

# CHAPTER 27

In this chapter the prophet goes on to show,

**I.** What great things God would do for his church and people, which should now shortly be accomplished in the deliverance of Jerusalem from Sennacherib and the destruction of the Assyrian army; but it is expressed generally, for the encouragement of the church in after ages, with reference to the power and prevalency of her enemies.

1. That proud oppressors should be reckoned with (v. 1).
2. That care should be taken of the church, as of God's vineyard (v. 2, 3).
3. That God would let fall his controversy with the people, upon their return to him (v. 4, 5).
4. That he would greatly multiply and increase them (v. 6).
5. That, as to their afflictions, the property of them should be altered (v. 7), they should be mitigated and moderated (v. 8), and sanctified (v. 9).
6. That though the church might be laid waste, and made desolate, for a time (v. 10, 11), yet it should be restored, and the scattered members should be gathered together again (v. 12, 13). All this is applicable to the grace of the gospel, and God's promises to, and providences concerning, the Christian church, and such as belong to it.

## ISAIAH 27:1-6

### THE DOOM OF PERSECUTORS

The prophet is here singing of judgment and mercy,

**I.** Of judgment upon the enemies of God's church (v. 1), *tribulation to those that trouble it*, <sup>5006</sup>2 Thessalonians 1:6. When the Lord *comes out of his place, to punish the inhabitants of the earth* (<sup>2930</sup>Isaiah 26:21), he will be sure to punish *leviathan, the dragon that is in the sea*, every proud oppressing tyrant, that is the terror of the mighty, and, like the leviathan, is *so fierce that none dares stir him up, and his heart as hard as a stone*, and

when he raises up himself the mighty are afraid, <sup><811D></sup>Job 41:10, 24, 25. The church has many enemies, but commonly some one that is more formidable than the rest. So Sennacherib was in his day, and Nebuchadnezzar in his, and Antiochus in his; so Pharaoh had been formerly, and is called *leviathan* and *the dragon*, <sup><2519></sup>Isaiah 51:9; <sup><37413></sup>Psalms 74:13, 14; <sup><3298></sup>Ezekiel 29:3. The New-Testament church has had its leviathans; we read of a great red dragon ready to devour it, <sup><6113></sup>Revelation 12:3. Those malignant persecuting powers are here compared to the leviathan for bulk, and strength, and the mighty bustle they make in the world, — to dragons for their rage and fury, — to serpents, *piercing serpents*, penetrating in their counsels, quick in their motions, and which, if they once get in their head, will soon wind in their whole body, — *crossing like a bar* (so the margin), standing in the way of all their neighbours and obstructing them, — to *crooked serpents*, subtle and insinuating, but perverse and mischievous. Great and mighty princes, if they oppose the people of God, are in God's account as dragons and serpents, the plagues of mankind; and the Lord will punish them in due time. They are too big for men to deal with and call to an account, and therefore the great God will take the matter into his own hands. He has a *sore, and great, and strong sword*, wherewith to do execution upon them when the *measure of their iniquity is full* and their *day has come to fall*. It is emphatically expressed in the original: *The Lord with his sword, that cruel one, and that great one, and that strong one, shall punish this unwieldy, this unruly criminal; and it shall be capital punishment: He shall slay the dragon that is in the sea; for the wages of his sin is death. This shall not only be a prevention of his doing further mischief, as the slaying of a wild beast, but a just punishment for the mischief he has done, as the putting of a traitor or rebel to death. God has a strong sword for the doing of this, variety of judgments sufficient to humble the proudest and break the most powerful of his enemies; and he will do it when the day of execution comes: In that day he will punish, his day which is coming,* <sup><35713></sup>Psalms 37:13. This is applicable to the spiritual victories obtained by our Lord Jesus over the powers of darkness. He not only disarmed, spoiled, and cast out, the prince of this world, but with his strong sword, the virtue of his death and the preaching of his gospel, he does and will *destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*, that great leviathan, that old serpent, the dragon. He shall be bound, that he may not deceive the nations, and that is a punishment to him (<sup><6112></sup>Revelation 20:2, 3); and at

length, for deceiving the nations, he shall be *cast into the lake of fire*,  
<sup><610></sup>Revelation 20:10.

**II.** Of mercy to the church. In that same day, when God is punishing the leviathan, let the church and all her friends be easy and cheerful; let those that attend her sing to her for her comfort, sing her asleep with these assurances; let it be sung in her assemblies,

**1.** That she is God's vineyard, and is under his particular care, v. 2, 3. She is, in God's eye, *a vineyard of red wine*. The world is as a fruitless worthless wilderness; but the church is enclosed as a vineyard, a peculiar place, and of value, that has great care taken of it and great pains taken with it, and from which precious fruits are gathered, wherewith they honour God and man. It is a vineyard of *red wine*, yielding the best and choicest grapes, intimating the reformation of the church, that it now brings forth good fruit unto God, whereas before it brought forth fruit to itself, or brought forth wild grapes, <sup><2304></sup>Isaiah 5:4. Now God takes care,

**(1.)** Of the safety of this vineyard: *I the Lord do keep it*. He speaks this as glorying in it that he is, and has undertaken to be, the keeper of Israel. Those that bring forth fruit to God are and shall be always under his protection. He speaks this as assuring us that they shall be so: *I the Lord*, that can do every thing, but cannot lie nor deceive, *I do keep it; lest any hurt it, I will keep it night and day*. God's vineyard in this world lies much exposed to injury; there are many that would hurt it, would tread it down and lay it waste (<sup><3013></sup>Psalm 80:13); but God will suffer no real hurt or damage to be done it, but what he will bring good out of. He will keep it constantly, night and day, and not without need, for the enemies are restless in their designs and attempts against it, and, both night and day, seek an opportunity to do it a mischief. God will keep it in the night of affliction and persecution, and in the day of peace and prosperity, the temptations of which are no less dangerous. God's people shall be preserved, not only from the *pestilence that walketh in darkness*, but from the *destruction that wasteth at noon-day*, <sup><4906></sup>Psalm 91:6. This vineyard shall be well fenced.

**(2.)** Of the fruitfulness of this vineyard: *I will water it every moment*, and yet it shall not be overwatered. The still and silent dews of God's grace and blessing shall continually descend upon it, that it may bring forth much fruit. We need the constant and continual waterings of the divine grace;

for, if that be at any time withdrawn, we wither, and come to nothing. God waters his vineyard by the ministry of the word by his servants the prophets, whose doctrine shall drop as the dew. Paul plants, and Apollos waters, but God gives the increase; for without him the watchman wakes and the husbandman waters in vain.

2. That, though sometimes he contends with his people, yet, upon their submission, he will be reconciled to them, v. 4, 5. *Fury is not in him* towards his vineyard; though he meets with many things in it that are offensive to him, yet he does not seek advantages against it, nor is extreme to mark what is amiss in it. It is true if he find in it briars and thorns instead of vines, and they be set in battle against him (as indeed that in the vineyard which is not for him is against him), he will tread them down and burn them; but otherwise, “If I am angry with my people, they know what course to take; let them humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and so *take hold of my strength* with a sincere desire to make their peace with me, and I will soon be reconciled to them, and all shall be well.” God sees the sins of his people and is displeased with them; but, upon their repentance, he turns away his wrath. This may very well be construed as a summary of the doctrine of the gospel, with which the church is to be watered every moment.

(1.) Here is a quarrel supposed between God and man; for here is a battle fought, and peace to be made. It is an old quarrel, ever since sin first entered. It is, on God's part, a righteous quarrel, but, on man's part, most unrighteous.

(2.) Here is a gracious invitation given us to make up this quarrel, and to get these matters in variance accommodated: “Let him that is desirous to be at peace with God take hold of his strength, of his strong arm, which is lifted up against the sinner to strike him dead; and let him by supplication keep back the stroke. Let him wrestle with me, as Jacob did, resolving not to let me go without a blessing; and he shall be *Israel — a prince with God.*” Pardoning mercy is called the power of our Lord; let him take hold of that. Christ is the *arm of the Lord*, <sup>251</sup> Isaiah 53:1. Christ *crucified is the power of God* (<sup>412</sup> 1 Corinthians 1:24); let him by a lively faith take hold of him, as a man that is sinking catches hold of a bough, or cord, or plank, that is within his reach, or as the malefactor took hold of the horns of the altar, believing that there is no other name by which he can be saved, by which he can be reconciled.

**(3.)** Here is a threefold cord of arguments to persuade us to do this.

**[1.]** Time and space are given us to do it in; for *fury is not in God*; he does not carry it towards us as great men carry it towards their inferiors, when the one is in a fault and the other in a fury. Men in a fury will not take time for consideration; it is, with them, but a word and a blow. Furious men are soon angry, and implacable when they are angry; a little thing provokes them, and no little thing will pacify them. But it is not so with God; he considers our frame, is slow to anger, does not stir up all his wrath, nor always chide.

**[2.]** It is in vain to think of contesting with him. If we persist in our quarrel with him, and think to make our part good, it is but like setting briars and thorns before a consuming fire, which will be so far from giving check to the progress of it that they will but make it burn the more outrageously. We are not an equal match for Omnipotence. *Woe unto him therefore that strives with his Maker!* He knows not the power of his anger.

**[3.]** This is the only way, and it is a sure way, to reconciliation: “Let him take this course to make peace with me, *and he shall make peace*; and thereby good, all good, shall come unto him.” God is willing to be reconciled to us if we be but willing to be reconciled to him.

**3.** That the church of God in the world shall be a growing body, and come at length to be a great body (v. 6): *In times to come* (so some read it), *in after-times*, when these calamities are overpast, or in the days of the gospel, the latter days, *he shall cause Jacob to take root*, deeper root than ever yet; for the gospel church shall be more firmly fixed than ever the Jewish church was, and shall spread further. Or, *He shall cause those of Jacob* that come back out of their captivity, or (as we read it) *those that come of Jacob, to take root downward, and bear fruit upward*, <sup><373></sup>Isaiah 37:31. They shall be established in a prosperous state, and then they shall *blossom and bud*, and give hopeful prospects of a great increase; and so it shall prove, for *they shall fill the face of the world with fruit*. Many shall be brought into the church, proselytes shall be numerous, some out of all the nations about that shall be to the God of Israel for a name and a praise; and the converts shall be fruitful in the fruits of righteousness. The preaching of the gospel *brought forth fruit in all the world* (<sup><306></sup>Colossians 1:6), fruit that remains, <sup><356></sup>John 15:16.

## ~~27:7~~ ISAIAH 27:7-13

### CORRECTION AND COMPASSION

Here is the prophet again singing of mercy and judgment, not, as before, judgment to the enemies and mercy to the church, but judgment to the church and mercy mixed with that judgment.

**I.** Here is judgment threatened even to Jacob and Israel. *They shall blossom and bud* (v. 6), but,

**1.** They shall be *smitten* and *slain* (v. 7), some of them shall. If God find any thing amiss among them, he will lay them under the tokens of his displeasure for it. Judgment shall begin at the house of God, and those whom God has known of all the families of the earth he will punish in the first place.

**2.** Jerusalem, their *defenced city, shall be desolate*, v. 10, 11. “God having tried a variety of methods with them for their reformation, which, as to many, have proved ineffectual, he will for a time lay their country waste,” which was accomplished when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Chaldeans; then that *habitation* was for a long time *forsaken*. If less judgments do not do the work, God will send greater; for *when he judges he will overcome*. Jerusalem had been a defenced city, not so much by art or nature as by grace and the divine protection; but, when God was provoked to withdraw, her defence departed from her, and then she was left like a wilderness. “And in the pleasant gardens of Jerusalem cattle shall feed, shall lie down there, and there shall be none to disturb them or drive them away; there they shall be *levant and couchant*, and they shall eat the tender branches of the fruit-trees,” which perhaps further signifies that the people should become an easy prey to their enemies. “*When the boughs thereof are withered* as they grow upon the tree, being blasted by winds and frosts and not pruned, *they shall be broken off* for fuel, and *the women and children shall come and set them on fire*. There shall be a total destruction, for the very trees shall be destroyed.” And this is a figure of the deplorable state of the vineyard (v. 2) when it *brought forth wild grapes* (~~27:11~~ Isaiah 5:2); and our Saviour seems to refer to this when he says of the branches of the vine which *abide not in him* that they are *cast forth and withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned* (~~4:16~~ John

15:6), which was in a particular manner fulfilled in the unbelieving Jews. The similitude is explained in the following words, *It is a people of no understanding*, brutish and sottish, and destitute of the knowledge of God, and that have no relish or savour of divine things, like a withered branch that has no sap in it; and this is at the bottom of all those sins for which God left them desolate, their idolatry first and afterwards their infidelity. Wicked people, however in other things they may be wits and politicians, in their greatest concerns are of no understanding; and their ignorance, being wilful, shall not only not be their excuse, but it shall be the ground of their condemnation; for therefore *he that made them*, that gave them their being, *will not have mercy on them*, nor save them from the ruin they bring upon themselves; and *he that formed them* into a people, formed them for himself, to show forth his praise, seeing they do not answer the end of their formation, but hate to be reformed, to be new-formed, will reject them, and *show them no favour*; and then they are undone: for, if he that made us by his power do not make us happy in his favour, we had better never have been made. Sinners flatter themselves with hopes of impunity, at least that they shall not be dealt with so severely as their ministers tell them, because God is merciful and because he is their Maker. But here we see how weak and insufficient those pleas will be; for, if they be of no understanding, he that made them, though he made them, and hates nothing that he has made, and though he has mercy in store for those who so far understand their interests as to apply to him for it, yet on them he will have no mercy, and will show them no favour.

**II.** Here is a great deal of mercy mixed with this judgment; for there are good people mixed with those that are corrupt and degenerate, *a remnant according to the election of grace*, on whom God will have mercy and to whom he will show favour: and these promises seem to point at all the calamities of the church, for which God would graciously provide these allays.

**1.** Though they shall be smitten and slain, yet not to that degree, and in that manner, in which their enemies shall be smitten and slain, v. 7. God has *smitten Jacob*, and he is slain. Many of those *that understand among the people shall fall by the sword and by flame many days*, <sup>2113</sup> Daniel 11:33. But it shall not be as those are smitten and slain,

**(1.)** Who smote him formerly, who were the rod of God's anger and the staff in his hand, which he made us of for the correction of his people, and

to whose turn it shall come to be reckoned with even for that: the child is spared, but the rod is burnt.

**(2.)** Who shall afterwards be slain by him, when he shall get the dominion, and repay them in their own coin, or slain for his sake in the pleading of his cause. God's people and God's enemies are here represented,

**[1.]** As struggling with each other; so the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent have been, are, and will be. In this contest there are slain on both sides. God makes use of wicked men, not only to smite, but to slay his people; for they are his sword, <sup><973></sup>Psalm 17:13. But, when the cup of trembling comes to be put into their hand, it will be much worse with them than ever it was with God's people in their greatest straits. The seed of the woman has only his heel bruised, but the serpent has his head crushed and broken. Note, Though God's persecuted people may be great losers, and great sufferers, for a while, yet those that oppress them will prove to be greater losers and greater sufferers at last, here or hereafter; for God will render double to them, <sup><66></sup>Revelation 18:6.

**[2.]** As sharing together in the calamities of this present time. They are both smitten, both slain, and both by the hand of God; for there is *one event to the righteous and to the wicked*. But is Jacob smitten as his enemies are? No, by no means; to him the property is altered, and it becomes quite another thing. Note, However it may seem to us, there is really a vast difference between the afflictions and deaths of good people and the afflictions and deaths of wicked people.

**2.** Though God will debate with them, yet it shall be in measure, and the affliction shall be mitigated, moderated, and proportioned to their strength, not to their deserts, v. 8. He will deal out afflictions to them as the wise physician prescribes medicines to his patients, just such a quantity of each ingredient, or orders how much blood shall be taken when a vein is opened: thus God orders the troubles of his people, not *suffering them to be tempted above what they are able*, <sup><603></sup>1 Corinthians 10:13. He measures out their afflictions by a little at a time, that they may not be pressed above measure; for he knows their frame, and corrects in judgment, and does not stir up all his wrath. When the affliction is shooting forth, when he is sending it out and giving it its commission, then he debates in measure, and not in extremity. He considers what we can bear when he begins to correct; and when he proceeds in his controversy, so that it is the *day of his east-wind*, which is not only blustering and noisy, but blasting and

noxious, yet he stays his rough wind, checks it, and sets bounds to it, does not suffer it to blow so hard as was feared; when he is winnowing his corn, it is with a gentle gale, that shall only blow away the chaff, but not the good corn. God has the winds at his command, and every affliction under his check. *Hitherto it shall go, but no further.* Let us not despair when things are at the worst; be the winds ever so rough, ever so high, God can say unto them, *Peace, be still.*

**3.** Though God will afflict them, yet he will make their afflictions to work for the good of their souls, and correct them as the father does the child, to drive out the foolishness that is bound up in their hearts (v. 9): *By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged.* This is the design of the affliction, to this it is adapted as a proper means, and, by the grace of God working with it, it shall have this blessed effect. It shall mortify the habits of sin; by this those defilements of the soul shall be purged away. It shall break them off from the practice of sin: *This is all the fruit,* this is it that God intends, this is all the harm it will do them, *to take away their sin,* than which they could not have a greater kindness done them, though it be at the expense of an affliction. Therefore, because the affliction is mitigated and moderated, and the rough wind stayed, therefore we may conclude that he designs their reformation, not their destruction; and, because he deals thus gently with us, we should therefore study to answer his ends in afflicting us. The particular sin which the affliction was intended to cure them of was the sin of idolatry, the sin which did most easily beset that people and to which they were strangely addicted. *Ephraim is joined to idols.* But by the captivity in Babylon they were not only weaned from this sin, but set against it. *Ephraim shall say, What have I do to any more with idols?* Jacob has his sin taken away, his beloved sin, *when he makes all the stones of the altar,* of his idolatrous altar, the stones of which were precious and sacred to him, *as chalk-stones that are beaten asunder;* he not only has them in contempt, and values them no more than chalk-stones, but he conceives an indignation at them, and, in a holy revenge, beats them asunder as easily as chalk-stones are broken to pieces. *The groves and the images shall not stand before this penitent,* but they shall be thrown down too, never to be set up again. This was according to the law for the demolishing and destroying of all the monuments of idolatry (<sup>(GEN 5)</sup> Deuteronomy 7:5); and according to this promise, since the captivity in Babylon, no people in the world have such a rooted aversion to idols and idolatry as the people of the Jews. Note, The design of

affliction is to separate between us and sin, especially that which has been *our own iniquity*; and then it appears that the affliction has done us good when we keep at a distance from the occasions of sin, and use all needful precaution that we may not only not relapse into it, but not so much as be tempted to it, <sup><BB6></sup>Psalm 119:67.

**4.** Though Jerusalem shall be desolate and forsaken for a time, yet there will come a day when its scattered friends shall resort to it again out of all the countries whither they were dispersed (v. 12, 13); though the body of the nation is abandoned as a people of no understanding, yet those that are indeed children of Israel shall be gathered together again, as the sheep of the flock when the shepherds that scattered them are reckoned with, <sup><540></sup>Ezekiel 34:10-19. Now observe concerning these scattered Israelites,

**(1.)** Whence they shall be fetched: *The Lord shall beat them off* as fruit from the tree, or beat them out as corn out of the ear. He shall find them out, and separate them from those among whom they dwelt, and with whom they seemed to be incorporated, *from the channel of the river Euphrates north-east, unto Nile, the stream of Egypt*, which lay south-west — those that were driven into the land of Assyria, and were captives there in the land of their enemies, where they were ready to perish for want of necessaries, and ready to despair of deliverance — and those that were *outcasts in the land of Egypt*, whither many of those that were left behind, after the captivity in Babylon, went, contrary to God's express command (<sup><246></sup>Jeremiah 43:6, 7), and there lived as outcasts: God has mercy in store for them all, and will make it to appear that, though they are cast out, they are not cast off.

**(2.)** In what manner they shall be brought back: *“You shall be gathered one by one, not in multitudes, not in troops forcing your way; but silently, and as it were by stealth, dropping in, first one, and then another.”* This intimates that the remnant that shall be saved consists but of few, and those saved with difficulty, and so as by fire, scarcely saved; they shall not come for company, but as God shall stir up every man's spirit.

**(3.)** By what means they shall be gathered together: *The great trumpet shall be blown, and then they shall come.* Cyrus's proclamation of liberty to the captives is this great trumpet, which awakened the Jews that were asleep in their thralldom to bestir themselves; it was like the sounding of the jubilee-trumpet, which published the year of release. This is applicable both to the preaching of the gospel, by which sinners are gathered in to the

grace of God, such as were outcasts and ready to perish (those that were afar off are made nigh; the gospel proclaims the acceptable year of the Lord), and also to the archangel's trumpet at the last day, by which saints shall be gathered to the glory of God, that lay as outcasts in their graves.

**(4.)** For what end they shall be gathered together: *To worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.* When the captives rallied again, and returned to their own land, the chief thing they had their eye upon, and the first thing they applied themselves to, was the worship of God. The holy temple was in ruins, but they had the holy mount, *the place of the altar,* ~~Gen~~ Genesis 13:4. Liberty to worship God is the most valuable and desirable liberty; and, after restraints and dispersions, a free access to his house should be more welcome to us than a free access to our own houses. Those that are gathered by the sounding of the gospel trumpet are brought in to worship God and added to the church; and the great trumpet of all will gather the saints together, *to serve God day and night in his temple.*