

# CHAPTER 2

The second alphabetical elegy is set to the same mournful tune with the former, and the substance of it is much the same; it begins with Ecah, as that did, “How sad is our case! Alas for us!”

**I.** Here is the anger of Zion's God taken notice of as the cause of her calamities (v. 1-9).

**II.** Here is the sorrow of Zion's children taken notice of as the effect of her calamities (v. 10-19).

**III.** The complaint is made to God, and the matter referred to his compassionate consideration (v. 20-22). The hand that wounded must make whole.

## ☞ LAMENTATIONS 2:1-9

### CAUSE OF ZION'S CALAMITIES

It is a very sad representation which is here made of the state of God's church, of Jacob and Israel, of Zion and Jerusalem; but the emphasis in these verses seems to be laid all along upon the hand of God in the calamities which they were groaning under. The grief is not so much that such and such things are done as that God has done them, that he appears angry with them; it is he that chastens them, and chastens them *in wrath* and *in his hot displeasure*; he has become their enemy, and fights against them; and this, this is the wormwood and the gall in the affliction and the misery.

**I.** Time was when God's delight was in his church, and he appeared to her, and appeared for her, as a friend. But now his displeasure is against her; he is angry with her, and appears and acts against her as an enemy. This is frequently repeated here, and sadly lamented. What he has done he has done *in his anger*; this makes the present day a melancholy day indeed with us, that it is *the day of his anger* (v. 1), and again (v. 2) it is *in his wrath*, and (v. 3) it is *in his fierce anger*, that he has *thrown down and cut off*, and (v. 6) *in the indignation of his anger*. Note, To those who know

how to value God's favour nothing appears more dreadful than his anger; corrections in love are easily borne, but rebukes in love wound deeply. It is God's wrath that *burns against Jacob like a flaming fire* (v. 3), and it is a consuming fire; it *devours round about*, devours all her honours, all her comforts. This is the *fury that is poured out like fire* (v. 4), like the fire and brimstone which were rained upon Sodom and Gomorrah; but it was their sin that kindled this fire. God is such a tender Father to his children that we may be sure he is never angry with them but when they provoke him, and give him cause to be angry; nor is he ever angry more than there is cause for. God's covenant with them was that if they would *obey his voice* he would be *an enemy to their enemies* (<sup>4222</sup>Exodus 23:22), and he had been so as long as they kept close to him; but now he is an enemy to them; at least he is *as an enemy*, v. 5. He has *bent his bow like an enemy*, v. 4. He stood *with his right hand* stretched out against them, and a sword drawn in it *as an adversary*. God is not really an enemy to his people, no, not when he is angry with them and corrects them in anger. We may be sorely displeased against our dearest friends and relations, whom yet we are far from having an enmity to. But sometimes he is *as an enemy* to them, when all his providences concerning them seem in outward appearance to have a tendency to their ruin, when every thing made against them and nothing for them. But, blessed be God, Christ is *our peace*, our peacemaker, who has slain the enmity, and in him we may *agree with our adversary*, which it is our wisdom to do, since it is in vain to contend with him, and he offers us advantageous conditions of peace.

**II.** Time was when God's church appeared very bright, and illustrations, and considerable among the nations; but now *the Lord has covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud* (v. 1), a dark cloud, which is very terrible to himself, and through which she cannot see his face; *a thick cloud* (so that word signifies), a *black cloud*, which eclipses all her glory and conceals her excellency; not such a cloud as that under which God conducted them through the wilderness, or that in which God took possession of the temple and filled it with his glory: no, that side of the cloud is now turned towards them which was turned towards the Egyptians in the Red Sea. The *beauty of Israel is now cast down from heaven to the earth*; their princes (<sup>411B-2</sup>Samuel 1:19), their religious worship, their beauty of holiness, all that which recommended them to the affection and esteem of their neighbours and rendered them amiable, which had *lifted them up to heaven*, was now withered and gone, because God had covered it with a cloud. He has *cut*

*off all the horn of Israel* (v. 3), all her beauty and majesty (<sup><127></sup>Psalm 132:17), all her plenty and fulness, and all her power and authority. They had, in their pride, lifted up their horn against God, and therefore justly will God *cut off their horn*. He disabled them to resist and oppose their enemies; he *turned back their right hand*, so that they were not able to follow the blow which they gave nor to ward off the blow which was given them. What can their right hand do against the enemy when God draws it back, and withers it, as he did Jeroboam's? Thus was the *beauty of Israel cast down*, when a people famed for courage were not able to stand their ground nor make good their post.

**III.** Time was when Jerusalem and the cities of Judah were strong and well fortified, were trusted to by the inhabitants and let alone by the enemy as impregnable. But now the lord has in anger *swallowed them up*; they are quite gone; the forts and barriers are taken away, and the invaders meet with no opposition: the stately structures, which were their strength and beauty, are pulled down and laid waste.

**1.** The Lord has in anger *swallowed up all the habitations of Jacob* (v. 2), both the cities and the country houses; they are burnt, or otherwise destroyed, so totally ruined that they seem to have been *swallowed up*, and no remains left of them. He has *swallowed up, and has not pitied*. One would have thought it a pity that such sumptuous houses, so well built, so well furnished, should be quite destroyed, and that some pity should have been had for the poor inhabitants that were thus dislodged and driven to wander; but God's wonted compassion seemed to fail: *He has swallowed up Israel*, as a lion swallows up his prey, v. 5.

**2.** He has *swallowed up* not only her common habitations, but her palaces, *all her palaces*, the habitations of their princes and great men (v. 5), though those were most stately, and strong, and rich, and well guarded. God's judgments, when they come with commission, level palaces with cottages, and as easily swallow them up. If palaces be polluted with sin, as theirs were, let them expect to be visited with a curse, which shall *consume them, with the timber thereof and the stones thereof*, <sup><384></sup>Zechariah 5:4.

**3.** He had destroyed not only their dwelling-places, but their *strong-holds*, their castles, citadels, and places of defence. These he has *thrown down in his wrath, and brought them to the ground*; for shall they stand in the way

of his judgments, and give check to the progress of them? No; let them drop like leaves in autumn; let them be rased to the foundations, and made to touch the *ground*, v. 2. And again (v. 5), *He has destroyed his strong-holds*; for what strength could they have against God? And thus he *increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation*, for they could not but be in a dreadful consternation when they saw all their defence departed from them. This is again insisted on, v. 7-9. In order to the *swallowing up of her palaces*, he has *given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces*, which were their security, and, when they are *broken down*, the palaces themselves are soon broken into. The walls of palaces cannot protect them, unless God himself be a wall of fire round about them. This God did *in his anger*, and yet he has done it deliberately. It is the result of a previous purpose, and is done by a wise and steady providence; for the Lord has *purposed to destroy the wall of the daughter of Zion*; he brought the Chaldean army in on purpose to do this execution. Note, Whatever desolations God makes in his church, they are all according to his counsels; he *performs the thing that is appointed for us*, even that which makes most against us. But, when it is done, he has *stretched out a line*, a measuring line, to do it exactly and by measure: hitherto the destruction shall go, and no further; no more shall be cut off than what is marked to be so. Or it is meant of *the line of confusion* (<sup>2341</sup>Isaiah 34:11), a levelling line; for he will go on with his work; he *has not withdrawn his hand from destroying*, that right hand which he stretched out against his people as *an adversary*, v. 4. As far as the purpose went the performance shall go, and his hand shall accomplish his counsel to the utmost, and not be withdrawn. Therefore he made the *rampart and the wall*, which the people had rejoiced in and upon which perhaps they had *made merry*, to *lament*, and they *languished together*; the *walls and the ramparts*, or bulwarks, upon them, fell together, and were left to condole with one another on their fall. *Her gates* are gone in an instant, so that one would think they were sunk into the ground with their own weight, and *he has destroyed and broken her bars*, those bars of Jerusalem's gates which formerly *he had strengthened*, <sup>473</sup>Psalms 147:13. Gates and bars will stand us in no stead when God has withdrawn his protection.

**IV.** Time was when their government flourished, their princes made a figure, their kingdom was great among the nations, and the balance of power was on their side; but now it is quite otherwise: *He has polluted the*

kingdom and the princes thereof, v. 2. They had first polluted themselves with their idolatries, and then God dealt with them as with polluted things; he threw them to the dunghill, the fittest place for them. he has given up their glory, which was looked upon as sacred (that is a character we give to majesty), to be trampled upon and profaned; and no marvel that the king and the priest, whose characters were always deemed venerable and inviolable, are despised by every body, when God has, *in the indignation of his anger, despised the king and the priest*, v. 6. He has abandoned them; he looks upon them as no longer worthy of the honours conveyed to them by the covenants of royalty and priesthood, but as having forfeited both; and then Zedekiah the king was used despitefully, and Seraiah the chief priest put to death as a malefactor. The crown has fallen from their heads, for *her king and her princes are among the Gentiles*, prisoners among them, insulted over by them (v. 9), and treated not only as common persons, but as the basest, without any regard to their character. Note, It is just with God to debase those by his judgments who have by sin debased themselves.

**V.** Time was when the ordinances of God were administered among them in their power and purity, and they had those tokens of God's presence with them; but now those were taken from them, that part of the *beauty of Israel* was gone which was indeed their greatest beauty.

**1.** The ark was God's footstool, under the mercy-seat, between the cherubim; this was of all others the most sacred symbol of God's presence (it is called his *footstool*, <sup><330></sup>1 Chronicles 28:2; <sup><399></sup>Psalms 99:5; 132:7); there the Shechinah rested, and with an eye to this Israel was often protected and saved; but now he *remembered not his footstool*. The ark itself was suffered, as it should seem, to fall into the hands of the Chaldeans. God, being angry, threw that away; for it shall be no longer his footstool; the earth shall be so, as it had been before the ark was, <sup><381></sup>Isaiah 66:1. Of what little value are the tokens of his presence when his presence is gone! Nor was this the first time that God gave his ark into captivity, <sup><398></sup>Psalms 78:61. God and his kingdom can stand without that footstool.

**2.** Those that ministered in holy things had been *pleasant to the eye in the tabernacle of the daughter of Zion* (v. 4); they had been *purser than snow, whiter than mile* (<sup><201></sup>Jeremiah 4:7); none more pleasant in the eyes of all good people than those that did the service of the tabernacle. But now these are slain, and their *blood is mingled with their sacrifices*. Thus is the

priest despised as well as the king. Note, When those that were pleasant to the eye in Zion's tabernacle are slain God must be acknowledged in it; he has done it, and the *burning which the Lord has kindled must be bewailed* but the whole house of Israel, as in the case of Nadab and Abihu, <sup><306></sup>Leviticus 10:6.

**3.** The temple was God's tabernacle (as the tabernacle, while that was in being, was called *his temple*, <sup><370></sup>Psalm 27:4) and this *he has violently taken away* (v. 6); he has plucked up the stakes of it and cut the cords; it shall be no more a tabernacle, much less his; he has *taken it away*, as the keeper of a garden takes away his hovel or shade, when he has done with it and has no more occasion for it; he takes it down as easily, as speedily, and with a little regret and reluctance as if it were but a *cottage in a vineyard or a lodge in a garden of cucumbers* (<sup><218></sup>Isaiah 1:8), but a *booth which the keeper makes*, <sup><378></sup>Job 27:18. When men profane God's tabernacle it is just with him to take it from them. God has justly refused to *smell their solemn assemblies* (Amos v. 21); they had provoked him to withdraw from them, and then no marvel that he has *destroyed his places of the assembly*; what should they do with the places when the services had become an abomination? He has now *abhorred his sanctuary* (v. 7); it has been defiled with sin, that only thing which he hates, and for the sake of that he abhors even his sanctuary, which he had delighted in and called *his rest for ever*, <sup><324></sup>Psalm 132:14. Thus he had *done to Shiloh*. Now the enemies have made as great a *noise* of revelling and blaspheming *in the house of the Lord* as ever had been made with the temple-songs and music *in the day of a solemn feast*, <sup><370></sup>Psalm 74:4. Some, by the *places of the assembly* (v. 6), understand not only the temple, but the synagogues, and the schools of the prophets, which the enemy had *burnt up*, <sup><378></sup>Psalm 74:8.

**4.** The solemn feasts and the sabbaths had been carefully remembered, and the people constantly put in mind of them; but now the Lord has *caused those to be forgotten*, not only in the country, among those that lived at a distance, but even in Zion itself; for there were none left to remember them, nor were there the places left where they used to be observed. Now that Zion was in ruins no difference was made between sabbath time and other times; every day was a day of mourning, so that all the *solemn feasts were forgotten*. Note, It is just with God to deprive those of the benefit and comfort of sabbaths and solemn feasts who have not duly valued them, nor conscientiously observed them, but have profaned them, which was one of the sins that the Jews were often charged with. Those that have *seen the*

days of the Son of man, and slighted them, may desire to see one of those days and not be permitted, <sup><472></sup>Luke 17:22.

5. The altar that had sanctified their gifts is now cast off, for God will no more accept their gifts, nor be honoured by their sacrifices, v. 7. The altar was *the table of the Lord*, but God will no longer keep house among them; he will neither feast them nor feast with them.

6. They had been blest with prophets and teachers of the law; but now *the law is no more* (v. 9); it is no more read by the people, no more expounded by the scribes; the tables of the law are gone with the ark; the book of the law is taken from them, and the people are forbidden to have it. What should those do with Bibles who had made no better improvement of them when they had them? *Her prophets also find no vision from the Lord; God answers them no more by prophets and dreams*, which was the melancholy case of Saul, <sup><485></sup>1 Samuel 28:15. They had persecuted God's prophets, and despised the visions they had from the Lord, and therefore it is just with God to say that they shall have no more prophets, no more visions. Let them go to the prophets that had flattered and deceived them with visions of their own hearts, for they shall have none from God to comfort them, or tell them *how long*. Those that misuse God's prophets justly lose them.

## <sup><210></sup>LAMENTATIONS 2:10-22

### COMPLICATED SORROWS

Justly are these called *Lamentations*, and they are very pathetic ones, the expressions of grief in perfection, mourning and woe, and nothing else, like the contents of Ezekiel's roll, <sup><210></sup>Ezekiel 2:10.

I. Copies of lamentations are here presented and they are painted to the life.

1. The judges and magistrates, who used to appear in robes of state, have laid them aside, or rather are stripped of them, and put on the habit of mourners (v. 10); the elders now sit no longer in the judgment-seats, the *thrones of the house of David*, but they *sit upon the ground*, having no seat to repose themselves in, or in token of great grief, as Job's friends *sat with*

him upon the ground, <sup><2113></sup>Job 2:13. They open not their mouth in the gate, as usual, to give their opinion, but they *keep silence*, overwhelmed with grief, and not knowing what to say. They have *cast dust upon their heads, and girded themselves with sackcloth*, as deep mourners used to do; they had lost their power and wealth, and that made the grieve thus. *Ploratur lachrymis amissa pecunia veris — Genuine are the tears which we shed over lost property.*

2. The young ladies, who used to dress themselves so richly, and *walk with stretched-forth necks* (<sup><2116></sup>Isaiah 3:16), now are humbled; *The virgins of Jerusalem hang down their heads to the ground*; those are made to know sorrow who seemed to bid defiance to it and were always disposed to be merry.

3. The prophet himself is a pattern to the mourners, v. 11. His *eyes do fail with tears*; he has wept till he can weep no more, has almost wept his eyes out, wept himself blind. Nor are the inward impressions of grief short of the outward expressions. *His bowels are troubled*, as they were when he saw these calamities coming (<sup><2119></sup>Jeremiah 4:19, 20), which, one would think, might have excused him now; but even he, to whom they were no surprise, felt them an insupportable grief, to such a degree that his *liver is poured out on the earth*; he felt himself a perfect colliquation; all his entrails were melted and dissolved, as <sup><2124></sup>Psalms 22:14. Jeremiah himself had better treatment than his neighbours, better than he had had before from his own countrymen, nay, their destruction was his deliverance, their captivity his enlargement; the same that made them prisoners made him a favourite; and yet his private interests are swallowed up in a concern for the public, and he bewails the *destruction of the daughter of his people* as sensibly as if he himself had been the greatest sufferer in that common calamity. Note, The judgments of God upon the land and nation are to be lamented by us, though we, for our parts, may escape pretty well.

II. Calls to lamentation are here given: *The heart of the people cried unto the Lord*, v. 18. Some fear it was a cry, not of true repentance, but of bitter complaint; their heart was as full of grief as it could hold, and they gave vent to it in doleful shrieks and outcries, in which they made use of God's name; yet we will charitably suppose that many of them did in sincerity cry unto God for mercy in their distress; and the prophet bids them go on to do so: "*O wall of the daughter of Zion! either you that stand upon the wall, you watchmen on the walls* (<sup><2116></sup>Isaiah 62:6), when you see the

enemies encamped about the walls and making their approaches towards them, or *because of the wall* (that is the subject of the lamentation), because of the *breaking down of the wall* (which was not done till about a month after the city was taken), because of this further calamity, let *the daughter of Zion lament still.*” This was a thing which Nehemiah lamented long after, <sup>(100)</sup>Nehemiah 1:3, 4. “*Let tears run down like a river day and night, weep without intermission, give thyself no rest from weeping, let not the apple of thy eye cease.*” This intimates,

1. That the calamities would be continuing, and the causes of grief would frequently recur, and fresh occasion would be given them every day and every night to bemoan themselves.
2. That they would be apt, by degrees, to grow insensible and stupid under the hand of God, and would need to be still called upon to afflict their souls yet more and more, till their proud and hard hearts were thoroughly humbled and softened.

**III.** Causes for lamentation are here assigned, and the calamities that are to be bewailed are very particularly and pathetically described.

1. Multitudes perish by famine, a very sore judgment, and piteous is the case of those that fall under it. God had corrected them by scarcity of provisions through want of rain some time before (<sup>(240)</sup>Jeremiah 14:1), and they were not brought to repentance by that lower degree of this judgment, and therefore now by the straitness of the siege God brought it upon them in extremity; for,

(1.) The children died for hunger in their mothers' arms: *The children and sucklings*, whose innocent and helpless state entitles them to relief as soon as any, *swoon in the streets* (v. 11) *as the wounded* (v. 12), there being no food to be had for them; those that are starved die as surely as those that are stabbed. They lie a great while crying to their poor mothers for corn to feed them and wine to refresh them, for they are such as had been bred up to the use of wine and wanted it now; but there is none for them, so that at length *their soul is poured into their mothers' bosom*, and there they breathe their last. This is mentioned again (v. 19): *They faint for hunger in the top of every street.* Yet this is not the worst,

(2.) There were some little children that were slain by their mothers' hands and eaten, v. 20. Such was the scarcity of provision that the *women ate the*

fruit of their own bodies, even their children when they were but of a *span long*, according to the threatening, <sup><685></sup>Deuteronomy 28:53. The like was done in the siege of Samaria, <sup><1169></sup>2 Kings 6:29. Such extremities, nay, such barbarities, were they brought to by the famine. Let us, in our abundance, thank God that we have food convenient, not only for ourselves, but for our children.

**2.** Multitudes fall by the sword, which devours one as well as another, especially when it is in the hand of such cruel enemies as the Chaldeans were.

**(1.)** They spared no character, no, not the most distinguished; even the *priest and the prophet*, who of all men, one would think, might expect protection from heaven and veneration on earth, *are slain*, not abroad in the field of battle, where they are out of their place, as Hophni and Phinehas, but in *the sanctuary of the Lord*, the place of their business and which they hoped would be a refuge to them.

**(2.)** They spared no age, no, not those who, by reason of their tender or their decrepit age, were exempted from taking up the sword; for even they *perished by the sword*. “The young, who have not yet come to bear arms, and the old, who have had their *discharge*, *lie on the ground, slain in the streets*, till some kind hand is found that will bury them.”

**(3.)** They spared no sex: *My virgins and my young men have fallen by the sword*. In the most barbarous military executions that ever we read of the virgins were spared, and made part of the spoil (<sup><918></sup>Numbers 31:18, <sup><959></sup>Judges 5:30), but here the virgins were put to the sword, as well as the young men.

**(4.)** This was the *Lord's doing*; he suffered the sword of the Chaldeans to devour thus without distinction: *Thou has slain them in the day of thy anger*, for it is God that *kills and makes alive*, and saves alive, as he pleases. But that which follows is very harsh: *Thou has killed, and not pitied*; for his soul is *grieved for the misery of Israel*. The enemies that used them thus cruelly were such as he had both mustered and summoned (v. 22): “*Thou hast called in, as in a solemn day, my terrors round about*, that is, the Chaldeans, who are such a terror to me;” enemies crowded into Jerusalem now as thickly as ever worshippers used to do on a solemn festival, so that they were quite overpowered with numbers, and none escaped nor remained; Jerusalem was made a perfect slaughter-house.

Mothers are cut to the heart to see those whom they have taken such care of, and pains with, and whom they have been so tender of, thus inhumanly used, suddenly cut off, though not soon reared: *Those that I have swaddled, and brought up, has my enemy consumed*, as if they were brought forth for the murderer, like lambs for the butcher, <sup><393></sup>Hosea 9:13. Zion, who was a mother to them all, lamented to see those who were brought up in her courts, and under the tuition of her oracles, thus made a prey.

**3.** Their false prophets cheated them, v. 14. This was a thing which Jeremiah had lamented long before, and had observed with a great concern (<sup><2443></sup>Jeremiah 14:13): *Ah! Lord God, the prophets say unto them, You shall not see the sword*; and here he inserts it among his lamentations: *Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee*; they pretended to discover for thee, and then to discover to thee, the mind and will of God, to see *the visions of the Almighty* and then to speak his words; but they were all vain and foolish things; their visions were all their own fancies, and, if they thought they had any, it was only the product of a crazed head or a heated imagination, as appeared by what they delivered, which was all idle and impertinent: nay, it is most likely that they themselves knew that the visions they pretended were counterfeit, and all a sham, and made use of only to colour that which they designedly imposed upon the people with, that they might make an interest in them for themselves. They are thy prophets, not God's prophets; he never sent them, nor were they pastors after his heart, but the people set them up, told them what they should say, so that they were *prophets after their hearts*.

**(1.)** Prophets should tell people of their faults, should show them their sins, that they may bring them to repentance, and so prevent their ruin; but these prophets knew that would lose them the people's affections and contributions, and knew they could not reprove their hearers without reproaching themselves at the same time, and therefore *they have not discovered thy iniquity*; they saw it not themselves, or, if they did, saw so little evil in it, or danger from it, that they would not tell them of it, though that might have been a means, by taking away their iniquity, to turn away their captivity.

**(2.)** Prophets should warn people of the judgments of God coming upon them, but these *saw for them false burdens*; the messages they pretended to deliver to them from God they knew to be false, and falsely ascribed to

God; so that, by soothing them up in carnal security, they caused that banishment which, by plain dealing, they might have prevented.

**4.** Their neighbours laughed at them (v. 15): *All that pass by thee clap their hands at thee.* Jerusalem had made a great figure, got a great name, and borne a great sway, among the nations; it was the envy and terror of all about; and, when the city was thus reduced; they all (as men are apt to do in such a case) triumphed in its fall; *they hissed, and wagged the head,* pleasing themselves to see how much it had fallen from its former pretensions. *Is this the city* (said they) *that men called the perfection of beauty?* <sup><1981></sup>Psalm 50:2. How is it now the perfection of deformity! Where is all its beauty now? *Is this the city which was called the joy of the whole earth* (<sup><1982></sup>Psalm 48:2), which rejoiced in the gifts of God's bounty and grace more than any other place, and which all the earth rejoiced in? Where is all its joy now and all its glorying? It is a great sin thus to make a jest of others' miseries, and adds very much affliction to the afflicted.

**5.** Their enemies triumphed over them, v. 16. Those that wished ill to Jerusalem and her peace now vent their spite and malice, which before they concealed; they now *open their mouths,* nay, they widen them; they *hiss and gnash their teeth* in scorn and indignation; they triumph in their own success against her, and the rich prey they have got in making themselves masters of Jerusalem: “*We have swallowed her up;* it is our doing, and it is our gain; it is all our own now. Jerusalem shall never be either courted or feared as she has been. *Certainly this is the day that we have long looked for; we have found it; we have seen it; aha! so would we have it.*” Note, The enemies of the church are apt to take its shocks for its ruins, and to triumph in them accordingly; but they will find themselves deceived; *for the gates of hell shall not prevail against the church.*

**6.** Their God, in all this, appeared against them (v. 17): *The Lord has done that which he had devised.* The destroyers of Jerusalem could have *no power against her unless it were given them from above.* They are but the sword in God's hand; it is he that has *thrown down, and has not pitied.* “In this controversy of his with us we have not had the usual instances of his compassion towards us.” *He has caused they enemy to rejoice over thee* (see <sup><1981></sup>Job 30:11); *he has set up the horn of thy adversaries,* has given them power and matter for pride. This is indeed the highest aggravation of the trouble, that God has become their enemy, and yet it is the strongest

argument for patience under it; we are bound to submit to what God does, for,

**(1.)** It is the performance of his purpose: *The Lord has done that which he had devised*; it is done with counsel and deliberation, not rashly, or upon a sudden resolve; it is the *evil that he has framed* (<sup>2481</sup>Jeremiah 18:11), and we may be sure it is framed so as exactly to answer the intention. What God devises against his people is designed for them, and so it will be found in the issue.

**(2.)** It is the accomplishment of his predictions; it is the fulfilling of the scripture; he has now *put in execution his word that he had commanded in the days of old*. When he gave them his law by Moses he told them what judgments he would certainly inflict upon them if they transgressed that law; and now that they have been guilty of the transgression of this law he had executed the sentence of it, according to <sup>1836</sup>Leviticus 26:16, etc., <sup>685</sup>Deuteronomy 28:15. Note, In all the providences of God concerning his church it is good to take notice of the fulfilling of his word; for there is an exact agreement between the judgments of God's hand and the judgments of his mouth, and when they are compared they will mutually explain and illustrate each other.

**IV.** Comforts for the cure of these lamentations are here sought for and prescribed.

**1.** They are sought for and enquired after, v. 13. The prophet seeks to find out some suitable acceptable words to say to her in this case: *Wherewith shall I comfort thee, O virgin! daughter of Zion?* Note, We should endeavour to comfort those whose calamities we lament, and, when our passions have made the worst of them, our wisdom should correct them and labour to make the best of them; we should study to make our sympathies with or afflicted friends turn to their consolation. Now the two most common topics of comfort, in case of affliction, are here tried, but are laid by because they would not hold. We commonly endeavour to comfort our friends by telling them,

**(1.)** That their case is not singular, nor without precedent; there are many whose trouble is greater, and lies heavier upon them, than theirs does; but Jerusalem's case will not admit this argument: "*What thing shall I liken to thee, or what shall I equal to thee, that I may comfort thee?*" What city, what country, is there, whose case is parallel to thine? What witness shall I

produce to prove an example that will reach thy present calamitous state? Alas! there is none, no sorrow like thine, because there is none whose honour was like thine.”

(2.) We tell them that their case is not desperate, but that it may easily be remedied; but neither will that be admitted here, upon a view of human probabilities; for *thy breach is great, like the sea*, like the breach which the sea sometimes makes upon the land, which cannot be repaired, but still grows wider and wider. Thou art wounded, and *who shall heal thee?* No wisdom nor power of man can repair the desolations of such a broken shattered state. It is to no purpose therefore to administer any of these common cordials; therefore,

2. The method of cure prescribed is to address themselves to God, and by a penitent prayer to commit their case to him, and to be instant and constant in such prayers (v. 19): “*Arise out of thy dust, out of thy despondency, cry out in the night*, watch unto prayer; when others are asleep, be thou upon thy knees, importunate with God for mercy; *in the beginning of the watches*, of each of the four watches, of the night (let thy eyes prevent them, <sup>119:148</sup> Psalm 119:148), then *pour out thy heart like water before the Lord*, be free and full in prayer, be sincere and serious in prayer, open thy mind, spread thy case before the Lord; *lift up thy hands towards him* in holy desire and expectation; beg for *the life of thy young children*. These poor lambs, what have they done? <sup>2 Samuel 24:17</sup> 2 Samuel 24:17. Take with you words, take with you these words (v. 20), *Behold, O Lord! and consider to whom thou hast done this*, with whom thou hast dealt thus. Are they not thy own, the seed of Abraham thy friend and of Jacob thy chosen? Lord, take their case into thy compassionate consideration!” Note, Prayer is a salve for every sore, even the sorest, a remedy for every malady, even the most grievous. And our business in prayer is not to prescribe, but to subscribe to the wisdom and will of God; to refer our case to him, and then to leave it with him. *Lord, behold and consider, and thy will be done.*