He thinks his present calamities sufficient to justify these passionate wishes (v. 18): "*Wherefore came I forth out of the womb, where I lay hid, was not seen, was not hated, where I lay safely and knew no evil, to see all this labour and sorrow, nay to have my days consumed with shame, to be continually vexed and abused, to have my life not only spent in trouble, but wasted and worn away by trouble?*"

II. What use we may make of this. It is not recorded for our imitation, and yet we may learn good lessons from it.

1. See the vanity of human life and the vexation of spirit that attends it. If there were not another life after this, we should be tempted many a time to wish that we have never known this; for our few days here are full of trouble.

2. See the folly and absurdity of sinful passion, how unreasonably it talks when it is suffered to ramble. What nonsense is it to curse a day — to curse a messenger for the sake of his message! What a brutish barbarous thing for a child to wish his own mother had never been delivered of him! See ^{<235D>}Isaiah 45:10. We can easily see the folly of it in others, and should take warning thence to suppress all such intemperate heats and passions in ourselves, to stifle them at first and not to suffer these evil spirits to speak. When the heart is hot, let the tongue be bridled, ^{<489E>}Psalm 39:1, 2.

3. See the weakness even of good men, who are but men at the best. See how much those who think they stand are concerned to take heed lest they fall, and to pray daily, Father in heaven, *lead us not into temptation!*