

CHAPTER 26

This chapter is a song of holy joy and praise, in which the great things God had engaged, in the foregoing chapter, to do for his people against his enemies and their enemies are celebrated: it is prepared to be sung when that prophecy should be accomplished; for we must be forward to meet God with our thanksgivings when he is coming towards us with his mercies. Now the people of God are here taught,

I. To triumph in the safety and holy security both of the church in general and of every particular member of it, under the divine protection (v. 1-4).

II. To triumph over all opposing powers (v. 5, 6).

III. To walk with God, and wait for him, in the worst and darkest times, v. 7-9).

IV. To lament the stupidity of those who regarded not the providence of God, either merciful or afflictive (v. 10, 11).

V. To encourage themselves, and one another, with hopes that God would still continue to do them good (v. 12, 14), and engage themselves to continue in his service (v. 13).

VI. To recollect the kind providences of God towards them in their low and distressed condition, and their conduct under those providences (v. 15-18).

VII. To rejoice in hope of a glorious deliverance, which should be as a resurrection to them (v. 19), and to retire in the expectation of it (v. 20, 21). And this is written for the support and assistance of the faith and hope of God's people in all ages, even those upon whom the ends of the world have come.

 **ISAIAH 26:1-4**

THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL

To the prophecies of gospel grace very fitly is a song annexed, in which we may give God the glory and take to ourselves the comfort of that grace:

In that day, the gospel day, which the day of the victories and enlargements of the Old-Testament church was typical of (to some of which perhaps this has a primary reference), *in that day this song shall be sung*; there shall be persons to sing it, and cause and hearts to sing it; it shall be sung *in the land of Judah*, which was a figure of the gospel church; for the gospel covenant is said to be made *with the house of Judah*, ^{<3008>}Hebrews 8:8. Glorious things are here said of the church of God.

I. That it is strongly fortified against those that are bad (v. 1): *We have a strong city*. It is a city incorporated by the charter of the everlasting covenant, fitted for the reception of all that are made free by that charter, for their employment and entertainment; it is a strong city, as Jerusalem was, while it was a city compact together, and had God himself a wall of fire round about it, so strong that none would have believed that an enemy could ever *enter into the gates of Jerusalem*, ^{<3042>}Lamentations 4:12. The church is a strong city, for it has *walls and bulwarks*, or counterscarps, and those of God's own appointing; for he has, in his promise, appointed salvation itself to be its defence. Those that are designed for salvation will find that to be their protection, ^{<3004>}1 Peter 1:4.

II. That it is richly replenished with those that are good, and they are instead of fortifications to it; for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, if they are such as they should be, are its strength, ^{<3025>}Zechariah 12:5. The gates are here ordered to be opened, *that the righteous nation, which keeps the truth, may enter in*, v. 2. They had been banished and driven out by the iniquity of the former times, but now the laws that were made against them are repealed, and they have liberty to enter in again. Or, There is an act for a general naturalization of all the righteous, whatever nation they are of, encouraging them to come and settle in Jerusalem. When God has done great things for any place or people he expects that thus they should render according to the benefit done unto them; they should be kind to his people, and take them under their protection and into their bosom. Note,

1. It is the character of righteous men that they keep the truths of God, a firm belief of which will have a commanding influence upon the regularity of the whole conversation. Good principles fixed in the head will produce good resolutions in the heart and good practices in the life.

2. It is the interest of states to countenance such, and court them among them, for they bring a blessing with them.

III. That all who belong to it are safe and easy, and have a holy security and serenity of mind in the assurance of God's favour.

1. This is here the matter of a promise (v. 3): *Thou wilt keep him in peace, peace, in perfect peace, inward peace, outward peace, peace with God, peace of conscience, peace at all times, under all events; this peace shall he be put into, and kept in the possession of, whose mind is stayed upon God, because it trusts in him.* It is the character of every good man that he trusts in God, puts himself under his guidance and government, and depends upon him that it shall be greatly to his advantage to do so. Those that trust in God must have their minds stayed upon him, must trust him at all times, under all events, must firmly and faithfully adhere to him, with an entire satisfaction in him; and such as do so God will keep in perpetual peace, and that peace shall keep them. When evil tidings are abroad *those* shall calmly expect the event, and not be disturbed by frightful apprehensions arising from them, whose hearts are *fixed, trusting in the Lord,* ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 112:7.

2. It is the matter of a precept (v. 4): “Let us make ourselves easy by *trusting in the Lord for ever*; since God has promised peace to those that stay themselves upon him, let us not lose the benefit of that promise, but repose an entire confidence in him. Trust in him for ever, at all times, when you have nothing else to trust to; trust in him for that peace, that portion, which will be for ever.” Whatever we trust to the world for, it will be but for a moment: all we expect from it is confined within the limits of time. But what we trust in God for will last as long as we shall last. For in the *Lord Jehovah — Jah, Jehovah,* in him who was, and is, and is to come, there is a rock of ages, a firm and lasting foundation for faith and hope to build upon; and the house built on that rock will stand in a storm. Those that trust in God shall not only find in him, but receive *from him, everlasting strength,* strength that will carry them to everlasting life, to that blessedness which is for ever; and therefore let them trust in him for ever, and never cast away nor change their confidence.

ISAIAH 26:5-11

THE GOODNESS AND JUSTICE OF GOD

Here the prophet further encourages us to trust in the Lord for ever, and to continue waiting on him; for,

I. He will make humble souls that trust in him to triumph over their proud enemies, v. 5, 6. Those that exalt themselves shall be abased: For he *brings down those that dwell on high*; and wherein they deal proudly he is, and will be, above them. Even the lofty city Babylon itself, or Nineveh, he lays it low, ^{<2365>}Isaiah 25:12. He can do it, be it ever so well fortified. He has often done it. He will do it, for he resists the proud. It is his glory to do it, for he proves himself to be God by *looking on the proud and abasing them*, ^{<810>}Job 40:12. But, on the contrary, those that humble themselves shall be exalted; for *the feet of the poor* shall tread upon the lofty cities, v. 6. He does not say, Great armies shall tread them down; but, When God will have it done, even the feet of the poor shall do it, ^{<3008>}Malachi 4:3. *You shall tread down the wicked. Come, set your feet on the necks of these kings.* See ^{<4576>}Psalm 147:6; ^{<660>}Romans 16:20.

II. He takes cognizance of the way of his people and has delight in it (v. 7): *The way of the just is evenness* (so it may be read): it is their endeavour and constant care to walk with God in an even steady course of obedience and holy conversation. *My foot stands in an even place*, goes in an even path, ^{<4932>}Psalm 26:12. And it is their happiness that God makes their way plain and easy before them: *Thou, most upright, dost level* (or *make even*) *the path of the just*, by preventing or removing those things that would be stumbling-blocks to them, so that nothing shall offend them, ^{<13165>}Psalm 119:165. God *weighs* it (so we read it); he considers it, and will give them grace sufficient for them, to help them over all the difficulties they may meet with in their way. Thus with the upright God will show himself upright.

III. It is our duty, and will be our comfort, to wait for God, and to keep up holy desires towards him in the darkest and most discouraging times, v. 8, 9. This has always been the practice of God's people, even when God has frowned upon them,

1. To keep up a constant dependence upon him: *“In the way of thy judgments we have still waited for thee; when thou hast corrected us we have looked to no other hand than thine to relieve us,”* as the servant looks only *to the hand of his master, till he have mercy upon him,* ~~(133)~~ Psalm 123:2. We cannot appeal from God's justice but to his mercy. If God's judgments continue long, if it be *a road of judgments* (so the word signifies), yet we must not be weary but continue waiting.

2. To send up holy desires towards him. Our troubles, how pressing soever, must never put us out of conceit with our religion, nor turn us away from God; but still *the desire of our soul must be to his name and to the remembrance of him;* and in the night, the darkest longest night of affliction, *with our souls must we desire him.*

(1.) Our great concern must be for God's name, and our earnest desire must be that his name may be glorified, whatever becomes of us and our names. This is that which we must wait for, and pray for. *“Father, glorify thy name, and we are satisfied.”*

(2.) Our great comfort must be in the remembrance of that name, of all that whereby God has made himself known. The remembrance of God must be our great support and pleasure; and, though sometimes we be unmindful of him, yet still our desire must be towards the remembrance of him and we must take pains with our own hearts to have him always in mind.

(3.) Our desires towards God must be inward, fervent, and sincere. With our soul we must desire him, with our soul we must pant after him (~~(134)~~ Psalm 42:1), and with our spirits within us, with the innermost thought and the closest application of mind, we must seek him. We make nothing of our religion, whatever our profession be, if we do not make heart-work of it.

(4.) Even in the darkest night of affliction our desires must be towards God, as our sun and shield; for, however God is pleased to deal with us, we must never think the worse of him, nor cool in our love to him.

(5.) If our desires be indeed towards God, we must give evidence that they are so by seeking him, and seeking him early, as those that desire to find him, and dread the thoughts of missing him. Those that would seek God

and find him must seek betimes, and seek him earnestly. Though we come ever so early, we shall find him ready to receive us.

IV. It is God's gracious design, in sending abroad his judgments, thereby to bring men to seek him and serve him: *When thy judgments are upon the earth*, laying all waste, then we have reason to expect that not only God's professing people, but even *the inhabitants of the world*, will learn *righteousness*, will have their mistakes rectified and their lives reformed, will be brought to acknowledge God's righteousness in punishing them, will repent of their own unrighteousness in offending God, and so be brought to walk in right paths. They will do this; that is, judgments are designed to bring them to this, they have a natural tendency to produce this effect, and, though many continue obstinate, yet some even of the inhabitants of the world will profit by this discipline, and will learn righteousness; surely they will; they are strangely stupid if they do not. Note, The intention of afflictions is to teach us righteousness; and blessed is the man whom God chastens, and thus teaches, ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 94:12. *Discite justitiam, moniti, et non temnere divos — Let this rebuke teach you to cultivate righteousness, and cease from despising the gods.* — Virgil.

V. Those are wicked indeed that will not be wrought upon by the favourable methods God takes to subdue and reform them; and it is necessary that God should deal with them in a severe way by his judgments, which shall prevail to humble those that would not otherwise be humbled. Observe,

1. How sinners walk contrary to God, and refuse to comply with the means used for their reformation and to answer the intentions of them, v. 10.

(1.) *Favour is shown* to them. They receive many mercies from God; he causes his sun to shine and his rain to fall upon them, nay, he prospers them, and into their hands he brings plentifully; they escape many of the strokes of God's judgments, which others less wicked than they have been cut off by; in some particular instances they seem to be remarkably favoured above their neighbours, and the design of all this is that they may be won upon to love and serve that God who thus favours them; and yet it is all in vain: *They will not learn righteousness*, will not be led to repentance by the goodness of God, and therefore it is requisite that God should send his judgments into the earth, to reckon with men for abused mercies.

(2.) They live *in a land of uprightness*, where religion is professed and is in reputation, where the word of God is preached, and where they have many good examples set them, — in a land of *evenness*, where there are not so many stumbling-blocks as in other places, — in a land of *correction*, where vice and profaneness are discountenanced and punished; yet there they will *deal unjustly*, and go on frowardly in their evil ways. Those that do wickedly deal unjustly both with God and man, as well as with their own souls; and those that will not be reclaimed by the justice of the nation may expect the judgments of God upon them. Nor can those expect a place hereafter in the land of blessedness who now conform not to the laws and usages, nor improve the privileges and advantages, of the land of uprightness; and why do they not? It is because they *will not behold the majesty of the Lord*, will not believe, will not consider, what a God of terrible majesty he is whose laws and justice they persist in the contempt of. God's majesty appears in all the dispensations of his providence; but they regard it not, and therefore study not to answer the ends of those dispensations. Even when we receive of the mercy of the Lord we must still behold the *majesty of the Lord and his goodness*.

(3.) God lifts up his hand to give them warning, that they may, by repentance and prayer, make their peace with him; but they take no notice of it, are not aware that God is angry with them, or coming forth against them: *They will not see*, and none so blind as those who will not see, who shut their eyes against the clearest conviction of guilt and wrath, who ascribe that to chance, or common fate, which is manifestly a divine rebuke, who regard not the threatening symptoms of their own ruin, but cry Peace to themselves, when the righteous God is waging war with them.

2. How God will at length be too hard for them; for, when he judges, he will overcome: *They will not see, but they shall see*, shall be made to see, whether they will or no, that God is angry with them. Atheists, scorners, and the secure, will shortly feel what now they will not believe, that *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*. They will not see the evil of sin, and particularly the sin of hating and persecuting the people of God; but they shall see, by the tokens of God's displeasure against them for it and the deliverances in which God will plead his people's cause, that what is done against them he takes as done against himself and will reckon for it accordingly. They shall see that they have done God's people a great deal of wrong, and therefore shall be ashamed of their enmity and envy

towards them, and their ill usage of such as deserved better treatment. Note, Those that bear ill-will to God's people have reason to be ashamed of it, so absurd and unreasonable is it; and, sooner or later, they shall be ashamed of it, and the remembrance of it shall fill them with confusion. Some read it, *They shall see and be confounded for the zeal of the people*, by the zeal God will show for his people; when they shall be made to know how jealous God is for the honour and welfare of his people they shall be confounded to think that they might have been of that people and would not. Their doom therefore is that, since they slighted the happiness of God's friends, *the fire of his enemies shall devour them*, that is, the fire which is prepared for his enemies and with which they shall be devoured, the fire designed for the devil and his angels. Note, Those that are enemies to God's people, and envy them, God looks upon as his enemies, and will deal with them accordingly.

ISAIAH 26:12-19

GOODNESS OF GOD TO ISRAEL

The prophet in these verses looks back upon what God had done with them, both in mercy and judgment, and sings unto God of both, and then looks forward upon what he hoped God would do for them. Observe,

I. His reviews and reflections are mixed. When he looks back upon the state of the church he finds,

1. That God had in many instances been very gracious to them and had done great things for them.

(1.) In general (v. 12): *Thou hast wrought all our works in us, or for us.* Whatever good work is done by us, it is owing to a good work wrought by the grace of God in us; it is he that puts good thoughts and affections into our hearts if at any time they be there, and that *works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Acti, agimus — Being acted upon, we act.* And if any kindness be shown us, or any of our affairs be prosperous and successful, it is God that works it for us. Every creature, every business, that is in any way serviceable to our comfort, is made by him to be so; and sometimes he makes that to work for us which seemed to make against us.

(2.) In particular (v. 15): “*Thou hast increased the nation, O Lord!* so that a little one has become a thousand (in Egypt they multiplied exceedingly, and afterwards in Canaan, so that they filled the land); and in this *thou art glorified,*” for the multitude of the people is the honour of the prince, and therein God was glorified as faithful to his covenant with Abraham, that he would make him a father of many nations. Note, God's nation is a growing nation, and it is the glory of God that it is so. The increase of the church, that holy nation, is *therefore* to be rejoiced in because it is the increase of those that make it their business to glorify God in this world.

2. That yet he had laid them under his rebukes.

(1.) The neighbouring nations had sometimes oppressed them and tyrannised over them (v. 13): “*O Lord our God!* thou who hast the sole right to rule us, whose subjects and servants we are, to thee we complain (for whither else should we go with our complaints?) that *other lords besides thee have had dominion over us.*” Not only in the days of the Judges, but afterwards, God frequently sold them into the hand of their enemies, or rather, by their iniquities, they *sold themselves*, ^{<251B} Isaiah 52:3-5. When they had been careless in the service of God, God suffered their enemies to have dominion over them, that they might know the difference between his service *and the service of the kingdoms of the countries.* It may be understood as a confession of sin, their serving other gods, and subjecting themselves to the superstitious laws and customs of their neighbours, by which other lords (for they called their idols *baals, lords*) had dominion over them, besides God. But now they promise that it shall be so no more: “Henceforth *by thee only will we make mention of thy name;* we will worship thee only, and in that way only which thou hast instituted and appointed.” The same may be our penitent reflection: *Other lords, besides God, have had dominion over us;* every lust has been our lord, and we have been led captive by it; and it is has been long enough, and too long, that we have thus wronged both God and ourselves. The same therefore must be our pious resolution, that henceforth we will make mention of God's name only and by him only, that we will keep close to God and to our duty and never desert it.

(2.) They had sometimes been carried into captivity before their enemies (v. 15): “The nation which at first thou didst increase, and make to take root, thou hast now diminished, and plucked up, and *removed to all the ends of the earth, driven out to the utmost parts of heaven,*” as is

threatened, ^{<510>}Deuteronomy 30:4; 28:64. But observe, Between the mention of the increasing of them and that of the removing of them it is said, *Thou art glorified*; for the judgments God inflicts upon his people for their sins are for his honour, as well as the mercies he bestows upon them in performance of his promise.

(3.) The prophet remembers that when they were thus oppressed and carried captive they cried unto God, which was a good evidence that they neither had quite forsaken him nor were quite forsaken of him, and that there were merciful intentions in the judgments they were under (v. 16): *Lord, in trouble have they visited thee*. This was usual with the people of Israel, as we find frequently in the story of the Judges. When *other lords had dominion over them they humbled themselves, and said, The Lord is righteous*, ^{<410>}2 Chronicles 12:6. See here,

[1.] The need we have of afflictions. They are necessary to stir up prayer; when it is said, *In trouble have they visited thee*, it is implied that in their peace and prosperity they were strangers to God, kept at a distance from him, and seldom came near him, as if, when the world smiled upon them, they had no occasion for his favours.

[2.] The benefit we often have by afflictions. They bring us to God, quicken us to our duty, and show us our dependence upon him. Those that before seldom looked at God now visit him; they come frequently, they become friendly, and make their court to him. Before, prayer came drop by drop, but now they *pour out a prayer*; it comes now like water from a fountain, not like water from a still. They poured out *a secret speech*; so the margin. Praying is speaking to God, but it is a secret speech; for it is the language of the heart, otherwise it is not praying. Afflictions bring us to secret prayer, in which we may be more free and particular in our addresses to him than we can be in public. In affliction those will seek God early who before sought him slowly, ^{<315>}Hosea 5:15. It will make men fervent and fluent in prayer. “They poured out a prayer, as the drink-offerings were poured out, when thy chastening was upon them.” But it is to be feared, when the chastening is off them, they will by degrees return to their former carelessness, as they had often done.

(4.) He complains that their struggles for their own liberty had been very painful and perilous, but that they had not been successful, v. 17, 18.

[1.] They had the throes and pangs they dreaded: “We have been like a woman in labour, that cries out in her pangs; we have with a great deal of anxiety and toil endeavoured to help ourselves, and our troubles have been increased by those attempts;” as when Moses came to deliver Israel the tale of bricks was doubled. Their prayers were quickened by the acuteness of their pains, and became as strong and vehement as the cries of a woman in sore travail. *So have we been in thy sight, O Lord!* It was a comfort and satisfaction to them, in their distress, that God had his eye upon them, that all their miseries were in his sight; he was no stranger to their pangs or their prayers. *Lord, all my desire is before thee, and my groaning is not hidden from thee,* ^{<38:9>} Psalm 38:9. Whenever they came to *present themselves before the Lord* with their complaints and petitions they were in agonies like those of a woman in travail.

[2.] They came short of the issue and success they desired and hoped for: “*We have been with child; we have had great expectation of a speedy and happy deliverance, have been big with hopes, and, when we have been in pain, have comforted ourselves with this, that the joyful birth would make us forget our misery,* ^{<16:21>} John 16:21. But, alas! *we have as it were brought forth wind;* it has proved a false conception; our expectations have been frustrated, and our pains have been rather dying pains than travailing ones; we have had a miscarrying womb and dry breasts. All our efforts have proved abortive: *We have not wrought any deliverance in the earth,* for ourselves or for our friends and allies, but rather have made our own case and theirs worse; *neither have the inhabitants of the world,* whom we have been contesting with, *fallen* before us, either in their power or in their hopes; but they are still as high and arrogant as ever.” Note, A righteous cause may be strenuously pleaded both by prayer and endeavour, both with God and man, and yet for a great while may be left under a cloud, and the point may not be gained.

II. His prospects and hopes are very pleasant. In general, “*Thou wilt ordain peace for us* (v. 12), that is, all that good which the necessity of our case calls for.” What peace the church has, or hopes for, it is of God's ordaining; and we may comfort ourselves with this, that, what trouble soever may for a time be appointed to the people of God, peace will at length be ordained for them; for the *end of those men is peace*. And, if God by his Spirit *work all our works in us*, he will ordain peace for us (for the work of righteousness shall be peace), and that is true and lasting peace, such as the world can neither give nor take away, which God

ordains; for, to those that have it, it shall be unchangeable as the ordinances of the day and of the night. Moreover, from what God has done for us, we may encourage ourselves to hope that he will yet further do us good. “Thou hast heard the desire of the humble, and therefore wilt (³⁰¹⁷Psalm 10:17); and, when this peace is ordained for us, then *by thee only will we make mention of thy name* (v. 13); we will give the glory of it to thee only, and not to any other, and we will depend upon thy grace only to enable us to do so.” We cannot praise God's name but by his strength. Two things in particular the prophet here comforts the church with the prospect of: —

1. The amazing ruin of her enemies (v. 14): *They are dead*, those *other lords that have had dominion over us*; their power is irrecoverably broken; they are quite cut off and extinguished: and *they shall not live*, shall never be able to hold up the head any more. Being *deceased, they shall not rise*, but, like Haman, when they have begun to fall before the seed of the Jews they shall sink like a stone. Because they are sentenced to this final ruin, therefore, in pursuance of that sentence, God himself has visited them in wrath, as a righteous Judge, and has cut off both the men themselves (*he has destroyed them*) and *the remembrance of them*: they and their names are buried together in the dust. He has *made all their memory to perish*; they are either forgotten or made mention of with detestation. Note, The cause that is maintained in opposition to God and his kingdom among men, though it may prosper awhile, will certainly sink at last, and all that adhere to it will perish with it. The Jewish doctors, comparing this with v. 19, infer that the resurrection of the dead belong to the Jews only, and that those of other nations shall not rise. But we know better; we know that *all who are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God*, and that this speaks of the final destruction of Christ's enemies, which is the second death.

2. The surprising resurrection of her friends, v. 19. Though the church rejoices not in the birth of the man-child, of which she travailed in pain, *but has as it were brought forth wind* (v. 18), yet the disappointment shall be balanced in a way equivalent: *Thy dead men shall live*; those who were thought to be dead, who had received a sentence of death within themselves, who were cast out as if they had been naturally dead, shall appear again in their former vigour. A spirit of life from God shall enter into the slain witnesses, and they shall prophesy again, (⁶¹¹³Revelation 11:11. *The dry bones shall live*, and become an *exceedingly great army*,

3570 Ezekiel 37:10. *Together with my dead body shall they arise.* If we believe the resurrection of the dead, of our dead bodies at the last day, as Job did, and the prophet here, that will facilitate our belief of the promised restoration of the church's lustre and strength in this world. When God's time shall have come, how low soever she may be brought, they shall arise, even Jerusalem, the city of God, but now lying like a dead body, a carcase to which the eagles are gathered together. God owns it still for his, so does the prophet; but it shall arise, shall be rebuilt, and flourish again. And therefore let the poor, desolate, melancholy remains of its inhabitants, that dwell as in dust, *awake and sing*; for they shall see Jerusalem, the *city of their solemnities, a quiet habitation again*, 3580 Isaiah 33:20. The dew of God's favour shall be to it as the evening dew to the herbs that were parched with the heat of the sun all day, shall revive and refresh them. And as the spring-dews, that water the earth, and make the herbs that lay buried in it to put forth and bud, so shall they flourish again, and *the earth shall cast out the dead*, as it casts the herbs out of their roots. The earth, in which they seemed to be lost, shall contribute to their revival. When the church and her interests are to be restored neither the dew of heaven nor the fatness of the earth shall be wanting to do their part towards the restoration. Now this (as Ezekiel's vision, which is a comment upon it) may be fitly accommodated,

(1.) To the spiritual resurrection of those that were dead in sin, by the power of Christ's gospel and grace. So Dr. Lightfoot applies it, *Hor. Hebr. in Joh. 12.24.* "The Gentiles shall live; with my body shall they arise; that is, they shall be called in after Christ's resurrection, shall rise with him, and sit with him in heavenly places; nay, they shall arise my body (says he); they shall become the mystical body of Christ, and shall arise as part of him."

(2.) To the last resurrection, when dead saints shall live, and rise together with Christ's dead body; for he arose as the first-fruits, and believers shall arise by virtue of their union with him and their communion in his resurrection.

ISAIAH 26:20-21

THE SURE REFUGE

These two verses are supposed not to belong to the song which takes up the rest of the chapter, but to begin a new matter, and to be rather an introduction to the following chapter than the conclusion of this. Of whereas, in the foregoing song, the people of God had spoken to him, complaining of their grievances, here he returns an answer to their complaints, in which,

I. He invites them into their chambers (v. 20): “*Come, my people, come to me, come with me*” (he calls them nowhere but where he himself will accompany them); “let the storm that disperses others bring you nearer together. Come, and *enter into thy chambers; stay not abroad, lest you be caught in the storm, as the Egyptians in the hail,*” ^{<012>}Exodus 9:21.

1. “Come into chambers of *distinction*; come into your own apartments, and continue not any longer mixed with the children of Babylon. *Come out from among them, and be you separate,*” ^{<017>}2 Corinthians 6:17; ^{<018>}Revelation 18:4. If God has set apart those that are godly for himself, they ought to set themselves apart.

2. “Into chambers of *defence*, in which by the secrecy or the strength of them you may be safe in the worst of times.” The attributes of God are the *secret of his tabernacle,* ^{<015>}Psalm 27:5. His name is a strong tower, into which we may run for shelter, ^{<010>}Proverbs 18:10. We must be faith find a way into these chambers, and there hide ourselves; that is, with a holy security and serenity of mind, we must put ourselves under the divine protection. Come, as Noah into the ark, for he *shut the doors about him*. When dangers are threatening it is good to retire, and lie hid, as Elijah did by the brook Cherith.

3. Into chambers of *devotion*. “Enter into thy closet, and *shut thy door,*” ^{<006>}Matthew 6:6. Be private with God: *Enter into thy chamber,* to examine thyself, and commune with thy own heart, to pray, and humble thyself before God.” This work is to be done in times of distress and danger; and thus we hide ourselves, that is, we recommend ourselves to God to hide us, and he will hide us either under heaven or in heaven. Israel must keep within doors when the destroying angel is slaying the first-born of Egypt,

else the blood on the door-posts will not secure them. So must Rahab and her family when Jericho is being destroyed. Those are most safe that are least seen. *Qui bene latuit, benevixit* — *He has lived well who has sought a proper degree of concealment.*

II. He assures them that the trouble would be over in a very short time, that they should not long be in any fright or peril: “*Hide thyself for a moment*, the smallest part of time we can conceive, like an atom of matter; may, if you can imagine one moment shorter than another, it is but for a *little moment*, and that with a *quasi* too, *as it were for a little moment*, less than you think of. When it is over it will seem as nothing to you; you will wonder how soon it is gone. You shall not need to lie long in confinement, long in concealment. The indignation will presently be over-past; that is, the indignation of the enemies against you, their persecuting power and rage, which force you to abscond. *When the wicked rise, a man is hid.* This will soon be over; God will cut them off, will break their power, defeat their purposes, and find a way for your enlargement.” When Athanasius was banished from Alexandria by an edict of Julian, and his friends greatly lamented it, he bade them be of good cheer. *Nubecula est quae cito pertransibit* — *It is a little cloud, that will soon blow over. You shall have tribulation ten days;* that is all, ⁽⁴⁶²⁰⁾Revelation 2:10. This enables God's suffering people to call their afflictions light, that they are but for a moment.

III. He assures them that their enemies should be reckoned with for all the mischief they had done them by the sword, either of war or persecution, v. 21. The Lord will punish them for the blood they have shed. Here is,

1. The judgment set, and process issued out: *The Lord comes out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity*, in giving such disturbance to all about them. There is a great deal of iniquity among the inhabitants of the earth; but though they all combine in it, though hand join in hand to carry it on, yet *it shall not go unpunished*. Besides the everlasting punishment into which the wicked shall go hereafter, there are often remarkable punishments of cruelty, oppression, and persecution, in this world. When men's indignation is over-past, and they have done their worst, let them then expect God's indignation, for *he sees that his day is coming*, ⁽⁴⁵⁷¹³⁾Psalms 37:13. *God comes out of his place to punish.* He shows himself in an extraordinary manner from heaven, the firmament of his

power, from the sanctuary, the residence of his grace. He is *raised up out of his holy habitation*, where he seemed before to conceal himself; and now he will do something great, the product of his wise, just, and secret counsels, as a prince that goes to take the chair or take the field,

~~3823~~ Zechariah 2:13. Some observe that God's place is the mercy-seat; there he delights to be; when he punishes he comes out of his place, for he has no pleasure in the death of sinners.

2. The criminals convicted by the notorious evidence of the face: *The earth shall disclose her blood*; the innocent blood, the blood of the saints and martyrs, which has been shed upon the earth like water, and has soaked into it, and been concealed and covered by it, shall not be brought to light, and brought to account; for God will make inquisition for it, and will give those that shed it blood to drink, for they are worthy. Secret murders, and other secret wickednesses, shall be discovered, sooner or later. And the slain which the earth has long covered she shall no longer cover, but they shall be produced as evidence against the murderers. The voice of Abel's blood cries from the earth, ~~100~~ Genesis 9:10, 11; ~~107~~ Job 20:27. Those sins which seemed to be buried in oblivion will be called to mind, and called over again, when the day of reckoning comes. Let God's people therefore wait awhile with patience, for behold the Judge stands before the door.