

CHAPTER 10

We may conjecture that the prophecy of this chapter was delivered after the first captivity, in the time of Jeconiah or Jehoiachin, when many were carried away to Babylon; for it has a double reference: —

I. To those that were carried away into the land of the Chaldeans, a country notorious above any other for idolatry and superstition; and they are here cautioned against the infection of the place, not to learn the way of the heathen (v. 1, 2), for their astrology and idolatry are both foolish things (v. 3-5), and the worshippers of idols brutish (v. 8, 9). So it will appear in the day of their visitation (v. 14, 15). They are likewise exhorted to adhere firmly to the God of Israel, for there is none like him (v. 6, 7). He is the true God, lives for ever, and has the government of the world (v. 10-13), and his people are happy in him (v. 16).

II. To those that yet remained in their own land. They are cautioned against security, and told to expect distress (v. 17, 18) and that by a foreign enemy, which God would bring upon them for their sin (v. 20-22). This calamity the prophet laments (v. 19) and prays for the mitigation of it (v. 23-25).

~~240~~ JEREMIAH 10:1-16

THE FOLLY OF IDOLATRY

The prophet Isaiah, when he prophesied of the captivity in Babylon, added warnings against idolatry and largely exposed the sottishness of idolaters, not only because the temptations in Babylon would be in danger of drawing the Jews there to idolatry, but because the afflictions in Babylon were designed to cure them of their idolatry. Thus the prophet Jeremiah here arms people against the idolatrous usages and customs of the heathen, not only for the use of those that had gone to Babylon, but of those also that staid behind, that being convinced and reclaimed, by the word of God, the rod might be prevented; and it is *written for our learning*. Observe here,

I. A solemn charge given to the people of God not to conform themselves to the ways and customs of the heathen. Let the house of Israel hear and receive this word from the God of Israel: “*Learn not the way of the heathen*, do not approve of it, no, nor think indifferently concerning it, much less imitate it or accustom yourselves to it. Let not any of their customs steal in among you (as they are apt to do insensibly) nor mingle themselves with your religion.” Note, It ill becomes those that are taught of God to *learn the way of the heathen*, and to think of worshipping the true God with such rites and ceremonies as they used in the worship of their false gods. See ⁽⁶²⁹⁾Deuteronomy 12:29-31. It was the way of the heathen to worship the host of heaven, the sun, moon, and stars; to them they gave divine honours, and from them they expected divine favours, and therefore, according as *the signs of heaven* were, whether they were auspicious or ominous, they thought themselves countenanced or discountenanced by their deities, which made them observe those signs, the eclipses of the sun and moon, the conjunctions and oppositions of the planets, and all the unusual phenomena of the celestial globe, with a great deal of anxiety and trembling. Business was stopped if any thing occurred that was thought to bode ill; if it did but thunder on their left hand, they were almost as if they had been thunderstruck. Now God would not have his people to be *dismayed at the signs of heaven*, to reverence the stars as deities, nor to frighten themselves with any prognostications grounded upon them. Let them fear the God of heaven, and keep up a reverence of his providence, and then they need not be *dismayed at the signs of heaven*, for the *stars in their courses* fight not against any that are at peace with God. The heathen are dismayed at these signs, for they know no better; but let not the *house of Israel*, that are taught of God, be so.

II. Divers good reasons given to enforce this charge.

1. The way of the heathen is very ridiculous and absurd, and is condemned even by the dictates of right reason, v. 3. The statutes and ordinances of the heathen are vanity itself; they cannot stand the test of a rational disquisition. This is again and again insisted upon here, as it was by Isaiah. The Chaldeans valued themselves upon their wisdom, in which they thought that they excelled all their neighbours; but the prophet here shows that they, and all others that worshipped idols and expected help and relief from them, were brutish and sottish, and had not common sense.

(1.) Consider what the idol is that is worshipped. It was a *tree cut out of the forest* originally. It was fitted up by *the hands of the workman*, squared, and sawed, and worked into shape; see ^{<244D>}Isaiah 44:12, etc. But, after all, it was but the stock of a tree, fitter to make a gate-post of than any thing else. But, to hide the wood, *they deck it with silver and gold*, they gild or lacquer it, or they deck it with gold and silver lace, or cloth of tissue. *They fasten it* to its place, which they themselves have assigned it, *with nails and hammers*, that it fall not, nor be thrown down, nor stolen away, v. 4. The image is made straight enough, and it cannot be denied but that the workman did his part, for it *is upright as the palm-tree* (v. 5); it looks stately, and stands up as if it were going to speak to you, but it *cannot speak*; it is a poor dumb creature; nor can it take one step towards your relief. If there be any occasion for it to shift its place, it must be carried in procession, for it *cannot go*. Very fitly does the admonition come in here, “*Be not afraid of them*, any more than of the signs of heaven; be not afraid of incurring their displeasure, for *they can do no evil*; be not afraid of forfeiting their favour, *for neither is it in them to do good*. If you think to mend the matter by mending the materials of which the idol is made, you deceive yourselves. Idols of gold and silver are an unworthy to be worshipped as wooden gods. *The stock is a doctrine of vanities*, v. 8. It teaches lies, teaches lies concerning God. It is *an instruction of vanities; it is wood*.” It is probable that the idols of gold and silver had wood underneath for the substratum, and then *silver spread into plates is brought from Tarshish*, imported from beyond sea, and *gold from Uphaz*, or *Phaz*, which is sometimes rendered the *fine* or *pure gold*, ^{<427B>}Psalms 21:3. A great deal of art is used, and pains taken, about it. They are not such ordinary mechanics that are employed about these as about the wooden gods, v. 3. these are cunning men; it is *the work of the workman*; the graver must do his part when it has passed through *the hands of the founder*. Those were but decked here and there with silver and gold; these are silver and gold all over. And, that these gods might be revered as kings, *blue and purple are their clothing*, the colour of royal robes (v. 9), which amuses ignorant worshippers, but makes the matter no better. For what is the idol when it is made and when they have made the best they can of it? He tells us (v. 14): *They are falsehood*; they are not what they pretend to be, but a great cheat put upon the world. They are worshipped as the gods that give us breath and life and sense, whereas they are lifeless senseless things themselves, and *there is no breath in them*; there is *no spirit in them* (so the word is); they are not animated, or

inhabited, as they are supposed to be, by any *divine spirit* or *numen* — *divinity*. They are so far from being gods that they have not so much as the *spirit of a beast that goes downward*. *They are vanity, and the work of errors*, v. 15. Enquire into the use of them and you will find they are vanity; they are good for nothing; no help is to be expected from them nor any confidence put in them. They are a *deceitful work, works of illusions, or mere mockeries*; so some read the following clause. They *delude* those that put their trust in them, make fools of them, or, rather, they make fools of themselves. Enquire into the use of them and you will find they are *the work of errors*, grounded upon the grossest mistakes that ever men who pretended to reason were guilty of. They are the creatures of a deluded fancy; and the errors by which they were produced they propagate among their worshippers.

(2.) Infer hence what the idolaters are that worship these idols. (v. 8): *They are altogether brutish and foolish*. Those that make them are like unto them, senseless and stupid, and there is no spirit in them — no use of reason, else they would never stoop to them, v. 14. *Every man* that makes or worships idols has become *brutish in his knowledge*, that is, brutish for want of knowledge, or brutish in that very thing which one would think they should be fully acquainted with; compare ^{<610>}Jude 1:10, *What they know naturally*, what they cannot but know by the light of nature, *in those things as brute beasts they corrupt themselves*. Though in the works of creation they cannot but see the eternal power and godhead of the Creator, yet they have become *vain in their imaginations, not liking to retain God in their knowledge*. See ^{<611>}Romans 1:21, 18. Nay, whereas they thought it a piece of wisdom thus to multiply gods, it really was the greatest folly they could be guilty of. *The world by wisdom knew not God*, ^{<612>}1 Corinthians 1:21; ^{<612>}Romans 1:22. *Every founder* is himself *confounded by the graven image*; when he has made it by a mistake he is more and more confirmed in his mistake by it; he is bewildered, bewitched, and cannot disentangle himself from the snare; or it is what he will one time or other be ashamed of.

2. The God of Israel is the one only living and true God, and those that have him for their God need not make their application to any other; nay, to set up any other in competition with him is the greatest affront and injury that can be done him. Let the house of Israel cleave to the God of Israel and serve and worship him only, for,

(1.) He is a non-such. Whatever men may set in competition with him, there is none to be compared with him. The prophet turns from speaking with the utmost disdain of the idols of the heathen (as well he might) to speak with the most profound and awful reverence of the God of Israel (v. 6, 7): “*Forasmuch as there is none like unto thee, O Lord!* none of all the heroes which the heathen have deified and make such ado about,” the dead men of whom they made dead images, and whom they worshipped. “Some were deified and adored for their wisdom; but, *among all the wise men of the nations*, the greatest philosophers or statesmen, as Apollo or Hermes, *there is none like thee*. Others were deified and adored for their dominion; but, *in all their royalty*” (so it may be read), “among all their kings, as Saturn and Jupiter, *there is none like unto thee*.” What is the glory of a man that invented a useful art or founded a flourishing kingdom (and these were grounds sufficient among the heathen to entitle a man to an apotheosis) compared with the glory of him that is the Creator of the world and that *forms the spirit of man within him*? What is the glory of the greatest prince or potentate, compared with the glory of him whose *kingdom rules over all*? He acknowledges (v. 6), *O Lord! thou art great*, infinite and immense, and *thy name is great in might*; thou hast all power, and art known to have it. Men's name is often beyond their might; they are thought to be greater than they are; but God's *name is great*, and no greater than he really is. And therefore *who would not fear thee, O King of nations*? Who would not choose to worship such a God as this, that can do every thing, rather than such dead idols as the heathen worship, that can do nothing? Who would not be afraid of offending or forsaking a God whose name is so *great in might*? Which of all the nations, if they understood their interests aright, *would not fear him* who is the *King of nations*? Note, There is an admirable decency and congruity in the worshipping of God only. It is fit that he who is God alone should alone be served, that he who is Lord of all should be served by all, that he who is great should be greatly feared and greatly praised.

(2.) His verity is as evident as the idol's vanity, v. 10. They are the work of men's hands, and therefore nothing is more plain than that it is a jest to worship them, if that may be called a jest which is so great an indignity to him that made us: *But the Lord is the true God*, the God of truth; he is God in truth. *God Jehovah is truth*; he is not a counterfeit and pretender, as they are, but is really what he has revealed himself to be; he is one we may depend upon, in whom and by whom we cannot be deceived.

[1.] Look upon him as he is in himself, and he is *the living God*. He is life itself, has life in himself, and is the fountain of life to all the creatures. The gods of the heathen are dead things, worthless and useless, but ours is a living God, and hath immortality.

[2.] Look upon him with relation to his creatures, he is a *King*, and absolute monarch, over them all, is their owner and ruler, has an incontestable right both to command them and dispose of them. As a king, he protects the creatures, provides for their welfare, and preserves peace among them. He is *an everlasting king*. The counsels of his kingdom were from everlasting and the continuance of it will be to everlasting. He is a *King of eternity*. The idols whom they call their kings are but of yesterday, and will soon be abolished; and the kings of the earth, that set them up to be worshipped, will themselves be in the dust shortly; but *the Lord shall reign for ever, thy God, O Zion! unto all generations*.

(3.) None knows the power of his anger. Let us stand in awe, and not dare to provoke him by giving that glory to another which is due to him alone; for *at his wrath the earth shall tremble*, even the strongest and stoutest of the kings of the earth; nay, the earth, firmly as it is fixed, when he pleases is made to quake and the rocks to tremble, ~~<DAE>~~ Psalm 104:32; ~~<SIB>~~ Habakkuk 3:6, 10. Though the nations should join together to contend with him, and unite their force, yet they would be found utterly unable not only to resist, but even *to abide his indignation*. Not only can they not make head against it, for it would overcome them, but they cannot bear up under it, for it would overload them, ~~<SIB>~~ Psalm 76:7, 8; ~~<SIB>~~ Nahum 1:6.

(4.) He is the God of nature, the fountain of all being; and all the powers of nature are at his command and disposal, v. 12, 13. The God we worship is he that made the heavens and the earth, and has a sovereign dominion over both; so that his *invisible things* are manifested and proved in the *things that are seen*.

[1.] If we look back, we find that the whole world owed its origin to him as its first cause. It was a common saying even among the Greeks — *He that sets up to be another god ought first to make another world*. While the heathen worship gods that they made, we worship the God that made us and all things. *First, The earth* is a body of vast bulk, has valuable treasures in its bowels and more valuable fruit on its surface. It and them he has *made by his power*; and it is by no less than an infinite power that it *hangs upon nothing*, as it does (~~<SIB>~~ Job 26:7) — *ponderibus librata suis* —

poised by its own weight. Secondly, The world, the habitable part of the earth, is admirably fitted for the use and service of man, and he hath established it so by his wisdom, so that it continues serviceable in constant changes and yet a continual stability from one generation to another. Therefore both the earth and the world are his, ¹²⁰¹ Psalm 24:1. Thirdly, The heavens are wonderfully stretched out to an incredible extent, and it is by his discretion that they are so, and that the motions of the heavenly bodies are directed for the benefit of this lower world. These declare his glory (¹²⁰¹ Psalm 19:1), and oblige us to declare it, and not give that glory to the heavens which is due to him that made them.

[2.] If we look up, we see his providence to be a continued creation (v. 13): *When he uttereth his voice* (gives the word of command) *there is a multitude of waters in the heavens*, which are poured out on the earth, whether for judgment or mercy, as he intends them. When he utters his voice in the thunder, immediately there follow thunder-showers, in which there are a multitude of waters; and those come with *a noise*, as the margin reads it; and we read of the *noise of abundance of rain*, ¹¹⁸¹ 1 Kings 18:41. Nay, there are wonders done daily in the kingdom of nature without noise: *He causes the vapours to ascend from the ends of the earth*, from all parts of the earth, even the most remote, and chiefly those that lie next the sea. All the earth pays the tribute of vapours, because all the earth receives the blessing of rain. And thus the moisture in the universe, like the money in a kingdom and the blood in the body, is continually circulating for the good of the whole. Those vapours produce wonders, for of them are formed *lightnings for the rain*, and *the winds* which God from time to time *brings forth out of his treasures*, as there is occasion for them, directing them all in such measure and for such use as he thinks fit, as payments are made out of the treasury. All the meteors are so ready to serve God's purposes that he seems to have treasures of them, that cannot be exhausted and may at any time be drawn from, ¹²⁰⁷ Psalm 135:7. God glories in the treasures he has of these, ¹³³² Job 38:22, 23. This God can do; but which of the idols of the heathen can do the like? Note, There is no sort of weather but what furnishes us with a proof and instance of the wisdom and power of the great Creator.

(5.) This God is Israel's God in covenant, and the felicity of every Israelite indeed. Therefore let the house of Israel cleave to him, and not forsake him to embrace idols; for, if they do, they certainly change for the worse,

for (v. 16) *the portion of Jacob is not like them*; their rock is not as our rock (⁴⁶²⁴Deuteronomy 32:31), nor ours like their mole-hills. Note,

[1.] Those that have the Lord for their God have a full and complete happiness in him. The *God of Jacob* is the *portion of Jacob*; he is his all, and in him he has enough and needs no more in this world nor the other. In him we have a worthy portion, ⁴¹⁶⁵Psalms 16:5.

[2.] If we have entire satisfaction and complacency in God as our portion, he will have a gracious delight in us as his people, whom he owns as *the rod of his inheritance*, his possession and treasure, with whom he dwells and by whom he is served and honoured.

[3.] It is the unspeakable comfort of all the Lord's people that he who is their God is *the former of all things*, and therefore is able to do all that for them, and give all that to them, which they stand in need of. Their *help stands in his name who made heaven and earth*. And he is the *Lord of hosts*, of all the hosts in heaven and earth, has them all at his command, and will command them into the service of his people when there is occasion. This is the name by which they know him, which they first give him the glory of and then take to themselves the comfort of.

[4.] Herein God's people are happy above all other people, happy indeed, *bona si sua norint* — *did they but know their blessedness*. The gods which the heathen pride, and please, and so portion themselves in, are vanity and a lie; but *the portion of Jacob is not like them*.

3. The prophet, having thus compared the gods of the heathen with the God of Israel (between whom there is no comparison), reads the doom, the certain doom, of all those pretenders, and directs the Jews, in God's name, to read it to the worshippers of idols, though they were their lords and masters (v. 11): *Thus shall you say unto them* (and the God you serve will bear you out in saying it), *The gods which have not made the heavens and the earth* (and therefore are no gods, but usurpers of the honour due to him only who did make heaven and earth) *shall perish*, perish of course, because they are vanity — perish by his righteous sentence, because they are rivals with him. As gods they shall perish *from off the earth* (even all those things *on earth beneath* which they make gods of) *and from under these heavens*, even all those things in the firmament of heaven, under the highest heavens, which are deified, according to the distribution in the second commandment. These words in the original are not in the Hebrew,

like all the rest, but in the Chaldee dialect, that the Jews in captivity might have this ready to say to the Chaldeans in their own language when they tempted them to idolatry: “Do you press us to worship your gods? We will never do that; for,”

(1.) “They are counterfeit deities; they are no gods, for they *have not made the heavens and the earth*, and therefore are not entitled to our homage, nor are we indebted to them either for the products of the earth or the influences of heaven, as we are to the God of Israel.” The primitive Christians would say, when they were urged to worship such a god, *Let him make a world and he shall be my god*. While we have him to worship who made heaven and earth, it is very absurd to worship any other.

(2.) “They are condemned deities. They *shall perish*; the time shall come when they shall be no more respected as they are now, but shall be buried in oblivion, and they and their worshippers shall sink together. The earth shall no longer bear them; the heavens shall no longer cover them; but both shall abandon them.” It is repeated (v. 15), *In the time of their visitation* they shall perish. When God comes to reckon with idolaters he will make them weary of their idols, and glad to be rid of them. They shall *cast them to the moles and to the bats*, ^{<300>}Isaiah 2:20. Whatever runs against God and religion will be run down at last.

<307> JEREMIAH 10:17-25

LAMENTATION OF JUDAH

In these verses,

I. The prophet threatens, in God's name, the approaching ruin of Judah and Jerusalem, v. 17, 18. The Jews that continued in their own land, after some were carried into captivity, were very secure; they thought themselves *inhabitants of a fortress*; their country was their strong hold, and, in their own conceit, impregnable; but they are here told to think of leaving it: they must prepare to go after their brethren, and pack up their effects in expectation of it: “*Gather up thy wares out of the land*; contract your affairs, and bring them into as small a compass as you can. *Arise, depart, this is not your rest*,” ^{<300>}Micah 2:10. Let not what you have lie scattered, for the Chaldeans will be upon you again, to be the executioners

of the sentence God has passed upon you (v. 18): “Behold, I will sling out the inhabitants of the land at this once; they have hitherto dropped out, by a few at a time, but one captivity more shall make a thorough riddance, and they shall be slung out as a stone out of a sling, so easily, so thoroughly shall they be cast out; nothing of them shall remain. they shall be thrown out with violence, and driven to a place at a great distance off, in a little time.” See this comparison used to signify an utter destruction, ^{<1059>}1 Samuel 25:29. *Yet once more* God will shake their land, and *shake the wicked out of it*, ^{<8126>}Hebrews 12:26. He adds, *And I will distress them, that they may find it so*. He will not only throw them out hence (that he may do and yet they may be easy elsewhere); but, whithersoever they go, trouble shall follow them; they shall be continually perplexed and straitened, and at a loss within themselves: and who or what can make those easy whom God *will distress*, whom he will distress *that they may find it so*, that they may feel that which they would not believe? They were often told of the weight of God's wrath and their utter inability to make head against it, or bear up under it. They were told that their sin would be their ruin, and they would not regard nor credit what was told them; but now *they shall find it so*; and *therefore* God will pursue them with his judgments, *that they may find it so*, and be forced to acknowledge it. Note, sooner or later sinners will find it just as the word of God has represented things to them, and no better, and that the threatenings were not bugbears.

II. He brings in the people sadly lamenting their calamities (v. 19): *Woe is me for my hurt!* Some make this the prophet's own lamentation, not for himself, but for the calamities and desolations of his country. He mourned for those that would not be persuaded to mourn for themselves; and, since there were none that had so much sense as to join with them, he weeps in secret, and cries out, *Woe is me!* In mournful times it becomes us to be of a mournful spirit. But it may be taken as the language of the people, considered as a body, and therefore speaking as a single person. The prophet puts into their mouths the words they *should* say; whether they would say them or no, they should have cause to say them. Some among them would thus bemoan themselves, and all of them, at last, would be forced to do it.

1. They lament that the affliction is very great, and it is very hard to them to bear it, the more hard because they had not been used to trouble and now did not expect it: “*Woe is me for my hurt*, not for what I fear, but for what I feel;” for they are not, as some are, worse frightened than hurt. Nor

is it a slight hurt, but *a wound*, a wound that is *grievous*, very painful, and very threatening.

2. That there is no remedy but patience. They cannot help themselves, but must sit still, and abide it: *But I said*, when I was about to complain of my wound, To what purpose is it to complain? *This is a grief, and I must bear it* as well as I can. This is the language rather of a sullen than of a gracious submission, of a patience per force, not a patience by principle. When I am in affliction I should say, “This is an evil, and I will bear it, because it is the will of God that I should, because his wisdom has appointed this for me and his grace will make it work for good to me.” This is *receiving evil* at the hand of God, ^{<10>}Job 2:10. But to say, “This is an evil, *and I must bear it*, because I cannot help it,” is but a brutal patience, and argues a want of those good thoughts of God which we should always have, even under our afflictions, saying, not only, God can and will do what he pleases, but, *Let him do what he pleases*.

3. That the country was quite ruined and wasted (v. 20): *My tabernacle is spoiled*. Jerusalem, though a strong city, now proves as weak and moveable as a tabernacle or tent, when it is taken down, and *all its cords*, that should keep it together, are *broken*. Or by the tabernacle here may be meant the temple, the sanctuary, which at first was but a tabernacle, and is now called so, as then it was sometimes called a temple. Their church is ruined, and all the supports of it fail. It was a general destruction of church and state, city and country, and there were none to repair these desolations. “*My children have gone forth of me; some have fled, others are slain, others carried into captivity, so that as to me, they are not; I am likely to be an outcast, and to perish for want of shelter; for there is none to stretch forth my tent any more, none of my children that used to do it for me, none to set up my curtains, none to do me any service.*” *Jerusalem has none to guide her of all her sons,* ^{<18>}Isaiah 51:18.

4. That the rulers took no care, nor any proper measures, for the redress of their grievances and the re-establishing of heir ruined state (v. 21): *The pastors have become brutish*. When the tents, the shepherds' tents, were spoiled (v. 20), it concerned the shepherds to look after them; but they were foolish shepherds. Their kings and princes had no regard at all for the public welfare, seemed to have no sense of the desolations of the land, but were quite besotted and infatuated. The priests, the pastors of God's tabernacle, did a great deal towards the ruin of religion, but nothing

towards the repair of it. They are *brutish* indeed, for *they have not sought the Lord*; they have neither made their peace with him nor their prayer to him; they had no eye to him and his providence, in their management of affairs; they neither acknowledged the judgment, nor expected the deliverance, to come from his hand. Note, Those are brutish people that do not seek the Lord, that live without prayer, and live without God in the world. Every man is either a saint or a brute. But it is sad indeed with a people when their pastors, that should *feed them with knowledge and understanding*, are themselves thus brutish. And what comes of it? *Therefore they shall not prosper*; none of their attempts for the public safety shall succeed. Note, Those cannot expect to prosper who do not by faith and prayer take God along with them in all their ways. And, when the pastors are brutish, what else can be expected but that *all their flocks should be scattered*? For, *if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into the ditch*. The ruin of a people is often owing to the brutishness of their pastors.

5. That the report of the enemy's approach was very dreadful (v. 22): *The noise of the bruit has come*, of the report which at first was but whispered and bruited abroad, as wanting confirmation. It now proves too true: *A great commotion arises out of the north country*, which threatens to make *all the cities of Judah desolate and a den of dragons*; for they must all expect to be sacrificed to the avarice and fury of the Chaldean army. And what else can that place expect but to be made a den of dragons which has by sin made itself a den of thieves?

III. He turns to God, and addresses himself to him, finding it to little purpose to speak to the people. It is some comfort to poor ministers that, if men will not hear them, God will; and to him they have liberty of access at all times. Let them close their preaching with prayer, as the prophet, and then they shall have no reason to say that they have laboured in vain.

1. The prophet here acknowledges the sovereignty and dominion of the divine Providence, that by it, and not by their own will and wisdom, the affairs both of nations and particular persons are directed and determined, v. 23. This is an article of our faith which it is very proper for us to make confession of at the throne of grace when we are complaining of an affliction or suing for a mercy: "*O Lord, I know, and believe, that the way of man is not in himself*; Nebuchadnezzar did not come of himself against our land, but by the direction of a divine Providence." We cannot of

ourselves do any thing for our own relief, unless God work with us and command deliverance for us; for *it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps*, though he seem in his walking to be perfectly at liberty and to choose his own way. Those that had promised themselves a long enjoyment of their estates and possessions were made to know, by sad experience, when they were thrown out by the Chaldeans, that *the way of man is not in himself*; he designs which men lay deep, and think well-formed, are dashed to pieces in a moment. We must all apply this to ourselves, and mix faith with it, that we are not at our own disposal, but under a divine direction; the event is often overruled so as to be quite contrary to our intention and expectation. We are not masters of our own way, nor can we think that every thing should be according to our mind; we must therefore refer ourselves to God and acquiesce in his will. Some think that the prophet here mentions this with a design to make this comfortable use of it, that, the way of the Chaldean army being not in themselves, they can do no more than God permits them; he can set bounds to thee proud waves, and say, *Hitherto they shall come, and no further*. And a quieting consideration it is that the most formidable enemies have *no power against us but what is given them from above*.

2. He deprecates the divine wrath, that it might not fall upon God's Israel, v. 24. He speaks not for himself only, but on the behalf of his people: *O Lord, correct me, but with judgment* (in measure and with moderation, and in wisdom, no more than is necessary for driving out of the foolishness that is bound up in our hearts), *not in thy anger* (how severe soever the correction be, let it come from thy love, and be designed for our good and made to work for good), not to *bring us to nothing*, but to bring us home to thyself. Let it not be according to the desert of our sins, but according to the design of thy grace. Note,

(1.) We cannot pray in faith that we may never be corrected, while we are conscious to ourselves that we need correction and deserve it, and know that as many as God loves he chastens.

(2.) The great thing we should dread in affliction is the wrath of God. Say not, Lord, *do not correct me*, but, Lord, do not correct me *in anger*; for that will infuse wormwood and gall into the affliction and misery that will *bring us to nothing*. We may bear the smart of his rod, but we cannot bear the weight of his wrath.

3. He imprecates the divine wrath against the oppressors and persecutors of Israel (v. 25): *Pour out thy fury upon the heathen that know thee not.* This prayer does not come from a spirit of malice or revenge, nor is it intended to prescribe to God whom he should execute his judgments upon, or in what order; but,

(1.) It is an appeal to his justice. As if he had said, “Lord, we are a provoking people; but are there not other nations that are more so? And shall we only be punished? We are thy children, and may expect a fatherly correction; but they are thy enemies, and against them we have reason to think thy indignation should be, not against us.” This is God's usual method. The *cup put into the hands* of God's people is *full of mixtures*, mixtures of mercy; but the *dregs of the cup* are reserved for *the wicked of the earth*, let them *wring them out*, ^{<978>}Psalm 75:8.

(2.) It is a prediction of God's judgments upon all the impenitent enemies of his church and kingdom. If *judgment begin thus at the house of God*, what shall be *the end of those that obey not his gospel?* ^{<997>}1 Peter 4:17. See how the heathen are described, on whom God's fury shall be poured out.

[1.] They are strangers to God, and are content to be so. they *know him not*, nor desire to know him. They are families that live without prayer, that have nothing of religion among them; they *call not on God's name*. Those that restrain prayer prove that they know not God; for those that know him will seek to him and entreat his favour.

[2.] They are persecutors of the people of God and are resolved to be so. *They have eaten up Jacob* with as much greediness as those that are hungry eat their necessary food; nay, with more, they have *devoured him, and consumed him, and made his habitation desolate*, that is, the land in which he lives, or the temple of God, which is his habitation among them. Note, What the heathen, in their rage and malice, do against the people of God, though therein he makes use of them as the instruments of his correction, yet he will, for that, make them the objects of his indignation. This prayer is taken from ^{<996>}Psalm 79:6, 7.