

# CHAPTER 31

This chapter goes on with the good words and comfortable words which we had in the chapter before, for the encouragement of the captives, assuring them that God would in due time restore them or their children to their own land, and make them a great and happy nation again, especially by sending them the Messiah, in whose kingdom and grace many of these promises were to have their full accomplishment.

**I.** They shall be restored to peace and honour, and joy and great plenty (v. 1-14).

**II.** Their sorrow for the loss of their children shall be at an end (v. 15-17).

**III.** They shall repent of their sins, and God will graciously accept them in their repentance (v. 18-20).

**IV.** They shall be multiplied and increased, both their children and their cattle, and not be cut off and diminished as they had been (v. 21-30).

**V.** God will renew his covenant with them, and enrich it with spiritual blessings (v. 31-34).

**VI.** These blessings shall be secured to theirs after them, even to the spiritual seed of Israel for ever (v. 35-37).

**VII.** As an earnest of this the city of Jerusalem shall be rebuilt (v. 38-40). These exceedingly great and precious promises were firm foundations of hope and full fountains of joy to the poor captives; and we also may apply them to ourselves and mix faith with them.

 **JEREMIAH 31:1-9**

## **RESTORATION PROMISED**

God here assures his people,

**I.** That he will again take them into a covenant relation to himself, from which they seemed to be cut off. *At the same time*, when God's anger breaks out against the wicked (~~240B~~ Jeremiah 30:24), his own people shall be owned by him as the children of his love: *I will be the God* (that is, I will show myself to be the God) *of all the families of Israel* (v. 1), — not of the two tribes only, but of all the tribes, — not of the house of Aaron only, and the families of Levi, but of all their families; not only their state in general, but their particular families, and the interests of them, shall have the benefit of a special relation to God. Note, The families of good people, in their family capacity, may apply to God and stay themselves upon him as their God. If we and our houses serve the Lord, we and our houses shall be protected and blessed by him, ~~403B~~ Proverbs 3:33.

**II.** That he will do for them, in bringing them out of Babylon, as he had done for their fathers when he delivered them out of Egypt, and as he had purposed to do when he first took them to be his people.

**1.** He puts them in mind of what he did for their fathers when he brought them out of Egypt, v. 2. They were then, as these were, a *people left of the sword*, that sword of Pharaoh with which he cut off all the male children as soon as they were born (a bloody sword indeed they had narrowly escaped) and that sword with which he threatened to cut them off when he pursued them to the Red Sea. They were then *in the wilderness*, where they seemed to be lost and forgotten, as these were now in a strange land, and yet they found grace in God's sight, were owned and highly honoured by him, and blessed with wonderful instances of his peculiar favour, and he was at this time going *to cause them to rest* in Canaan. Note, When we are brought very low, and insuperable difficulties appear in the way of our deliverance, it is good to remember that it has been so with the church formerly, and yet that it has been raised up from its low estate and has got to Canaan through all the hardships of a wilderness; and God is still the same.

**2.** They put him in mind of what God had done for their fathers, intimating that they now saw not such signs, and were ready to ask, as Gideon did, *Where are all the wonders that our fathers told us of?* It is true, *The Lord hath appeared of old unto me* (v. 3), in Egypt, in the wilderness, hath appeared with me and for me, hath been seen in his glory as my God. The years of ancient times were glorious years; but now it is otherwise; what good will it do us that he *appeared of old* to us when now he is *a God that*

*hides himself* from us? <sup>23515</sup>Isaiah 45:15. Note, It is hard to take comfort from former smiles under present frowns.

**3.** To this he answers with an assurance of the constancy of his love: *Yea, I have loved thee*, not only with an ancient love, but *with an everlasting love*, a love that shall never fail, however the comforts of it may for a time be suspended. It is *an everlasting love; therefore have I extended or drawn out lovingkindness unto thee* also, as well as to thy ancestors, or, *with lovingkindness have I drawn thee* to myself as thy God, from all the idols to which thou hadst turned aside. Note, It is the happiness of those who are through grace interested in the love of God that it is *an everlasting love* (from everlasting in the counsels of it, *to* everlasting in the continuance and consequences of it), and that nothing can separate them from that love. Those whom God loves with this love he will draw into covenant and communion with himself, by the influences of his Spirit upon their souls; he will *draw them with lovingkindness*, with the cords of a man and bands of love, than which no attractive can be more powerful.

**III.** That he will again form them into a people, and give them a very joyful settlement in their own land, v. 4, 5. Is the church of God his house, his temple? Is it now in ruins? It is so; but, *Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built*. Are they parts of this building dispersed? They shall be collected and put together again, each in its place. If God undertake to build them, they shall be built, whatever opposition may be given to it? Is *Israel* a beautiful *virgin*? Is she now stripped of her ornaments and reduced to a melancholy state? She is so; but *thou shalt again be adorned* and made fine, adorned *with thy tabrets*, or timbrels, the ornaments of thy chamber, and made merry. They shall resume their harps which had been hung upon the willow-trees, shall tune them, and shall themselves be in tune to make use of them. They shall be adorned with their tabrets, for now their mirth and music shall be seasonable; it shall be a proper time for it, God in his providence shall call them to it, and then it shall be an ornament to them; whereas tabrets, at a time of common calamity, when God called to mourning, were a shame to them. Or it may refer to their use of tabrets in the solemnizing of their religious feasts and their *going forth in dances* then, as the *daughters of Shiloh*, <sup>0219</sup>Judges 21:19, 21. Our mirth is then indeed an ornament to us when we serve God and honour him with it. Is the joy of the city maintained by the products of the country? It is so; and therefore it is promised (v. 5), *Thou shalt yet plant vines upon the mountains of Samaria*, which had been the head city of the kingdom of

Israel, in opposition to that of Judah; but they shall now be united (<sup><372></sup>Ezekiel 37:22), and there shall be such perfect peace and security that men shall apply themselves wholly to the improvement of their ground: *The planters shall plant*, not fearing the soldiers' coming to eat the fruits of what they had planted, or to pluck it up; but they themselves *shall eat them* freely, *as common things*, not forbidden fruits, not forbidden by the law of God (as they were till the fifth year, <sup><382></sup>Leviticus 19:23-25), not forbidden by the owners, because there shall be such plenty as to yield enough for all, enough for each.

**IV.** That they shall have liberty and opportunity to worship God in the ordinances of his own appointment, and shall have both invitations and inclinations to do so (v. 6): *There shall be a day*, and a glorious day it will be, when *the watchmen upon Mount Ephraim*, that are set to stand sentinel there, to give notice of the approach of the enemy, finding that all is very quiet and that there is no appearance of danger, shall desire for a time to be discharged from their post, that they may *go up to Zion*, to praise God for the public peace. Or *the watchmen* that tend the vineyards (spoken of v. 5) shall stir up themselves, and one another, and all their neighbours, to go and keep the solemn feasts at Jerusalem. Now this implies that the service of God shall be again set up in Zion, that there shall be a general resort to it, with much affection and mutual excitement, as in David's time, <sup><391></sup>Psalms 122:1. But that which is most observable here is *that the watchmen of Ephraim* are forward to promote the worship of God at Jerusalem, whereas formerly *the watchman of Ephraim was hatred against the house of his God* (<sup><398></sup>Hosea 9:8), and, in stead of inviting people to Zion, laid snares for those that set their faces thitherward, <sup><381></sup>Hosea 5:1. Note, God can make those who have been enemies to religion and the true worship of God to become encouragers of them and leaders in them. This promise was to have its full accomplishment in the days of the Messiah, when the gospel should be preached to all these countries, and a general invitation thereby given into the church of Christ, of which Zion was a type.

**V.** That God shall have the glory and the church both the honour and comfort of this blessed change (v. 7): *Sing with gladness for Jacob*, that is, let all her friends and well-wishers rejoice with her, <sup><626></sup>Deuteronomy 32:43. *Rejoice, you Gentiles with his people*, <sup><650></sup>Romans 15:10. The restoration of Jacob will be taken notice of by all the neighbours, it will be

matter of joy to them all, and they shall all join with Jacob in his joys, and thereby pay him respect and put a reputation upon him. Even *the chief of the nations*, that make the greatest figure, shall think it an honour to them to congratulate the restoration of Jacob, and shall do themselves the honour to send their ambassadors on that errand. *Publish you, praise you.* In publishing these tidings, praise the God of Israel, praise the Israel of God, speak honourably of both. The publishers of the gospel must publish it with praise, and therefore it is often spoken of in the *Psalms* as mingled with *praises*, <sup><160></sup>Psalm 67:2, 3; 96:2, 3. What we either bring to others or take to ourselves the comfort of we must be sure to give God the praise of. *Praise you, and say, O Lord! save thy people;* that is, perfect their salvation, go on to save *the remnant of Israel*, that are yet in bondage; as <sup><160></sup>Psalm 126:3, 4. Note, When we are praising God for what he has done we must call upon him for the future favours which his church is in need and expectation of; and in praying to him we really praise him and give him glory; he takes it so.

**VI.** That, in order to a happy settlement in their own land, they shall have a joyful return out of the land of their captivity and a very comfortable passage homeward (v. 8, 9), and this beginning of mercy shall be to them a pledge of all the other blessings here promised.

**1.** Though they are scattered to places far remote, yet they shall be brought together *from the north country, and from the coasts of the earth;* wherever they are, God will find them out.

**2.** Though many of them are very unfit for travel, yet that shall be no hindrance to them: *The blind and the lame* shall come; such a good-will shall they have to their journey, and such a good heart upon it, that they shall not make their blindness and lameness an excuse for staying where they are. Their companions will be ready to help them, will be *eyes to the blind and legs to the lame*, as good Christians ought to be to one another in their travels heavenward, <sup><160></sup>Job 29:15. But, above all, their God will help them; and let none plead that he is blind who has God for his guide, or lame who has God for his strength. *The women with child* are heavy, and it is not fit that they should undertake such a journey, much less those *that travail with child;* and yet, when it is to return to Zion, neither the one nor the other shall make any difficulty of it. Note, When God calls we must not plead any inability to come; for he that calls us will help us, will strengthen us.

**3.** Though they seem to be diminished, and to have become few in numbers, yet, when they come all together, they shall be *a great company*; and so will God's spiritual Israel be when there shall be a general rendezvous of them, though now they are but a little flock.

**4.** Though their return will be matter of joy to them, yet prayers and tears will be both their stores and their artillery (v. 9): *They shall come with weeping and with supplications*, weeping for sin, supplication for pardon; *for the goodness of God shall lead them to repentance*; and they shall weep with more bitterness and more tenderness for sin, when they are delivered out of their captivity, than ever they did when they were groaning under it. Weeping and praying do well together; tears put life into prayers, and express the liveliness of the, and prayers help to wipe away tears. *With favours will I lead them* (so the margin reads it); in their journey they shall be compassed with God's favours, the fruits of his favour.

**5.** Though they have a perilous journey, yet they shall be safe under a divine convoy. Is the country they pass through dry and thirsty? *I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters*, not the waters of a land-flood, which fail in summer. Is it a wilderness where there is no road, no track? *I will cause them to walk in a straight way*, which they shall not miss. Is it a rough and rocky country? Yet *they shall not stumble*. Note, Whithersoever God gives his people a clear call he will either find them or make them a ready way; and while we are following Providence we may be sure that Providence will not be wanting to us. And, *lastly*, here is a reason given why God will take all this care of his people: *For I am a Father to Israel*, a Father that begat him, and therefore will maintain him, that have the care and compassion of a father for him (<sup>PSALM</sup> Psalm 103:13); *and Ephraim is my first-born*; even Ephraim, who, having gone astray from God, was *no more worthy to be called a son*, shall yet be owned as a *first-born*, particularly dear, and heir of a double portion of blessings. The same reason that was given for their release out of Egypt is given for their release out of Babylon; they are free-born and therefore must not be enslaved, are born to God and therefore must not be the servants of men. <sup>EXODUS</sup> Exodus 4:22, 23, *Israel is my son, even my first-born; let my son go that he may serve me*. If we take God for our Father, and join ourselves to *the church of the first-born*, we may be assured that we shall want nothing that is good for us.

## ~~281D~~ JEREMIAH 31:10-17

### PROMISES TO ISRAEL

This paragraph is much to the same purport with the last, publishing to the world, as well as to the church, the purposes of God's love concerning his people. This is a *word of the Lord* which the *nations* must *hear*, for it is a prophecy of a work of the Lord which the nations cannot but take notice of. Let them hear the prophecy, that they may the better understand and improve the performance; and let those that hear it themselves declare it to others, *declare it in the isles afar off*. It will be a piece of news that will spread all the world over. it will look very great in history; let us see how it looks in prophecy.

It is foretold,

- 1.** That those who are dispersed shall be brought together again from their dispersions: *He that scattereth Israel will gather him*; for he knows whither he scattered them and therefore where to find them, v. 10. *Una eademque manus vulnus opemque tulit* — *The hand that inflicted the wound shall heal it*. And when he has gathered him into one body, one fold, he will *keep him, as a shepherd does his flock*, from being scattered again.
- 2.** That those who are sold and alienated shall be redeemed and brought back, v. 11. Though the enemy that had got possession of him was *stronger than he*, yet *the Lord*, who is stronger than all. *has redeemed and ransomed him*, not by price, but by power, as of old out of the Egyptians' hands.
- 3.** That with their liberty they shall have plenty and joy, and God shall be honoured and served with it, v. 12, 13. When they shall have returned to their own land *they shall come and sing in the high place of Zion*; on the top of that holy mountain they shall sing to the praise and glory of God. We read that they did so when the foundation of the temple was laid there; *they sang together, praising and giving thanks to the Lord*, ~~281D~~ Ezra 3:11. *They shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord*; that is, they shall flock in great numbers and with great forwardness and cheerfulness, as streams of water, *to the goodness of the Lord*, to the temple where he causes his goodness to pass before his people. They shall come together in

solemn assemblies, to *praise him for his goodness*, and to pray for the fruits of it and the continuance of it; they shall come to bless him for his goodness, in giving them *wheat, and wine, and oil, and the young of the flock and of the herd*, which, now that they have obtained their freedom, they have an uncontested property in and the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of, and which therefore they honour God with the first-fruits of and out of which they bring offerings to his altar. Note, It is comfortable to observe the goodness of the Lord in the gifts of common providence, and even in them to taste covenant-love. Having plenty (plenty out of want and scarcity) they shall greatly rejoice, *their soul shall be as a watered garden*, flourishing and fruitful (<sup>2881</sup>Isaiah 58:11), pleasant and fragrant, and abounding in all good things. Note, Our souls are never valuable as gardens but when they are watered with the dews of God's Spirit and grace. It is a precious promise which follows, and which will not have its full accomplishment any where on this side the height of the heavenly Zion, that *they shall not sorrow any more at all*; for it is only in that new Jerusalem *that all tears shall be wiped away*, (<sup>4204</sup>Revelation 21:4). However, so far it was fulfilled to the returned captives that they had not any more those causes for sorrow which they had formerly had; and therefore (v. 13) *young men and old shall rejoice together*; so grave shall the young men be in their joys as to keep company with the old men, and so transported shall the old men be as to associate with the young. *Salva res est, saltat senex — The state prospers, and the aged dance*. God will *turn their mourning into joy*, their fasts into solemn feasts, (<sup>3889</sup>Zechariah 8:19). It was in the return out of Babylon that those *who sowed in tears* were made to *reap in joy*, (<sup>4035</sup>Psalms 126:5, 6). Those are comforted indeed whom God comforts, and may forget their troubles when he *makes them to rejoice from their sorrow*, not only rejoice after it, but rejoice from it their joy shall borrow lustre from their sorrow, which shall serve as a foil to it; and the more they think of their troubles the more they rejoice in their deliverance.

**4.** That both the ministers and those they minister to shall have abundant satisfaction in what God gives them (v. 14): *I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness*; there shall be such a plenty of sacrifices brought to the altar that those who *live upon the altar* shall live very comfortably, they and their families shall be *satiated with fatness*, they shall have enough, and that of the best; *and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness*, and shall think there is enough in that to make them happy; and



so there is. God's people have an abundant satisfaction in God's goodness, though they have but little of this world. Let them be satisfied of God's lovingkindness, and they will be satisfied with it and desire no more to make them happy. All this is applicable to the spiritual blessings which the redeemed of the Lord enjoy by Jesus Christ, infinitely more valuable than corn, and wine, and oil, and the satisfaction of soul which they have in the enjoyment of them.

**5.** That those particularly who had been in sorrow for the loss of their children who were carried into captivity should have that sorrow turned into joy upon their return, v. 15-17. Here we have,

**(1.)** The sad lamentation which the mothers made for the loss of their children (v. 15): *In Ramah was there a voice heard*, at the time when the general captivity was, nothing but *lamentation, and bitter weeping*, more there than in other places, because there Nebuzaradan had the general rendezvous of his captives, as appears, <sup><2401></sup>Jeremiah 40:1, where we find him sending Jeremiah back from Ramah. *Rachel* is here said to *weep for her children*. The sepulchre of Rachel was between Ramah and Bethlehem. Benjamin, one of the two tribes, and Ephraim, head of the ten tribes, were both descendants from Rachel. She had but two sons, the elder of whom was one for whom his father grieved and *refused to be comforted* (<sup><0355></sup>Genesis 37:35); the other she herself called *Benoni* — *the son of my sorrow*. Now the inhabitants of Ramah did in like manner *grieve for their sons and their daughters* that were carried away (as <sup><0816></sup>1 Samuel 30:6), and such a voice of lamentation was there as, to speak poetically, might even have raised Rachel out of her grave to mourn with them. The tender parents even *refused to be comforted for their children, because they were not*, were not with them, but were in the hands of their enemies; they were never likely to see them any more. This is applied by the evangelists to the great mourning that was at Bethlehem for the murder of the infants there by Herod (<sup><0177></sup>Matthew 2:17-18), and this scripture is said to be then fulfilled. They wept for them, *and would not be comforted*, supposing the case would not admit any ground of comfort, *because they were not*. Note, Sorrow for the loss of children cannot but be great sorrow, especially if we so far mistake as to think *they are not*.

**(2.)** Seasonable comfort administered to them in reference hereunto, v. 16, 17. They are advised to moderate that sorrow, and to set bounds to it: *Refrain thy voice from weeping and thy eyes from tears*. We are not

forbidden to mourn in such a case; allowances are made for natural affection. But we must not suffer our sorrow to run into an extreme, to hinder our joy in God, or take us off from our duty to him. Though we mourn, we must not murmur, nor must we resolve, as Jacob did, to go to the grave mourning. In order to repress inordinate grief, we must consider that *there is hope in our end*, hope that there will be an end (the trouble will not last always), that it will be a happy and — the end will be peace. Note, It ought to support us under our troubles that we have reason to hope they will end well. *The righteous has hope in his death*; that will be the blessed period of his grief and the blessed passage to his joys. “*There is hope for thy posterity*” (so some read it); “though thou mayest not live to see these glorious days thyself, there is hope that thy posterity shall. Though one generation falls in the wilderness, the next shall enter Canaan. Two things thou mayest comfort thyself with the hope of:” —

[1.] “The reward of thy work: — *Thy suffering work shall be rewarded*. The comforts of the deliverance shall be sufficient to balance all the grievances of thy captivity.” God makes his people *glad according to the days wherein he has afflicted them*, and so there is a proportion between the joys and the sorrows, as between the reward and the work. The *glory to be revealed*, which the saints hope for in the end, will abundantly countervail *the sufferings of this present time*, ~~☞~~ Romans 8:18.

[2.] “The restoration of thy children: *They shall come again from the land of the enemy* (v. 16); *they shall come again to their own border*,” v. 17. *There is hope* that children at a distance may be brought home. Jacob had a comfortable meeting with Joseph after he had despaired of ever seeing him. There is hope concerning children removed by death that they shall *return to their own border*, to the happy lot assigned them in the resurrection, a lot in the heavenly Canaan, that border of his sanctuary. We shall see reason to repress our grief for the death of our children that are taken into covenant with God when we consider the hopes we have of their resurrection to eternal life. They are not lost, but gone before.

## ~~☞~~ JEREMIAH 31:18-26

### EPHRAIM'S REPENTANCE AND PRIVILEGE

We have here,

**I.** Ephraim's repentance, and return to God. Not only Judah, but Ephraim the ten tribes, shall be restored, and therefore shall thus be prepared and qualified for it, <sup><348></sup>Hosea 14:8. *Ephraim shall say, What have I do to any more with idols?* Ephraim the people, is here spoken of as a single person to denote their unanimity; they shall be as one man in their repentance and shall glorify God in it with one mind and one mouth, one and all. it is likewise thus expressed that it might be the better accommodated to particular penitents, for whose direction and encouragement this passage is intended. Ephraim is here brought in weeping for sin, perhaps because Ephraim, the person from whom that tribe had its denomination, was a man of a tender spirit, *mourned for his children many days* (<sup><372></sup>1 Chronicles 7:21, 22), and sorrow for sin is compared to that *for an only son*. This penitent is here brought in,

**1.** Bemoaning himself and the miseries of his present case. True penitents do thus bemoan themselves.

**2.** Accusing himself, laying a load upon himself as a sinner, a great sinner. He charges upon himself, in the first place, that sin which his conscience told him that he was more especially guilty of at this time, and that was impatience under correction: *"Thou has chastised me; I have been under the rod, and I needed it, I deserved it; I was justly chastised, chastised as a bullock, who would never have felt the goad if he had not first rebelled against the yoke."* True penitents look upon their afflictions as fatherly chastisements: *"Thou hast chastised me and I was chastised; that is, it was well that I was chastised, otherwise I should have been undone; it did me good, or at least was intended to do me good; and yet I have been impatient under it."* Or it may intimate his want of feeling under the affliction: *"Thou hast chastised me and I was chastised, that was all; I was not awakened by it and quickened by it; I looked no further than the chastisement. I have been under the chastisement as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, unruly and unmanageable, kicking against the pricks, like a wild bull in a net,"* <sup><250></sup>Isaiah 51:20. This is the sin he finds himself guilty of now; but (v. 19) he reflects upon his former sins and looks as far back as the days of his youth. The discovery of one sin should put us upon searching out more; now he remembers *the reproach of his youth*. Ephraim, as a people, reflect upon the misconduct of their ancestors when they were first formed in a people. It is applicable to particular persons. Note, The sin of our youth was the reproach of our youth, and we

ought often to remember it against ourselves and to bear it in a penitential sorrow and shame.

**3.** He is here brought in angry at himself, having a holy indignation at himself for his sin and folly: He *smote upon his thigh*, as the publican upon his breast. He was even amazed at himself, and at his own stupidity and frowardness: He *was ashamed, yea even confounded*, could not with any confidence look up to God, nor with any comfort reflect upon himself.

**4.** He is here recommending himself to the mercy and grace of God. He finds he is bent to backslide from God, and cannot by any power of his own keep himself close with God, much less, when he has revolted, bring himself back to God, and therefore he prays, *Turn thou me and I shall be turned*, which implies that unless God do turn him by his grace he shall never be turned, but wander endlessly, that therefore he is very desirous of converting grace, has a dependence upon it, and doubts not but that that grace will be sufficient for him, to help him over all the difficulties that were in the way of his return to God. See <sup>2474</sup>Jeremiah 17:14, *Heal me and I shall be healed*. God works with power, can make the unwilling willing; if he undertake the conversion of a soul, it will be converted.

**5.** He is here pleasing himself with the experience he had of the blessed effect of divine grace: *Surely after that I was turned I repented*. Note, All the pious workings of our heart towards God are the fruit and consequence of the powerful working of his grace in us. And observe, He was *turned*, he was *instructed*, his will was bowed to the will of God, by the right informing of his judgment concerning the truths of God. Note, The way God takes of converting souls to himself is by opening the eyes of their understandings, and all good follows thereupon: *After that I was instructed I yielded, I smote upon my thigh*. When sinners come to a right knowledge they will come to a right way. Ephraim was chastised, and that did not produce the desired effect, it went no further: *I was chastised*, and that was all. But, when the instructions of God's Spirit accompanied the corrections of his providence, then the work was done, then he *smote upon his thigh*, was so humbled for sin as to have no more to do with it.

**II.** God's compassion on Ephraim and the kind reception he finds with God, v. 20.

**1.** God owns him for a child and a prodigal: *Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child?* Thus when Ephraim bemoans himself God bemoans

him, as *one whom his mother comforts*, though she had chidden him, <sup>(2613)</sup>Isaiah 66:13. *Is this Ephraim my dear son? Is this that pleasant child?* Is it he that is thus sad in spirit and that complains so bitterly? So it is like that of Saul (<sup>(4957)</sup>1 Samuel 26:17), *Is this thy voice, my son David?* Or, as it is sometimes supplied, *Is not Ephraim my dear son? Is he not a pleasant child?* Yes, now he is, now he repents and returns. Note, Those that have been undutiful backsliding children, if they sincerely return and repent, however they have been under the chastisement of the rod, shall be accepted of God as dear and pleasant children. Ephraim had afflicted himself, but God thus heals him — had abased himself, but God thus honours him; as the returning prodigal who thought himself no more worthy to be *called a son*, yet, by his father, had the *best robe* put on him and a *ring on his hand*.

**2.** He relents towards him, and speaks of him with a great deal of tender compassion: *Since I spoke against him*, by the threatenings of the word and the rebukes of providence, *I do earnestly remember him still*, my thoughts towards him are thoughts of peace. Note, When God afflicts his people, yet he does not forget them; when he casts them out of their land, yet he does not cast them out of sight, nor out of mind. Even then when God is speaking against us, yet he is acting for us, and designing our good in all; and this is our comfort in our affliction, that *the Lord thinks upon us*, though we have forgotten him. *I remember him still*, and therefore *my bowels are troubled for him*, as Joseph's yearned towards his brethren, even when he *spoke roughly* to them. When Israel's afflictions extorted a penitent confession and submission it is said that his soul was grieved for the misery of Israel (<sup>(4716)</sup>Judges 10:16), for he always afflicts with the greatest tenderness. It was God's compassion that mitigated Ephraim's punishment: *My heart is turned within me* (<sup>(2108)</sup>Hosea 11:8, 9); and now the same compassion accepted Ephraim's repentance. Ephraim had pleaded (v. 18), *Thou art the Lord my God*, therefore to thee will I return, therefore on thy mercy and grace I will depend; and God shows that it was a valid plea and prevailing, for he makes it appear both that he is God and not man and that he is *his God*.

**3.** He resolves to do him good: *I will surely have mercy upon him*, saith *the Lord*, Note, God has mercy in store, rich mercy, sure mercy, suitable mercy, for all that in sincerity seek him and submit to him; and the more we are afflicted for sin the better prepared we are for the comforts of that mercy.

**III.** Gracious excitements and encouragements given to the people of God in Babylon to prepare for their return to their own land. Let them not tremble and lose their spirits; let them not trifle and lose their time; but with a firm resolution and a close application address themselves to their journey, v. 21, 22.

- 1.** They must think of nothing but of coming back to their own country, out of which they had been driven: *“Turn again, O virgin of Israel! a virgin to be again espoused to thy God; turn again to these thy cities; though they are laid waste and in ruins, they are thy cities, which thy God gave thee, and therefore turn again to them.”* They must be content in Babylon no longer than till they had liberty to return to Zion.
- 2.** They must return the same way that they went, that the remembrance of the sorrows which attended them, or which their fathers had told them of, in such and such places upon the road, the sight of which would, by a local memory, put them in mind of them, might make them the more thankful for their deliverance. Those that have departed from God into the bondage of sin must return by the way in which they went astray, to the duties they neglected, must *do their first works*.
- 3.** They must engage themselves and all that is within them in this affair: *Set thy heart towards the highway; bring thy mind to it; consider thy duty, the interest, and go about it with a good-will.* Note, The way from Babylon to Zion, from the bondage of sin to the glorious liberty of God's children, is a highway; it is right, it is plain, it is safe, it is well-tracked (<sup>2318</sup>Isaiah 35:8); yet none are likely to walk in it, unless they *set their hearts towards it*.
- 4.** They must furnish themselves with all needful accommodations for the journey: *Set thee up way-marks, and make thee high heaps or pillars; send before to have such set up in all places where there is any danger of missing the road.* Let those that go first, and are best acquainted with the way, set up such directions for those that follow.
- 5.** They must compose themselves for their journey: *How long will thou go about, O backsliding daughter?* Let not their minds fluctuate, or be uncertain about it, but resolve upon it; let them not distract themselves with care and fear; let them not seek about to creatures for assistance, not hurry hither and thither in courting them, which had often been an instance

of their backsliding from God; but let them cast themselves upon God, and then let their minds be fixed.

**6.** They are encouraged to do this by an assurance God gives them that he would *create a new thing* (strange and surprising) *in the earth* (in that land), *a woman shall compass a man*. The church of God, that is weak and feeble as a woman, altogether unapt for military employments and of a timorous spirit (<sup>254b</sup> Isaiah 54:6), shall surround, besiege, and prevail against a mighty man. The church is compared to a woman, <sup>611b</sup> Revelation 12:1. And, whereas we find *armies compassing the camp of the saints* (<sup>610b</sup> Revelation 20:9), now the camp of the saints shall compass them. Many good interpreters understand this *new thing* created in that land to be the incarnation of Christ, which God an eye to in bringing them back to that land, and which had sometimes been given them for a sign, <sup>237a</sup> Isaiah 7:14; 9:6. *A woman*, the virgin Mary, enclosed in her womb *the Mighty One*; for so *Geber*, the word here used, signifies; and God is called *Gibbor, the Mighty God* (<sup>263b</sup> Jeremiah 32:18), as also is Christ in <sup>239a</sup> Isaiah 9:6, where his incarnation is spoken of, as it is supposed to be here. He is *El-Gibbor, the mighty God*. Let this assure them that God would not cast off this people, for that blessing was to be among them, <sup>238b</sup> Isaiah 65:8.

**IV.** A comfortable prospect given them of a happy settlement in their own land again.

**1.** They shall have an interest in the esteem and good-will of all their neighbours, who will give them a good word and put up a good prayer for them (v. 23): *As yet* or rather *yet again* (though Judah and Jerusalem have long been an astonishment and a hissing), *this speech shall be used*, as it was formerly, *concerning the land of Judah and the cities thereof, The Lord bless you, O habitation of justice and mountain of holiness!* This intimates that they shall return much reformed and every way better; and this reformation shall be so conspicuous that all about them shall take notice of it. The *cities*, that used to be nests of pirates, shall be *habitations of justice*; the *mountain of Israel* (so the whole land is called, <sup>375a</sup> Psalm 78:54), and especially Mount Zion, shall be a *mountain of holiness*. Observe, Justice towards men, and holiness towards God, must go together. Godliness and honesty are what God has joined, and let no man think to put them asunder, not to make one to atone for the want of the other. It is well with a people when they come out of trouble thus refined, and it is a sure presage of further happiness. And we may with great

comfort pray for the blessing of God upon those houses that are *habitations of justice*, those cities and countries that are *mountains of holiness*. There the Lord will undoubtedly *command the blessing*.

**2.** There shall be great plenty of all good things among them (v. 24, 25): *There shall dwell in Judah itself*, even in it, though it has now long lain waste, both husbandmen and shepherds, the two ancient and honourable employments of Cain and Abel, <sup>GENE</sup>Genesis 4:2. It is comfortable dwelling in a *habitation of justice* and a *mountain of holiness*. “And the husbandmen and shepherds shall eat of the fruit of their labours; for I have *satiated the weary and sorrowful soul*;” that is, those that came weary from their journey, and have been long sorrowful in their captivity, shall now enjoy great plenty. This is applicable to the spiritual blessings God has in store for all true penitents, for all that are just and holy; they shall be abundantly satisfied with divine graces and comforts. In the love and favour of God the weary soul shall find rest and the sorrowful soul joy.

**V.** The prophet tells us what pleasure the discovery of this brought to his mind, v. 26. The foresights God had given him sometimes of the calamities of Judah and Jerusalem were exceedingly painful to him (as <sup>2049</sup>Jeremiah 4:19), but these views were pleasant ones, though at a distance. “*Upon this I awaked*, overcome with joy, which burst the fetters of sleep; and I reflected upon my dream, and it was such as had made *my sleep sweet to me*; I was refreshed, as men are with quiet sleep.” Those may sleep sweetly that lie down and rise up in the favour of God and in communion with him. Nor is any prospect in this world more pleasing to good men, and good ministers, than that of the flourishing state of the church of God. What can we see with more satisfaction than *the good of Jerusalem, all the days of our life, and peace upon Israel*?

## <sup>2817</sup>JEREMIAH 31:27-34

### GOD'S COVENANT RENEWED

The prophet, having found his sleep sweet, made so by the revelations of divine grace, sets himself to sleep again, in hopes of further discoveries, and is not disappointed; for it is here further promised,



**I.** That the people of God shall become both numerous and prosperous. Israel and Judah shall be replenished both with men and cattle, as if they were sown with the seed of both, v. 27. They shall increase and multiply like a field sown with corn; and this is the product of God's blessing (v. 23), for whom God blessed, to them he said, *Be fruitful*. This should be a type of the wonderful increase of the gospel-church. God will build them, and plant them, v. 28. He *will watch over them* to do them good; no opportunity shall be lost that may further their prosperity. Every thing for a long time had turned so much against them, and all occurrences did so transpire to ruin them, that it seemed as if God had *watched over them to pluck up and to throw down*; but now every thing that falls out shall happily fall in to strengthen and advance their interests. God will be as ready to comfort those that repent of their sins, and are humbled for them, as he is to punish those that continue in love with their sins, and are hardened in them.

**II.** That they shall be reckoned with no further for the sins of their fathers (v. 29, 30),: *They shall say no more* (they shall have no more occasion to say) that *God visits the iniquity of the parents upon the children*, which God had done in the captivity, for the sins of their ancestors came into the account against them, particularly those of Manasseh: this they had complained of as a hardship. Other scriptures justify God in this method of proceeding, and our Saviour tells the wicked Jews in his days that they should smart for their fathers' sins, because they persisted in them, <sup>425</sup>Matthew 23:35, 36. But it is here promised that this severe dispensation with them should now be brought to an end, that God would proceed no further in his controversy with them for their fathers' sins, but remember for them his covenant with their fathers and do them good according to that covenant: *They shall no more* complain, as they have done, that *the fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children's teeth are set on edge* (which speaks something of an absurdity, and is an invidious reflection upon God's proceedings), but *every one shall die for his own iniquity* still; though God will cease to punish them in their national capacity, yet he will still reckon with particular persons that provoke him. Note, Public salvations will give no impunity, no security, to private sinners: still every man that *eats the sour grapes* shall have his *teeth set on edge*. Note, Those that eat forbidden fruit, how tempting soever it looks, will find it a *sour grape*, and it will *set their teeth on edge*; sooner or later they will feel from it and reflect upon it with bitterness. There is as direct a tendency in

sin to make a man uneasy as there is in sour grapes to set the teeth on edge.

**III.** That God will renew his covenant with them, so that all these blessings they shall have, not by providence only, but by promise, and thereby they shall be both sweetened and secured. But this covenant refers to gospel times, the latter days that *shall come*; for of gospel grace the apostle understands it (<sup>388</sup>Hebrews 8:8, 9, etc.), where this whole passage is quoted as a summary of the covenant of grace made with believers in Jesus Christ. Observe,

**1.** Who the persons are with whom this covenant is made — *with the house of Israel and Judah*, with the gospel church, *the Israel of God* on which *peace shall be* (<sup>386</sup>Galatians 6:16), with the spiritual seed of believing Abraham and praying Jacob. Judah and Israel had been two separate kingdoms, but were united after their return, in the joint favours God bestowed upon them; so Jews and Gentiles were in the gospel church and covenant.

**2.** What is the nature of this covenant in general: it is a *new covenant* and *not according to the covenant made with them when they came out of Egypt*; not as if that made with them at Mount Sinai were a covenant of nature and innocency, such as was made with Adam in the day he was created; no, that was, for substance, a covenant of grace, but it was a dark dispensation of that covenant in comparison with this in gospel times. Sinners were saved by that covenant upon their repentance, and faith in a Messiah to come, whose blood, confirming that covenant, was typified by that of the legal sacrifices, <sup>1217</sup>Exodus 24:7, 8. Yet this may upon many accounts be called new, in comparison with that; the ordinances and promises are more spiritual and heavenly, and the discoveries much more clear. That covenant God made with them when he *took them by the hand*, as they had been blind, or lame, or weak, *to lead them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant they broke*. Observe, It was God that made this covenant, but it was the people that broke it; for our salvation is of God, but our sin and ruin are of ourselves. It was an aggravation of their breach of it that God *was a husband to them*, that he had espoused them to himself; it was a marriage-covenant that was between him and them, which they broke by idolatry, that spiritual adultery. It is a great aggravation of our treacherous departures from God that he has been a

husband to us, a loving, tender, careful husband, faithful to us, and yet we false to him.

**3.** What are the particular articles of his covenant. They all contain spiritual blessings; not, “I will give them the land of Canaan and a numerous issue,” but, “I will give them pardon, and peace, and grace, good heads and good hearts.” He promises,

**(1.)** That he will incline them to their duty; *I will put my law in their inward part and write it in their heart*; not, I will give them a new law (as Mr. Gataker well observes), for Christ *came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it*; but the law shall be written in their hearts by the finger of the Spirit as formerly it was written in the tables of stone. God writes his law in the hearts of all believers, makes it ready and familiar to them, at hand when they have occasion to use it, as that which is *written in the heart*, <sup><108B></sup>Proverbs 3:3. He makes them in care to observe it, for that which we are solicitous about is said to lie near our hearts. He works in them a disposition to obedience, a conformity of thought and affection to the rules of the divine law, as that of the copy to the original. This is here promised, and ought to be prayed for, that our duty may be done conscientiously and with delight.

**(2.)** That he will take them into relation to himself: *I will be their God*, a God all-sufficient to them, *and they shall be my people*, a loyal obedient people to me. God's being to us a God is the summary of all happiness; heaven itself is no more, <sup><811B></sup>Hebrews 11:16; <sup><621B></sup>Revelation 21:3. Our being to him a people may be taken either as the condition on our part (those and those only shall have God to be to them a God that are truly willing to engage themselves to be to him a people) or as a further branch of the promise that God will by his grace make us his people, *a willing people, in the day of his power*; and, whoever are his people, it is his grace that makes them so.

**(3.)** That there shall be an abundance of the knowledge of God among all sorts of people, and this will have an influence upon all good: for those that rightly know God's name will seek him, and serve him, and put their trust in him (v. 34): *All shall know me*; all shall be welcome to the knowledge of God and shall have the means of that knowledge; *his ways shall be known upon earth*, whereas, for many ages, *in Judah only was God known*. Many more shall know God than did in the Old Testament times, which among the Gentiles were times of ignorance, the true God

being to them an unknown God. The things of God shall in gospel times be made more plain and intelligible, and level to the capacities of the meanest, than they were while Moses had a *veil upon his face*. There shall be such a general knowledge of God that there shall not be so much need as had formerly been of teaching. Some take it as a hyperbolical expression (and the dulness of the Jews needed such expressions to awaken them), designed only to show that the knowledge of God in gospel times should vastly exceed that knowledge of him which they had under the law. Or perhaps it intimates that in gospel times there shall be such great plenty of public preaching, statedly and constantly, by men authorized and appointed to *preach the word in season and out of season*, much beyond what was under the law, that there shall be less need than there was then of fraternal teaching, by a neighbour and a brother. The priests preached but now and then, and in the temple, and to a few in comparison; but now all shall or may know God by frequenting the assemblies of Christians, wherein, through all parts of the church, the good knowledge of God shall be taught. Some give this sense of it (Mr. Gataker mentions it), That many shall have such clearness of understanding in the things of God that they may seem rather to have been taught by some immediate irradiation than by any means of instruction. In short, the things of God shall by the gospel of Christ be brought to a clearer light than ever (~~2~~ Timothy 1:10), and the people of God shall by the grace of Christ be brought to a clearer sight of those things than ever, ~~17~~ Ephesians 1:17, 18.

(4.) That, in order to all these blessings, sin shall be pardoned. This is made the reason of all the rest: *For I will forgive their iniquity*, will not impute that to them, nor deal with them according to the desert of that, *will forgive and forget: I will remember their sin no more*. It is sin that keeps good things from us, that stops the current of God's favours; let sin be taken away by pardoning mercy, and the obstruction is removed, and divine grace runs down like a river, like a mighty stream.

## ~~28~~ JEREMIAH 31:35-40

### EVANGELICAL PROMISES

Glorious things have been spoken in the foregoing verses concerning the gospel church, which that epocha of the Jewish church that was to

commence at the return from captivity would at length terminate in, and which all those promises were to have their full accomplishment in. But may we depend upon these promises? Yes, we have here a ratification of them, and the utmost assurance imaginable given of the perpetuity of the blessings contained in them. The great thing here secured to us is that while the world stands God will have a church in it, which, though sometimes it may be brought very low, shall yet be raised again, and its interests re-established; it is *built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*. Now here are two things offered for the confirmation of our faith in this matter — the building of the world and the rebuilding of Jerusalem.

**I.** The building of the world, and the firmness and lastingness of that building, are evidences of the power and faithfulness of that God who has undertaken the establishment of his church. *He that built all things at first is God* (<sup>3004</sup>Hebrews 3:4), and the same is he that makes all things now. The constancy of the glories of the kingdom of nature may encourage us to depend upon the divine promise for the continuance of the glories of the kingdom of grace, for *this is as the waters of Noah*, (<sup>2509</sup>Isaiah 54:9). Let us observe here,

**1.** The glories of the kingdom of nature, and infer thence how happy those are that have this God, the God of nature, to be their God for ever and ever. Take notice,

**(1.)** Of the steady and regular motion of the heavenly bodies, which God is the first mover and supreme director of: *He gives the sun for a light by day* (v. 35), not only made it at first to be so, but still gives it to be so; for the light and heat, and all the influences of the sun, continually depend upon its great Creator. He gives *the ordinances of the moon and stars for a light by night*; their motions are called *ordinances* both because they are regular and by rule and because they are determined and under rule. See (<sup>4383</sup>Job 38:31-33).

**(2.)** Take notice of the government of the sea, and the check that is given to its proud billows: *The Lord of hosts divides the sea*, or (as some read it) *settles the sea, when the waves thereof roar* (*divide et impera — divide and rule*); when it is most tossed God keeps it within compass (<sup>2452</sup>Jeremiah 5:22), and soon quiets it and makes it calm again. The power of God is to be magnified by us, not only in maintaining the regular

motions of the heavens, but in controlling the irregular motions of the seas.

(3.) Take notice of the vastness of the heavens and the unmeasurable extent of the firmament; he must needs be a great God who manages such a great world as this is; the *heavens above cannot be measured* (v. 37), and yet God fills them.

(4.) Take notice of the mysteriousness even of that part of the creation in which our lot is cast and which we are most conversant with. *The foundations of the earth cannot be searched out beneath*, for the Creator *hangs the earth upon nothing* (<sup><B367></sup>Job 26:7), and we *know not how the foundations thereof are fastened*, <sup><B386></sup>Job 38:6.

(5.) Take notice of the immovable steadfastness of all these (v. 36): *These ordinances cannot depart from before God*; he has all the hosts of heaven and earth continually under his eye and all the motions of both; he has established them, and they abide, *abide according to his ordinance, for all are his servants*, <sup><B390></sup>Psalms 119:90, 91. The heavens are often clouded, and the sun and moon often eclipsed, the earth may quake and the sea be tossed, but they all keep their place, are moved, but not removed. Herein we must acknowledge the power, goodness, and faithfulness of the Creator.

2. The securities of the kingdom of grace inferred hence: we may be confident of this very thing that *the seed of Israel shall not cease from being a nation*, for the spiritual Israel, the gospel church, shall be *a holy nation, a peculiar people*, <sup><B393></sup>1 Peter 2:9. When Israel according to the flesh is no longer a nation the *children of the promise are counted for the seed* (<sup><B398></sup>Romans 9:8) and *God will not cast off all the seed of Israel*, no, *not for all that they have done*, though they have done very wickedly, v. 37. He justly might cast them off, but he will not. Though he cast them out from their land, and cast them down for a time, yet he will not cast them off. Some of them he casts off, but not all; to this the apostle seems to refer (<sup><B401></sup>Romans 11:1), *Hath God cast away his people? God forbid* that we should think so! For (v. 5) *at this time there is a remnant*, enough to save the credit of the promise that *God will not cast off all the seed of Israel*, though many among them throw away themselves by unbelief. Now we may be assisted in the belief of this by considering,

(1.) That the God that has undertaken the preservation of the church is a God of almighty power, who *upholds all things by his almighty word*. *Our help stands in his name who made heaven and earth*, and therefore can do any thing.

(2.) That God would not take all this care of the world but that he designs to have some glory to himself out of it; and how shall he have it but by securing to himself a church in it, a people that *shall be to him for a name and a praise?*

(3.) That if the order of the creation therefore continues firm because it was well-fixed at first, and is not altered because it needs no alteration, the method of grace shall for the same reason continue invariable, as it was a first well settled.

(4.) That he who has promised to preserve a church for himself has approved himself faithful to the word which he has spoken concerning the stability of the world. He that is true to his covenant with Noah and his sons, because he established it for an *everlasting covenant* (~~xxxv~~Genesis 9:9, 16), will not, we may be sure, be false to his covenant with Abraham and his seed, his spiritual seed, for that also is an *everlasting covenant*. Even that which they have done amiss, though they have done much, shall not prevail to defeat the gracious intentions of the covenant. See ~~xxxvi~~Psalm 89:30, etc.

**II.** The rebuilding of Jerusalem which was now in ruins, and the enlargement and establishment of that, shall be an earnest of these great things that God will do for the gospel church, the *heavenly Jerusalem*, v. 38-40. *The days will come*, though they may be long in coming, when,

**1.** Jerusalem shall be entirely built again, as large as ever it was; the dimensions are here exactly described by the places through which the circumference passed, and no doubt the wall which Nehemiah built, and which, the more punctually to fulfil the prophecy, began about the *tower of Hananeel*, here mentioned (~~xxxvii~~Nehemiah 3:1), enclosed as much ground as is here intended, though we cannot certainly determine the places here called *the gate of the corner*, *the hill Gareb*, etc.

**2.** When built it shall be consecrated to God and to his service. It *shall be built to the Lord* (v. 38), and even the suburbs and fields adjacent *shall be holy unto the Lord*. It shall not be polluted with idols as formerly, but God

shall be praised and honoured there; the whole city shall be as it were one temple, one holy place, as the new Jerusalem is, which *therefore* has no temple, because it is all temple.

**3.** Being thus built by virtue of the promise of God, *it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down, any more for ever*; that is, it shall continue very long, the time of the new city from the return to its last destruction being fully as long as that of the old from David to the captivity. But this promise was to have its full accomplishment in the gospel church, which, as it is the spiritual Israel, and therefore God will not cast it off, so it is the holy city, and therefore all the powers of men *shall not pluck it up, nor throw it down*. It may lie waste for a time, as Jerusalem did, but shall recover itself, shall weather the storm and gain its point, *and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it*.