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**[JEREMIAH-DANIEL](https://gracegems.org/Simeon/simeons_devotional_commentaries.htm)**

JEREMIAH

[Jeremiah 2:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 2.4-6)

DISCOURSE 1026

THE INGRATITUDE OF MEN

[Jeremiah 2:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 2.4-6). Hear you the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: Thus says the Lord, What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain? Neither said they, Where is the Lord, that brought us up out of the land of Egypt?

HOW marvelous is the condescension of Almighty God! There is not in the universe a man that would bear with his fellow-man as God bears with his people. Amidst all the indignities that they offer him, he follows them with entreaties, reasonings, expostulations, if by any means he may prevail upon them to turn to him, and thus to avert from themselves his merited displeasure. In my text, all Israel are challenged by him to assign a reason for their contemptuous treatment of him. As by the Prophet Micah he says, "O my people, what have I done unto you? and wherein have I wearied you? testify against me [Micah 6:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Micah 6.3);" so here he challenges them all to say, "What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?"

Here we are called to consider,

I. The complaint he makes—

Grievous, indeed, had been the departure of God's people from him, and their insuperable attachment to idols. Jeremiah says of them: "It is the land of graven images: "they are mad upon their idols [Jeremiah 50:38](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 50.38)." And this was the more wonderful, because they believed that Jehovah had brought them out of Egypt, and led them through the wilderness, and established them in Canaan; and yet they did not, as one might have supposed, desire to know and serve Him, but turned their backs upon him, and sought in preference "the vanities of the Heathen [Deuteronomy 32:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 32.21). [Jeremiah 14:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 14.22)," even their idols of wood and stone.

But if God utters this complaint against his ancient people, how much more justly may he urge it against us. For there is in us, alas!

1. The same folly—

What has been the uniform tenor of our lives, but one constant state of departure from God, and a preferring of every vanity before him? True, we have not bowed down to idols of wood and stone: but we have cared for nothing, yes, and thought of nothing, but the pleasures, or riches, or honors of this vain world. Look at persons in early youth; see them growing up to manhood; see them in full maturity of mind and body; yes, look at them when grey hairs are come upon them, yes, and when bowed down with the infirmities of age; what is it they are seeking after? and what is it to which they look for satisfaction? It is the world, in some shape or other. Though they have found all that they ever enjoyed to be, in fact, nothing but "vanity and vexation of spirit," yet they go on in the same infatuated course from year to year, withholding their hearts from God, who alone can make them happy, and setting their affections upon things which never did, nor ever can, administer to their comfort. In a word, "they forsake God, the fountain of living waters, and hew out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water verse 13".

2. The same ingratitude—

If their ingratitude was base, who inquired not after Him who had redeemed them from Egypt, what must ours be, who have been redeemed from death and Hell; and redeemed, too, not as Israel, by a mere act of power, but by the blood and righteousness of our incarnate God! Consider, in reference to the points specified in the passage before us, from what bondage we have been delivered; what provision God has made for us in the way; and what a rest he has prepared for us at the end verse 6, 7. What were the afflictions of Egypt, in comparison of the miseries of Hell? And what were the cloudy pillar for their direction, and the manna and water for their support, in comparison of the in-dwelling of the Spirit of God in our souls, as our Guide, our Sanctifier, and our Comforter? And what was a short possession of Canaan, in comparison of an eternal inheritance in Heaven? What the Jews enjoyed was a mere shadow only, of which we possess the substance: and all this bought for us by the precious blood of Christ, who laid down his life for us?

Now, it might well be supposed that we should be continually inquiring after this Savior; and that we should not have so much as a wish but to know him, love him, serve him, glorify him, and enjoy him. But has this been the case with us? Have we not, on the contrary, passed days, weeks, months, and years, without any anxious desire after him, or any diligent pursuit of him? Look back, I pray you, and see what has been the state of your souls, from your youth up even to the present moment. Compare your feelings about the things of this world, its cares, pleasures, vanities; and say whether they have not engrossed your minds far more than the Lord Jesus, and all the wonders of redeeming love. Tell me, then, What can exceed your ingratitude? and how justly may God be filled with indignation against you!.

From this complaint, we pass on to notice,

II. His challenge in relation to it—

"What iniquity have your fathers found in me," to justify such conduct towards me?: This was altogether unanswerable by them: but how much more so by us!

I now, in God's name, challenge every one of you to say, What have you ever found in the Lord Jesus Christ that merits such treatment at your hands?

1. Have you ever found him a hard Master?

The Jews might have said, that God imposed "a yoke upon them, which neither they nor their fathers were ever able to bear:" but can you speak thus of Christ's yoke? Has he not declared, and do not your consciences attest, that "his yoke is easy, and his burden light? Truly, there is not one of his commandments that is grievous;" not one "in the keeping of which you will not receive" a present, as well as an eternal, "great reward."

2. Have you found him, in any one respect, less gracious or merciful than he professed to be?

Where is there a truly penitent soul that he ever spurned from his footstool?: Where is there one who ever cried to him for help, and did not find his grace sufficient for him?: Who ever delighted himself in him, and did not experience a reciprocation of his love?: And whom did he ever leave or forsake, provided he, on his part, "cleaved with full purpose of heart unto him?": May he not address every one of you in the words nearly following my text; "O generation! Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? Why then say you, We are lords; we will come no more unto you verse 31." Yes, Brethren, I challenge you, and God himself invites the whole world to sit in judgment, and decide the controversy between us: "O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard: What could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done in it? Why, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes [Isaiah 5:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 5.3-4)."

Tell me then,

1. What will you say in justification of yourselves?

Are you not guilty? and have you so much as a shadow of an excuse for your base conduct? When the Lord Jesus, at the Last Day, shall call you to account, and say, Why did you prefer every vanity before me?: Why did not all the wonders which I had wrought for you, in bearing your sins and expiating your guilt, find a place in your minds, and constrain you to surrender up yourselves to me?: Tell me, will not your mouth be shut? Will you not then be amazed at the iniquity that was in you?: I pray you, then, put aside all your self-vindicating delusions, and cast yourselves at the feet of Jesus, crying, "Save, Lord, or I perish!"

2. What line of conduct will you henceforth pursue?

Will you go on in your neglect of God and his Christ, and in a determined pursuit of earthly vanities? I trust you will not. I do hope that you will see how unreasonable such conduct is, and will from this time turn unto God with your whole hearts. And see, for your encouragement, how rich are the offers of his grace! He says concerning you, "You have not called upon me, O Jacob; but you have been weary of me, O Israel. I have not caused you to serve with an offering, nor wearied you with incense; but you have made me to serve with your sins, and wearied me with your iniquities, I, even I, am he who (What? will pour out my judgments upon you? No: but that) blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and will not remember your sins, Put me in remembrance (of this promise): let us plead together: "declare you (your affiance in it), that you may be justified [Isaiah 43:22-26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 43.22-26)." Truly, it seems incredible that God, that God whom we have so offended, should address us in such terms as these. But these are the very words of God, addressed even to the most rebellious of the human race. Apply them, then, to your own souls, my Brethren, and seek now the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Then shall you, notwithstanding all your past wickedness, find favor with God, and "the blood of Jesus Christ his Son shall cleanse you from all sin."

[Jeremiah 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 2.12-13)

DISCOURSE 1027

THE FOUNTAIN OF LIVING WATERS

[Jeremiah 2:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 2.12-13). Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be very desolate, says the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

RELIGION may be considered as of two kinds, theoretical and practical. In the term theoretical, I include everything that is necessary to prove the truth of Christianity: and under the term practical, whatever is required of those who embrace it. To understand the theoretical part, is desirable; to perform the practical is necessary. The two kinds, however are not necessarily united: the theoretical may exist where the practical is disregarded; and the practical may exist, where the theoretical is unknown. Thousands of pious persons have neither leisure nor talent for collating manuscripts, or for weighing the evidences that may be adduced in favor of particular hypotheses: and to say that these cannot be religious, because they are wanting in critical acumen, would be as absurd as to say that a man cannot be honest, because he has not sufficient knowledge of the laws to be a judge. The unlettered Christian assumes the truth of Christianity; and he finds it true by its effects. And such persons may well refer to the effects, in proof of the truth of that religion which they profess. But it is one thing to refer to practical effects, and another to ground their faith on any transient feelings: This no man of reflection can do: the other, no man of piety can forbear. Feelings may be excited by erroneous notions, as well as by those which are just: but holiness, radical and universal holiness, can be produced by Christianity alone. We will appeal to all the religions that ever appeared upon the face of the earth, and ask, Whether any of them ever produced in their votaries such effects as were visible in Christ and his Apostles? The reason is plain: It is the Spirit of God who sanctifies: and he is promised to those only who believe in Christ: and consequently, his sanctifying energy, in its full extent at least, can be found in them alone. I grant that it would be wrong to rest the truth of our religion on that ground only; but surely it may properly be referred to, as an additional and corroborating proof of our religion. If this be not a proper test of our religion, whereby shall the superior excellency of Christianity be known? If the Bible produce no better effects than the Koran, I do not hesitate to say that it is no better than the Koran: but if its effects be such as no other religion can produce, then will those effects be, though not the only, yet a solid and important proof of our religion: and those who cannot enter into learned disquisitions about the credibility of the Scriptures, have reason to thank God that they have within themselves an evidence of the truth of Christianity, which the objections of infidels can never set aside The author does not mean, that this is the only evidence which unlearned men have of the Divine authority of the Bible. They, as well as the learned, have other grounds for their faith. They see the provision, which the Bible makes for their restoration to happiness, to be precisely such as their necessities required. They see also, that the purity of its commands has a wonderful tendency to elevate their nature, and to produce universal happiness: and these two things form in their minds a strong internal evidence of the Divine origin of the Bible; while the general and long-continued reception of that book among those who have spent their whole lives in investigating its authenticity, serves in their minds as a strong external evidence, that the Bible is really given by the inspiration of God. Nevertheless, their actual experience of a change of heart and life, wrought in them by the Bible, is to them a strong additional evidence of its Divine authority. Of course, this change cannot produce any conviction in the minds of others; because none but God and a man's own conscience can know the full extent of that change. The error lies in confounding the two kinds of religion. They are distinct; and they should be kept so.

To enter deeply into the theory of religion, much strength of intellect, much general knowledge, and much patient investigation are requisite. To have just, and even enlarged, views of the practical part, little is wanting but a humble teachable mind, enlightened by the truths, and sanctified by the influence, of the Gospel of Christ. The former, when possessed in the highest degree, will consist with all manner of evil tempers, and evil habits: the latter necessarily involves in it a change both of heart and life. The former is of importance principally to those, whose office calls them to defend the outworks of Christianity against the assaults of infidels: the latter is essential to the happiness of every individual. To the former your mind is now directed from time to time, by a zealous and learned professor The Revelation Herbert Marsh, D. D. now The Right Revelation Lord Bishop of Peterborough, of John's College, Lady Margaret's Professor of Divinity; who was giving Public Lectures in the University Church, on the principal subjects connected with Theological Learning, who is giving us the result of his own laborious researches, and commendably exerting his talents to promote among us the too much neglected study of sacred literature: to the latter, which we consider as more appropriate to the ordinary services of the Church, we would on the on the present occasion solicit your attention.

The subject which we would submit to your consideration, is a solemn charge, brought by God himself against his people of old. They were guilty of gross idolatry; and for that, in part, they are here reproved: the very heavens are summoned to bear witness against them, and to express with utter astonishment their abhorrence of such impiety. But another complaint against them was, that, in their straits and difficulties, they were ever looking to Egypt and Assyria for help, instead of relying on the Lord their God. Now if, in respect of gross idolatry, the passage be thought more immediately applicable to them, it will nevertheless, as a charge of spiritual idolatry, be found to contain ample matter of accusation against ourselves.

Let us then consider,

I. The evils which God lays to our charge;

II. The light in which they should be viewed.

I. The evils which God lays to our charge are, that we have forsaken him, and sought our happiness in the creature rather than in the Creator. He justly calls himself "the fountain of living waters:" for he is, and must be acknowledged to be, the only source of all good. What is there in the visible creation, that is not the product of his power, and the gift of his grace? or what is there that can afford satisfaction to the souls of men, or to the bright intelligences of Heaven, which does not emanate from his presence and love? If it be replied, that many sources of consolation are opened for us in the contemplations of reason, or the gratifications of sense; we answer, That the very capacity to communicate or receive pleasure is the fruit of his bounty; and that the creature can be no more to us than what he is pleased to make it.

What then does he require of us? He calls us to regard him as the one source of happiness to ourselves; to acknowledge him in all that we have; and to trust in him for all that we stand in need of. He calls us to resemble our first parents in their primitive state; yes, to resemble the very angels around his throne; and to delight ourselves in him, as our Friend, our Portion, "our eternal great Reward." By sin, indeed, we are become incapable of fulfilling these duties, or of experiencing these enjoyments, to the extent we ought: but still God desires to restore us to the felicity which we have lost, and to communicate to us all those blessings which we have forfeited by our transgressions.

Happy would it be for us, if we were duly impressed with this unmerited kindness and unbounded mercy. But, instead of seeking blessedness in him, we forsake him utterly: we cast off his yoke, we trample on his laws, we cast him even out of our thoughts.

Now let us see what is that rival which we prefer: it is the creature, justly called "a broken cistern." Some look for happiness in the gratifications of sense; others in the attainment of wealth or honor; others, in the pursuits of science or philosophy. We beg to be clearly understood when speaking on this subject: we do not mean to condemn pleasure, honor, wealth, or science, as evil in themselves: they all have their legitimate and appropriate use, and all may be pursued and enjoyed in perfect consistency with a good conscience. It is quite a mistake to think that religion is opposed to any of these things: on the contrary, it leads to the richest enjoyment of created good, and enjoins, instead of prohibiting, a diligent performance of every known duty. If subordinated to religion, and pursued for God, (we repeat it,) the pleasures of sense may be possessed, and the duties of every station discharged: nay more, we declare, that no man can be religious without endeavoring to fulfill the duties of his calling, whether they be commercial or military, philosophical or religious. But the evil incident to these things consists in making them the great end of our life; in suffering them to draw away our hearts from God, or to occupy that place in our affections which is due to God alone. It is in this view that we are to be understood as denominating the pursuit of these things "evil;" and we doubt not but that the consciences of all attest the truth of our statement, and accede fully to that apostolic, that incontrovertible position, that to "love and serve the creature more than the Creator" is idolatry.

We have digressed a little, for the purpose of being more clearly understood. Let us now return to our observation, that the creature, which is suffered to rival God in our affections, whatever it may be, is only "a broken cistern." Who will venture to say that he has ever found solid and permanent satisfaction in the creature? Who has lived any considerable time in the world without learning, by his own experience, the truth of Solomon's observation, that "all below the sun is vanity?" Yet, whatever our experience has been, we still follow our own delusions, and run after a phantom, which, while we think to apprehend it, eludes our grasp. We think that the pleasures of the world will make us happy: we follow them, and for a moment dream that we are happy; but we awake, and find that it was but a dream. We next try wealth or honor: we run the race; we attain the prize; and find at last that we have been following a shadow. We imagine, perhaps, that science and philosophy, being so much more elevated in their nature than the common concerns of life, will form a kind of Paradise for us: we labor, we press forward, we become distinguished for high attainments, but are as far off from solid happiness as ever; and are constrained to join our testimony to that of the wisest of men, after he had "sought out all things that are done under the Heaven," that even wisdom, with all its high attainments, is only "vanity and vexation of spirit."

Such is the charge which God has exhibited against us; and we appeal to every man's conscience for the truth of it. Is there so much as one among us whose conscience does not tell him, "You are the man?" We are God's people, as much as the Jews of old were: "He has nourished and brought us up, and yet we have rebelled against him: The ox knows his owner, and the donkey his master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not consider." Notwithstanding a secret conviction that God was the only source of real happiness, we could not prevail upon ourselves to seek after him: and notwithstanding our daily experience of the insufficiency of the creature to make us happy, we could not relinquish the vain pursuit. We have hewn out one cistern, and found it incapable of retaining any water: we have then renewed our labor, and hewed out another; which we have found as unproductive of solid benefit as the former. We have even worn ourselves out with the pursuit of various and successive vanities, yet have persisted in our error, untaught by experience, and unwearied by disappointments. Even to the close of life "we hold fast deceit;" "we refuse to return;" "a deceived heart has turned us aside, so that we cannot deliver our souls, or say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?"

Will any contend, that these pursuits are not evil? Surely they are evil in the sight of God. So far from passing over the whole as of small account, he disjoins and separates the different parts of his charge, and declares, that on account of each we are involved in guilt. Our neglect of him has been exceeding sinful, as our attachment to vanity has also been: "My people have committed two evils."

But on this part of our subject we shall enter more fully, while we consider,

II. In what light we should view these evils—

We are apt to palliate our conduct, and to say, What great harm is there in these things? But if we look to our text, we shall see that they are both heinous in themselves, and terrible in their consequences. In respect of heinousness, I scarcely know whether is greater, their guilt or their folly. Only let us consider what advantages we have enjoyed for the knowledge and service of God. Is it nothing that we have been endowed with such noble capacities, and have neglected to improve them; insomuch that the progressive enlargement of them has tended rather to increase our alienation from God, than to bring us nearer to him? Is it nothing that we have had the inspired volume in our hands, and yet have scarcely differed at all, except in speculative notions, from the heathen? Is it nothing that we have provoked God to jealousy with things which cannot profit, and preferred even the basest lust before him? Is it nothing that we have despised redeeming love, trodden under foot the Son of God, counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and done despite to the Spirit of grace? Should we account it a light matter, if we ourselves were treated thus by our servants and children; if they cast off all regard for us, and poured contempt upon us, and set at nothing our authority, neglecting everything that we commanded, doing everything that we forbade, and persisting in such conduct for years together, in spite of everything we could say or do to reclaim them? And if we should resent such conduct, shall not God much more? But, whatever we may think of these things, God calls them "evils," and such too as may well excite "astonishment" among all the hosts of Heaven: "Be astonished, O heavens, at this!"

Nor is the folly of such conduct less than the malignity. Suppose only that one half the labor which we have used in the pursuit of vanities had been employed in the service of our God; or suppose that only the Sabbaths (a seventh part of our time) had been improved with that assiduity and constancy which we have exerted on other days in the pursuit of this world; I will venture to say, that had even that measure of piety been exercised by us, we should have been far happier here, and should have had infinitely better prospects in the eternal world. What amazing folly, then, have we been guilty of! Truly, if the fact were not proved beyond a possibility of doubt, it would not be credited, that persons possessed of reason could act so irrational a part. But, to view it in a proper light, we should attend to the representation given of it in the text. It is true, the picture is so strong, and yet withal so exact, that we shall scarcely endure to look at it. But let us contemplate it a moment: let us imagine to ourselves a person dwelling close to a perennial spring of water, and yet with great labor and fatigue hewing out first one cistern, and then another, and, after multiplied disappointments, dying at last of thirst. By what name should we designate this? Should we be content with calling it folly? Should we not soon find for it a more appropriate and humiliating term? Let us take this then as a glass wherein to view our own likeness: it is no exaggerated representation, but the precise view in which God sees our conduct. We are aware, that the idea suggested implies such a degree of infatuation as almost to provoke a smile: but the more humiliating the picture, the more need there is that we should contemplate it: and my labor will not have been lost, if a few only of the present assembly be led to bear it in remembrance, and to meditate upon it in their secret retirement.

We have further to remark, that these evils are represented in the text as terrible also in their consequences. Men do not like, in general, to hear of this: they wish rather to have it kept out of sight. But it is melancholy that they should so labor to deceive their own souls. If, by concealing the consequences of sin, we could ward them off and prevent them, we should be the last to bring them forward to your view: but if it be the surest way to draw them down upon you, surely we should deserve ill at your hands if we forbore to warn you of them. It is not thus that the Prophets and Apostles acted: nor is it thus that God would have us act. He bids us to "warn the wicked of their evil ways:" and declares, that if we neglect to do so, he "will require their blood at our hands." In order then that the danger of such sins as are here laid to our charge may appear, consider what are the representations given of it in the Holy Scriptures, If there be one image more terrible than another, it is that of lying down in a lake of fire and brimstone, ever to be consuming and unconsumed: yet that is the image repeatedly employed by Christ himself, in order to represent the misery that awaits the impenitent and unbelieving world. This will account for the extreme anxiety and sorrow which holy men of old expressed when contemplating the danger to which their fellow-creatures were exposed: "Rivers of waters run down my eyes," says David, "because men keep not your law:" And again, "I am horribly afraid for the ungodly that forsake your law." Indeed, how is it possible to entertain light thoughts of this, if we only consider what have uniformly been the feelings of men, the very moment that they have come to a just sense of their state? See the jailor's agitation; or hear the cries of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost. Nay, we need only consider what our own apprehensions sometimes have been, when sickness has come upon us, or death appeared to be near at hand. But, if yet we be disposed to doubt, let us ask, Why is it that God calls on the heavens to "be horribly afraid, and to be very desolate?" Is there no cause for such language? Is it intended only to alarm us, and to excite unfounded apprehensions? No, surely: it is founded in truth: it is the effusion of unbounded love; the compassionate warning of a tender Father. Permit me, then, once more to say, that the forsaking of the Fountain of Living Waters is an evil, a great evil; and that the hewing out of broken cisterns for ourselves is also a great evil. God views these evils in all their malignity: the angels also that are around the throne, view them with deep solicitude, anxiously desiring to see us escape from them, and waiting in readiness to rejoice over our return to God. O that we might no longer indulge a fatal security! "no longer say, Peace, peace! lest sudden destruction come upon us without any way to escape!" If God were a hard master, and his service irksome, there would be some shadow of excuse for such conduct. But, who ever sought after God in vain, provided he sought in sincerity and truth? and, whoever found him without finding in him all that could comfort and enrich the soul? God himself puts the question; "What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain?" "Have I been a wilderness to Israel? a land of darkness? Why say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto you?"

Shall we plead, as an excuse, that religion is a source of melancholy? Surely they who harbor such an opinion have never known what religion is. That a neglect of religion will make us melancholy, is clear enough, as well from the dissatisfaction which, notwithstanding our diversified enjoyments, generally prevails, as from the disquietude which men feel in the prospect of death and judgment. But religion, true religion, brings peace into the soul: it leads us to the Fountain of Living Water, where we can at all times quench our thirst, and taste beforehand the felicity of Heaven. Our blessed Lord invites us to him in this view: "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink;" and "the water that I will give him shall be in him a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life." Listen, then, to that expostulation of the prophet; "Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread, and your labor for that which satisfies not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat you that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness." Return to the Fountain; and make the experiment, at least: see whether there be not more happiness in turning from vanity, than in embracing it; in seeking after God, than in forsaking him; in the holy exercises of prayer and praise, than in a brutish neglect of these duties; in applying to your souls the promises of Christ, than in a profane contempt of them: and, lastly, in obtaining sweet foretastes of heavenly bliss, than in reluctant approaches towards an unknown eternity. O that I might not commend this Fountain to you in vain! All ranks and orders among you are beginning to show a laudable attention to the theory of religion: O that you might begin to show it to the practice also! You are not backward to manifest your approbation of that zeal which directs you to the evidences of religion: be not therefore offended with that, which solicits your attention to its effects.

[Jeremiah 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 2.19)

DISCOURSE 1028

THE EVIL OF BACKSLIDING

[Jeremiah 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 2.19). Your own wickedness shall correct you, and your backslidings shall reprove you: know therefore and see, that it is an evil thing, and bitter, that you have forsaken the Lord your God.

SIN and misery are very nearly connected; and the nearer we are to God by relation or profession, the more immediately will our transgressions be followed by tokens of his displeasure. The Israelites were God's chosen people; yet, while the Amorites, and other idolatrous nations, were left to fill up the measure of their iniquities, before they were visited according to their deserts, the Jews, especially while journeying through the wilderness, were speedily chastened for their iniquities, and made to feel the evil and bitterness of sin. Thus, only in a more secret and silent manner, does God now punish the backslidings of his people; nor does he notice only the grosser violations of his law, but the more hidden abominations of the heart, and secret declensions from the spiritual life. Indeed, he makes sin its own punishment, according to what is written in the text: to elucidate which, we shall show,

I. In what respects our own backslidings correct us—

It is not unfrequently that, even in our temporal concerns, we suffer loss by relaxing our diligence in spiritual duties: but it is invariably found, that backslidings from God are attended with very painful consequences:

1. They wound our conscience—

Conscience, if duly attended to, is a faithful monitor, and will upbraid us for declensions, however secret, and transgressions, however small: and when it testifies of willful deliberate sin, when it summons us into the divine presence, and accuses us before God, it will make a Felix tremble, and a Judas abhor his very existence. This is a correction, which, as no enlightened person would willingly endure, so neither, until he return to God, or have his "conscience seared as with an hot iron," can he hope to escape.

2. They intercept our views of God—

God is exceeding gracious to those who walk circumspectly before him: but he has warned us that, "if we forsake him, he will forsake us [2 Chronicles 15:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Chron 15.2)." This his people of old experienced to their cost, as the prophet told them; "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear [Isaiah 59:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 59.2)." And is this a slight correction? Let the cries and terrors of persons under dereliction [Psalm 77:1-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 77.1-9); [Psalm 88:3-16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 88.3-16), be to us as a beacon for our effectual admonition.

3. They indispose us for spiritual exercises and enjoyments—

While we maintain close fellowship with God, our duties are a source of the sublimest happiness: but when we decline from his ways, the whole work of religion becomes a burden. Have we neglected prayer for a season, or been inattentive in it to the frame of our minds? how painful a task is it to approach our God! the most glorious of all privileges is turned into an irksome rite, to which we are goaded by a guilty conscience. The same indisposition instantly extends itself to every other office of religion; so that the visiting of the sick, the conversing on spiritual subjects, the reading of the Holy Scriptures, and indeed the whole life of religion is bereft of vital energy, and degenerates into an empty and unproductive form. What an awful punishment is this!

4. They lay us open to the incursions of sin and Satan—

Righteousness is, as it were, a breast-plate that guards our vitals, and proves an armor on the right hand and on the left [Ephesians 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 6.14). [2 Corinthians 6:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 6.7). but unwatchfulness deprives the soul of its defense, and exposes us to the envenomed darts of our great adversary. If we have secretly declined from God, the temptations, which once were easily overcome, have a deep and lasting effect: our spirits are soon ruffled; our evil passions are soon awakened; and, if God interpose not for our recovery we shall soon "return with the dog to his vomit, and with the sow that is washed to her wallowing in the mire." Sin, of any kind, makes a breach in the soul, which, if not stopped at first, will widen, until our desolation is inevitable, and our ruin final, Who can but tremble at the warning which God himself has given us; "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be held with the cords of his own sins [Proverbs 5:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 5.22)."

Additional light will be reflected on this subject, while we consider,

II. The evil and bitterness of a backsliding state—

The sinfulness of an ignorant and carnal state, heinous as it is, is by no means comparable to the guilt of backsliding from God. To view backslidings in their real malignity we must remember that they involve in them,

1. A violation of the most solemn engagements—

The man, who professes to be a follower of Christ, pledges himself by that very profession to devote himself entirely to the service of his God: he declares, as it were, his approbation of his baptismal covenant, and his determination through grace to adhere to it in all things. But, in proportion as he yields to open sin or secret declensions, he revokes all his promises, and renounces all his expectations of the Divine favor. How vile, and how desperate, must such a conduct be in the eyes of God!

2. A contempt of the richest mercies—

While we serve God aright, we never find him backward to recompense our worthless endeavors: the more diligently we have sought him, the more abundantly has he enriched us with grace and peace. When therefore we forsake him, we say, in fact, that we neither love "nor fear him," (see verse 19.) yes, that we despise his mercies, and prefer the pleasures of sin before any of the pleasures which he can afford us. What base ingratitude, what daring insolence is this!

3. A vindication of God's open and avowed enemies—

Practical piety condemns the world; but impiety, as far as it extends, proclaims to all, that God is not worthy to be loved and served. The backslider goes further still; and says to all around him, I have tried God, and found him to be "a wilderness to his people verse 31;" I once was weak enough to think that the more religious I was, the more happy I should be: but I was disappointed in my hopes; and now revert to my former ways, that all may know the superior happiness, which, in my opinion at least, is to be enjoyed in freedom from restraints, and in the gratifications of time and sense. Alas! on what a precipice does the backslider stand! and, what an account will he have to give at last, if he do not instantly return to God in penitence and faith!

Nor is the bitterness of such a state easy to be appreciated—

If we would "know and see" what a "bitter thing" it is to forsake the Lord, let us consult the declarations of God, "the Lord God of hosts," and the experience of his ancient people. What "broken bones" did the fall of David occasion [Psalm 51:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 51.8). And where was the blessedness which the Galatian Church had once enjoyed, when, through the influence of their false teachers, they had declined from the simplicity of the Gospel [Galatians 4:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 4.15). Indeed, let any man consult the records of his own conscience, and he will soon perceive, that, as there is no happiness to be compared with a state of nearness to God, so there is no misery like that which a sense of his departure from us will occasion. As for the bitterness of it to apostates in the day of judgment, that cannot be described; and we pray God we may never be left to feel and endure it, But let us study to "know and see" it in its true light, that we may be stirred up by the consideration of it to "cleave unto our God with full purpose of heart."

[Jeremiah 2:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 2.23-24)

DISCOURSE 1029

SELF-VINDICATING SINNERS REPROVED

[Jeremiah 2:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 2.23-24). How can you say, I am not polluted, I have not gone after Baalim? See your way in the valley; know what you have done: you are a swift dromedary traversing her ways; a wild donkey used to the wilderness, that snuffs up the wind at her pleasure: in her occasion who can turn her away? All they that seek her will not weary themselves: in her month they shall find her.

IN estimating our state before God, we ought to mark the circumstances under which our sins are committed, and the aggravations of our guilt in that particular view. It is in this light that our iniquities are viewed by God. The mercies we have received from him; the resolutions which, under a sense of those mercies, we have formed; the degree in which we have degenerated; all these things are marked by God, and form an accumulation of wickedness far exceeding that of any individual acts verse 20–22. But there is one evil which enhances our guilt beyond every other that can be named; and that is, a self-justifying spirit, and a denial of the accusations which God, in his word, and by his ministers, brings against us. That I may guard you against this, which is so pre-eminently offensive to the Divine Majesty, I will set before you,

I. The self-vindicating ways of sinners—

Ministers are commanded to "show the house of Israel their transgressions and their sins." And it might be supposed, that, when men's iniquities are so visible and undeniable, they would fall under the accusation, and humble themselves before God. But they, for the most part, justify themselves against the charge that is brought against them: some,

1. In a way of direct denial—

A remarkable instance of this we have in Cain. After he had murdered his brother Abel, the Lord came to him, and said, "Where is Abel, your brother? and he said, I know not: am I my brother's keeper? [Genesis 4:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen 4.9)." What astonishing effrontery was here? Yet is it precisely such as we see generally exhibited by those around us. We ask them, in God's holy name, Why "they live as without God in the world," and without any just concern about their eternal interests? But they deny the charge; "They do not neglect God: they do not disregard their own souls: they do not "cast God's word behind them," and "pour contempt on all the wonders of redeeming love." Though their wickedness is as manifest as was that of the worshipers of Baal, they will still say, "I am not polluted; I have not gone after Baalim"

2. In a way of vain excuse—

Of this we see a striking example in Saul. He had been commanded to destroy the Amalekites, and everything that appertained unto them; and when Samuel came to him, he said, "Blessed be of the Lord! I have performed the commandment of the Lord. And Samuel said, What means, then, this bleating of the sheep in mine ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?" Then Saul, unable to deny the fact that he had spared the best of the prey, excused himself: "They, the people, have brought them from the Amalekites, having spared the best of the sheep and of the oxen, to sacrifice unto the Lord your God: and the rest we have utterly destroyed 1 Samuel 15:13-15." Thus, when men cannot deny their wickedness, they will excuse it: 'They have done nothing but what was sanctioned by custom;' or, 'They have only followed those impulses of nature which they were not able to withstand.' It is probable that the idolaters in my text did not mean to deny that they showed some respect to their molten images; but only to say, that it was not to the images themselves, or to Baal, that they paid their homage; but to Jehovah, as represented by them. Such are the refuges of papists at this day, in all their idolatrous worship: and such the vain excuses of all the votaries of this world.

3. In a way of hypocritical palliation—

Here we must go back to our first parents, when interrogated respecting their eating of the forbidden fruit. The man cast the blame upon his wife; or rather upon God himself, who had given her to him: "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." The woman, in like manner, shifted the blame from herself, and cast it on the serpent: "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat [Genesis 3:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen 3.11-13)." So sinners of every description find something to palliate their guilt; 'The faults they have committed have not been of an enormous kind: the commissions have been but rare: they have not injured any one: they have had no evil intention: their hearts have been good, though their actions have not been altogether so correct.' But God sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance: but God sees the heart.

But men cannot deceive God; as will be seen by,

II. The charge which God brings against them—

However we may justify ourselves, "God will reprove us, and set before us the things that we have done [Psalm 50:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 50.21)." In the passage before us, he substantiates his charge against his offending people,

1. By an appeal to fact—

"See your way in the valley: know what you have done." In the valleys, as well as in the hills, your idolatries obtrude themselves upon the notice of the whole world: "they are not discovered by secret search verse 24;" they do not even affect concealment. And may we not say to you also, "See your ways in the valleys?" Look at your whole lives: what are they but one continued scene of rebellion against God? Trace your conduct, from your youth up: what have you done, but "love and serve the creature more than the Creator?" and yet you will say, "We have not gone after Baalim." What is idolatry if this be not? and how can you "provoke God to jealousy" more than by the very conduct which you have pursued from your earliest youth? Look at your very religion: what has it been, but a mere form, without any vital power; a shadow, without any substance? It is not by occasional slips that you have fallen, but by one entire uninterrupted course of conduct, Who among you will deny this? What excuses can you find for this? What palliations can such criminal proceedings admit of?

2. By a most apt comparison—

The dromedary and the wild donkey, when seeking their mate, are so bent upon the attainment of their desires, that all efforts to catch them are in vain: and no one will weary himself with so fruitless a labor. But, when their time of pregnancy has advanced, they fall comparatively an easy prey to the pursuer. And it is but to little purpose that we follow you with invitations, entreaties, expostulations, warnings: you "will not hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely." It is perfectly surprising to see how little effect is produced on the minds of the generality by all the labors of the most faithful ministers. There is occasion for the same complaint in every age, and every place: "Lord, who has believed our report? and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Let your own consciences testify whether the representation here given be not just and true.

There is a time, however, when we may hope to prevail: and in the hope that it may have arrived, we will, in a word of application, now address ourselves unto you—

Happy, happy would it be, if you began at last to be "weary and heavy-laden with your sins!" This is the time that God looks for: and it is the time that we look for also, in the hope that we may prevail upon you to return unto your God. Truly, we may ask with confidence, "What fruit have you had of the things whereof you are now ashamed?" What, but disappointment and misery and death? O, then, "return unto Him from whom you have deeply revolted": And what does God require of you, in order to your acceptance with him? He says, "Only acknowledge your iniquity [Jeremiah 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.13)." So, then, say I also; and know, that if you come to the Lord Jesus Christ burdened with your sins, he will speedily and most assuredly "give you rest." "While you cover your sins, you cannot prosper: but if you confess and forsake them, you will have mercy [Proverbs 28:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 28.13)." Hear the beloved Apostle: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us; but if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness [1 John 1:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 John 1.8-9)." Receive this testimony, and act upon it; "so your iniquities, how great or numerous soever they have been, shall not be your ruin [Ezekiel 18:30](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 18.30). Here the fullness and sufficiency of Christ may be set forth to advantage."

[Jeremiah 2:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 2.27-28)

DISCOURSE 1030

THE FOLLY OF NEGLECTING GOD

[Jeremiah 2:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 2.27-28). They have turned their back unto me, and not their face; but in the time of their trouble they will say, Arise, and save us! But where are your gods that you have made you? Let them arise, if they can save you in the time of your trouble.

AMONG the various powers which distinguish man from all the rest of the creation, is the faculty of looking forward to future events, and of receiving, by anticipation, impressions suited to them. This faculty is given to him principally for the furtherance of his eternal welfare: and, if he used it aright, he could not fail of attaining eternal blessedness. But as he abuses his other powers, so does he grievously misimprove this: he employs it for the purpose of temporal advancement; but forgets its use in reference to eternity. Hence, until affliction bring him to a juster view of his condition, he casts off all fear of God, and lives, as it were, "without God in the world." Of this God complained respecting his people of old; and at the same time he warned them of the bitter consequences that would ensue from it; for, if they persisted in looking to their false gods in the time of prosperity, they should have none other to assist them in the season of adversity.

From the words thus explained, we may take occasion to show,

I. The conduct of sinners towards their God—

Man in every age, especially if he have any knowledge of a Supreme Being, pursues nearly the same course, until he has been converted by Divine grace.

In the text we behold how he conducts himself,

1. In a state of ease—

It is surprising to see how entirely men banish from their minds all thoughts of God. Though called and invited to draw near to him, they cannot be prevailed upon to bow their knees before him, and to seek his face in prayer [Isaiah 64:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 64.7). If at any time they draw near to him in public, it is not really to know his will, or to enjoy his presence, but merely to perform a duty, in which their hearts are not at all engaged [Matthew 15:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 15.8).

But the expression in our text imports, not merely a neglect of God, but a contempt of him also. And a most awful mark of contempt it is, to turn our back upon him when he calls us, instead of turning to him our face. Yet thus it is that we treat him, exactly as his people did even in his very temple [Ezekiel 8:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 8.16); we all have idols in our hearts; and those we serve to the utter neglect of God; and, when reminded of our duty to him, we cry, "Who is the Lord? I know him not;" "I will have nothing to do with him" "I desire not the knowledge of his ways Compare [Jeremiah 2:31](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 2.31), with [Exodus 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 5.2). [Psalm 12:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 12.4); [Psalm 81:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 81.11). [Job 21:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 21.14-15). [Isaiah 30:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 30.11)."

2. In a state of trouble—

Few are so hardened in iniquity, but they will begin to reflect on their ways when they come into trouble: "they will pour out a prayer, when God's chastening is upon theme [Isaiah 26:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 26.16)." Even hypocrites [Psalm 78:34-37](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 78.34-37), yes and heathens too [Jon. 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jonah. 1.5), when reduced to great extremities, will cry for help: "In their affliction," says God, "they will seek me early [Hosea 5:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 5.15)." Nay more, they will express, not only importunity, but, as our text intimates, a considerable measure of impatience also: as if God were bound immediately to interpose for them, though they have rejected and "forgotten him days without number verse 22 with [Isaiah 58:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 58.3)." The whole of their conduct is beautifully set forth in the preceding context, under the image of "a wild donkey." She, when seeking her mate, is so wild, that no one will attempt to catch her: but, when the time is come for her to be delivered of her young, she may easily be caught verse 23, 24. So it is with sinners, when bent upon the gratification of their earthly and sensual desires, they prosecute their own ways without restraint, and laugh at all our efforts to apprehend them: but, when burdened and bowed down with trouble, they will suffer us to approach them, and will bear to hear the voice of counsel and reproof. Their affliction represses for a season their spirit of rebellion, and brings them to a better mind.

Still however their conduct is most perilous, as will appear, while we show,

II. The folly and danger of it—

To manifest this, we need only consider,

1. The disappointment it will occasion—

Even now, in the midst of all their pursuits, we would ask the ungodly. Whether they have ever found any solid satisfaction in the vanities of time and sense? and has not the creature invariably proved to them "a broken cistern, that could hold no water verse 13." Yes assuredly, they have "spent their money for that which is not bread, and labored for that which satisfies not [Isaiah 55:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 55.2)." or rather, as it is well expressed, "Have sought to fill their belly with the east wind [Job 15:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 15.2)." And this is what God has repeatedly forewarned them of in his blessed word: "Let not him that is deceived trust in vanity; for vanity shall be his recompense [Job 15:31](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 15.31)." And if even now, "in the time of their sufficiency, they be in straits [Job 20:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 20.22)," how much move, when they come into trouble, may it be asked, "What fruit have you of these things whereof you are now ashamed?" Will their pleasures, their riches, or their honors, which they once sought with such avidity, then comfort them? Alas! how little can such things do to assuage even the pains of a diseased body, and much more to pacify a guilty conscience, and to compose the mind, in the prospect of death and judgment! Truly, "miserable comforters are they all." Yet to them will God leave us in the day of our calamity, if we will persist in making them our idols during the season of our health. This he tells us in our text; "Let the gods that you have made to you, arise and save you." It was thus that he mocked his people of old, when they had withstood all the corrections of his providence [Judges. 10:10-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Judg. 10.10-14); and thus he has declared that he will mock us also, if we continue obstinately to withstand all the overtures of his love and mercy [Proverbs 1:24-31](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 1.24-31).

But, even supposing that the vanities of this world were not so ineffectual for our present support as they are found to be, of what use or benefit will they be found when we are standing at the judgment-seat of Christ? Will they interpose between us and an angry God? or will they descend with us into those gloomy mansions to which their votaries will be doomed, and there alleviate the anguish of our minds? Will the friends, by whom we were induced to turn our back on God, confirm to us all the promises they made to us, and obtain for us that blessedness which they so confidently assured us was in no danger of being lost? Ah, the disappointment which we shall feel in that day, when no possibility remains of rectifying our error! How shall we curse our folly for giving way to such delusions, and feel that truth which we are now so backward to believe, that "they who observe lying vanities, forsake their own mercies [Jon. 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jonah. 2.8)."

2. The reflections to which it will give rise—

Here we will not give ourselves time for consideration; but when we come into the eternal world, we shall have nothing else to do: and then how inexpressibly painful will it be to reflect, 'I once had a God of infinite love and mercy calling me to accept of reconciliation with him; I had a Savior too who offered to cleanse me in his blood from all my sins, and to clothe me in the robe of his own unspotted righteousness: by his Holy Spirit also my Savior strove with me, to bring me to repentance, and to guide my feet into the way of peace. Once had I ordinances, wherein I might have enjoyed my God; and ministers by whom I might have been led to the great Shepherd and Bishop of my soul. But now all those blessings are withdrawn, and are forever hid from my eyes. I valued them not when they were within my reach: I had no taste but for the vanities of this world; and, like Esau, I sold Heaven itself for a poor worthless momentary enjoyment: now too, like him, I am rejected, and could find no place of repentance in my Father's mind, though I should seek it ever so carefully with tears [Matthew 23:37-38](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 23.37-38) with [Hebrews 12:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 12.16-17).' 'Now I find that God's word was true; and that the harvest which we must reap accords with the seed we sowed: "I reap now nothing but corruption, because I sowed only to the flesh;" whereas, if I could have been prevailed upon to "sow unto the Spirit, I should at this moment have been reaping everlasting life [Galatians 6:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 6.7-8)." I now call to my God, and beg him to send me only a drop of water to cool my tongue; but he bids me go for relief to the gods which I preferred before him, and reminds me, that, having received the consolations which I desired, I have no other to expect at his hands [Luke 16:24-26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 16.24-26).'

Such is the portion of those who neglect God: "they sow the wind, and they reap the whirlwind [Hosea 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 8.7)."

ADDRESS—

1. Those that are at ease in their sins—

You think it time enough to seek the Lord when you are no longer able to enjoy the world. But are you sure that time will be afforded you, if you neglect the present hour; or that God will hear you, when your prayers are extorted only by pain and terrors? Such delays receive but little countenance from God in the passage we are considering, or indeed in any other part of Holy Writ See [Psalm 81:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 81.11-12). [Hosea 4:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 4.17). [Luke 19:42](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 19.42). "Seek then the Lord while he may be found; call you upon him while he is hear [Isaiah 55:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 55.6)."

2. Those who are brought into any kind of trouble—

Now then at least is the time for you to call upon your God; for when will you do it, if not in the time of trouble? Will you stay until you are summoned before his judgment-seat? Will you not begin to look for the Bridegroom, until he has already entered into his house, and the door is shut? O look upon your affliction as the voice of God: receive it as a messenger sent from him to prepare you for his presence: and remember, if he has warned you of your danger, he has also given you encouragement to turn unto him. He has shown you, in his reception of the Prodigal, how ready he is to receive returning penitents [Luke 15:20-24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 15.20-24); and, in his mercy to Manasseh, how great iniquities he can pardon [2 Chronicles 33:10-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Chron 33.10-13). Only "return then unto him; so iniquity shall not be your ruin."

3. Those who have already begun to seek the Lord—

Say, Whether it has been in vain to seek the Lord? Has he been "a wilderness to you, or a land of darkness verse 31." Has he not done more for you than the world over did, and rendered you happier than you ever were in the days of your vanity? Be thankful to him then that he ever enabled you to "choose the good part, which shall never be taken away from you." If trouble come to you, you have no need to fear [1 Peter 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Pet 3.13); for it is sent by him in love to purge you from your remaining dross, and fit you for his presence, where is fullness of joy for evermore.

[Jeremiah 2:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 2.31-32)

DISCOURSE 1031

GOD'S COMPLAINT AGAINST THE REBELLIOUS

[Jeremiah 2:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 2.31-32). O generation, see you the word of the Lord; Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? Why say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto you? Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me, days without number.

I AM perfectly astonished. I can scarcely believe my own eyes. Who is it that thus addresses us; and vindicates his own character against the accusations which, by our lives at least, we bring against him? It is none other than Jehovah himself, calling upon us to prove, if we can, that he merits at our hands the treatment he has received from us. Often does he call on Heaven and earth to judge between him and his people [Micah 6:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Micah 6.2-3); But in the chapter before us, he supposes himself to be charged with having acted unkindly, not to say injuriously, towards them: "Hear you the word of the Lord, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel: thus says the Lord; What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and have become vain verse 4, 5." And again in the text, "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" Behold, Brethren, I am now to you in God's stead: and I call upon you, in God's name, to answer to the challenge given you, and to the charge that is brought against you. Hear at my mouth,

I. His appeal, in answer to your charges against him—

Was he to the Jews a wilderness or a land of darkness?"

The Jews, from their own history, could not but know what a terrible wilderness, and what a land of darkness, their ancestors had been brought into, when they came out of the land of Egypt: it was "a land of deserts and of pits, a land of drought and of the shadow of death, a land that no man passed through, and where no man dwelt verse 6." In a word, it was a land where they could find no sustenance, and where, but for the Divine interposition, they must all have perished. And had God been to them in any respect like that? Had he left them to perish? Had he not, on the contrary, administered to their every want, going before them in a pillar of fire, and supplying them with food, and miraculously preserving their very clothes from wearing out for the space of forty years; and, at last, putting them into a full and peaceful possession of the promised land Cite [Deuteronomy 32:10-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 32.10-14) and [Nehemiah 9:21-25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Neh 9.21-25)..

Has he, in his conduct to us, deserved any such humiliating imputation?

We, also, have been passing through a dreary wilderness, in our way to the promised land: and has he been inattentive to our wants? Has he not given us his only dear Son to be our Savior?: Has he not also given his Holy Spirit, to guide, preserve, and sanctify us, and to make us meet for our destined inheritance?: Tell me so much as one thing which you have ever lacked, provided you sought it humbly at his hands?: I hesitate not to affirm, that if there be any one thing that you have ever lacked, it has been, not from want of care in him, but from your own negligence in asking it: for "he never said at any time to any human being, Seek you my face in vain." I say, then, that your charges against him, as defective in kindness or care or liberality, are altogether false; and that there is no one thing that you could reasonably hope to be done for you, which he has not freely and effectually done [Isaiah 5:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 5.3-4).

But not satisfied with vindicating God, I call you to hear,

II. His charge against you—

He complains, and justly too, of two things;

1. The flagrancy of your rebellion—

His people of old said, "We are lords: we will come no more unto you." And such has been the language both of your hearts and lives. You have affected independence. Satan's temptation to our first parents was, "You shall be as gods:" and you have affected to be as gods, even from that very hour; and have felt no disposition to come to Jehovah for anything. In truth, independence is the very essence of the Fall: it is that which characterizes every living man. Every man trusts in his own wisdom and righteousness and strength; and follows his own will, and "walks after the imaginations of his own heart." Let any one ask himself, Whether, during his whole life, this have not been his state? Can any of us say with truth, that we have been from the beginning so deeply sensible of our own utter destitution of all good, that we have cried day and night to God for everything which our souls needed, and have cleaved to Christ alone as our wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption? Have we, even this very day, come to God for these blessings, as persons who felt their need of them, and their entire dependence on him for a supply of them? Have we not rather imagined that we were "rich, and increased in goods, and in need of nothing; instead of feeling ourselves wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked?" Then you must confess that God's charge against you is true; and that, in refusing to come to him as the only source of all good, you have shown yourselves proud, daring, impious, self-sufficient rebels, and have deserved to be visited with his heaviest judgments.

2. The contemptuousness of your neglect—

One would have supposed that, after all the mercies which God had given to his ancient people, they could not but have borne him in constant and most affectionate remembrance. Yet had they in reality "forgotten him." Of this he complains, with just indignation: "Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?" No, worthless and contemptible as such vanities are, the minds of young people, and of females especially, are so set upon them, as scarcely, for any length of time, to have them absent from their minds. But, though God had given himself as "a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to his people [Isaiah 28:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 28.5)," and his relation to them elevated them above all the people of the world, "yet did they forget him, days without number." And has he given to us less occasion to remember him, than to them? Yet have we forgotten him, even as they did. We have forgotten our obligations to him; so that he receives few, if any, acknowledgments at our hands. We have forgotten our dependence on him; so that he hears but few and faint petitions for the blessings we stand in need of. We have forgotten the great account which we have to give to him; so that, to obtain an interest in Christ, is not the great labor of our lives; nor is it our daily serious endeavor to approve ourselves to God us his devoted servants. Let any one only look back for a single week, and see how much greater interest a young female takes in the adorning of her person, than we have done in providing the ornaments of divine grace for our souls, to "prepare us for our union with our heavenly Bridegroom [Revelation 21:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev 21.2)." Say, then, whether God is not justly incensed against us, and whether we have not need to humble ourselves before him, for "provoking him thus to jealousy?" Behold then, while on God's part I repel with indignation the charges which you bring against him, I call your very consciences to witness against you, that the charges, which I have in his name exhibited against you, are not only true, but heinous in the extreme.

APPLICATION—

1. Are there now any of you disposed to vindicate yourselves?

Yes: the Jews denied their criminality, while yet "their iniquities testified against them to their face [Hosea 5:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 5.5)." And thus it is with you. "You have even wearied God by your transgression; and yet you say, Wherein have we wearied him [Malachi 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mal 2.17)." But in this you only aggravate your guilt, and augment your eternal condemnation. For thus says the Lord: "You say, Because I am innocent, surely his anger shall turn away from me. Behold, I will plead with you, because you say I have not sinned verse 35." Know you this, every one of you, before it be too late, that, "he who covers his sins, shall not prosper; and that he only who confesses and forsakes them, shall find mercy [Proverbs 28:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 28.13)."

2. Are any of you humbled under a sense of your guilt?

To you then I say, that He who "chose Israel, not for any goodness that was in them, but purely because he would choose them [Deuteronomy 7:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 7.7-8)," is ready to exercise his sovereign love and mercy towards you. See how, after taking them from the most helpless and degraded state, he beautified and adorned that people for himself Cite at length [Ezekiel 16:8-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 16.8-14); Thus will he also cleanse you from your iniquities, and transform you into his own most blessed image, and render you meet for an everlasting union with himself. This I am commissioned by him to declare: "Go, and proclaim these words unto them; and say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God [Jeremiah 3:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.12-13)." Yes, in the sacred name of Him whom you have offended, I declare, that "though your iniquities have been red like crimson, they shall be as wool; and though they have been as scarlet, they shall be white as snow [Isaiah 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 1.18)."

[Jeremiah 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.11)

DISCOURSE 1032

COMPARATIVE CRIMINALITY

[Jeremiah 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.11). And the Lord said unto me, The backsliding Israel has justified herself more than treacherous Judah.

THE subject of comparative criminality is one on which we should enter with the greatest care, because it is rarely thought of but in a way of self-preference and self-delight; and where these feelings are generated in the soul, the most incalculable injury has been sustained. We are told by Paul, that "they who measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves among themselves, are not wise [2 Corinthians 10:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 10.12)." Yet, for the purpose of augmenting our humiliation before God, we may, not unprofitably, consider our own superior guilt, as Israel of old were taught to do, when God spoke to the prophet the words which we have just read. Both Israel and Judah had sinned grievously against him: Israel more openly; and Judah in somewhat of a more covert way: but God declared, that, notwithstanding all that might be thought to the contrary, the criminality of Judah exceeded that of Israel.

That we may learn how to judge ourselves, I shall first state, and then confirm, this decision of our God. Let me then,

I. State this decision of the Lord—

Consider what was the state of the parties concerned. Israel, or the ten tribes, had cast off God, from the first moment that they became a nation: and they persisted in their idolatries, until they provoked God to give them up into the hands of their Assyrian enemies. As their injured husband, he gave them a bill of divorce, and would no longer acknowledge them under the relation of a spouse. Judah, on the contrary, had retained the worship of the True God; though they retained their idols, and paid divine honors unto Malcham [Zephaniah 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zeph 1.5). Because of their apparent superiority to Israel, they would scarcely so much as own their relation to her [Ezekiel 33:26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 33.26). But if their sins were somewhat less ostensible, they were committed with tenfold greater aggravations before God. Their advantages had been incomparably greater, because of the numbers of prophets that were sent to them, and the stated ordinances which they enjoyed, and the presence of God that was in the midst of them: and, inasmuch as these advantages were altogether despised among them, their guilt was the greater: so that it might well be said of Judah, "Israel has justified herself more than treacherous Judah." This judgment indeed was not exactly what Judah would have formed, nor what would approve itself, at first sight, to any among ourselves. We should have been ready to think that any religion was better than none; and that even the appearance of regard for God was better than an avowed contempt of him. This, however, was not God's judgment respecting it: he decided rather against the form, which was destitute of the power of godliness; and declared that "backsliding Israel had justified herself more than treacherous Judah."

Now, this decision being of general importance, I will proceed to,

II. Confirm it—

It is generally thought that a profession of religion, even though it be insincere, is more pleasing to God than an open contempt of all religion. But God has determined otherwise; and has declared, that specious insincerity is worse than open profaneness, because,

1. It argues a deeper depravity of heart—

Ungodly men persist in their impieties, without much reflection upon the guilt they contract, or the judgments they incur: They rush, for the most part, into sin, "like a horse into the battle." But a man professing godliness shows that he has some sense of his duty, and some desire to secure his eternal interests. Hence, in him, sin finds a conflict which it finds not in others. In him "the spirit lusts against the flesh, as well as the flesh against the spirit." He has somewhat of a conscience, which remonstrates against his evil ways: and he is constrained to stupefy and sear his conscience, in order to obtain any release from the terrors with which he is assaulted in his prospects of a future judgment. He wishes indeed to save appearances, and to satisfy his own conscience: but this only proves the more fully the inveteracy of his lusts, which are able to prevail over such weighty considerations. He knows what sin deserves; and yet commits it: he knows what sin has brought on others; and yet ventures to indulge in it. His sin, therefore, notwithstanding his plausibility, is so much the more heinous, in proportion as it is committed against light and knowledge, against mercies and judgments, and against the motions of God's Holy Spirit within him. In the passage before us, this is marked with very extraordinary force. Within the space of five verses, Israel is characterized four times as "backsliding;" and Judah no less than five times as "treacherous." Now, in the estimation of all, a traitor is accounted worse than a rebel; and an adulterous wife more guilty than a licentious prostitute. The relation in which they stand to their Lord, the obligations which they owe him, and the professions which they make of their regard for his honor, greatly aggravate the wickedness which they contract: and exactly thus do the transgressions of a religious professor exceed in enormity those committed by a mere worldly character [Amos. 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Amos. 3.2).

2. It casts more dishonor upon God—

A man who follows his own will, without restraint, does indeed cast off the yoke of God, and shows that he is determined to brave all the consequences of his transgression. But a religious professor says, in effect, to all around him, 'I am God's servant; and I render to him all the service he requires, and all that he deserves. I know my duty towards him; and I perform it.' But what a shameful reflection does this cast on God! What! Does he require no more than this? Then he can never be considered as "glorious in holiness." And does he deserve no more than this? Then surely he has but little excellency in himself, and has done but little for us. But what horrible impiety is there in such insinuations as these! I had almost said, that the greatest enormities, in one who is professedly ungodly, are light in comparison of those which such a professor commits: and without hesitation will I declare, that Sodom and Gomorrah, with all their abominations, shall fare better, in the day of judgment, than he [Matthew 11:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 11.24).

3. It does more extensive injury to man—

Who thinks of pouring contempt on God on account of the impieties of a profane character? But let a man, who makes a profession of religion, transgress, and immediately religion itself is condemned, and "the way of truth is evil spoken of" on his account; yes, and the very name of God himself also is blasphemed. If the faults of such an one be of a more trivial kind, then the world plead his example, and think themselves at liberty to do, every day of their lives, what he has done occasionally under the influence of temptation: or, if his sins be more heinous, then all religious people are regarded as hypocrites for his sake; and the ungodly harden themselves in their wickedness, and account themselves quite as good as those who make a profession of religion. Truly, to cast such a stumbling-block before men is a fearful evil; and the certainty of such effects renders the sins of religious persons far more criminal than those who live altogether as without God in the world.

ADDRESS—

1. Those who are careless about religion—

You are ready to justify yourselves on this ground, that you make no profession of religion, and therefore are not hypocrites. But if we acknowledge that you are not so criminal as some others, yet look at the judgments executed on Israel, and see what you yourselves must expect. Truly, a bill of divorce is that which must be put into your bosom; and an eternal separation from your God will ensue: But see the invitation given you from the Lord verse 12; and turn unto him while yet his arms are open to receive you.

2. Those who make a profession of religion—

Take particular notice what Judah's sin was: it was, that "she turned not to the Lord with her whole heart, but insincerely." Now it is with your whole heart, that you must turn to God, if ever you would be approved by him. God said respecting Laodicea, "I would you were cold or hot: and because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue you out of my mouth." Be not satisfied, then, with a lukewarm state: but give yourselves wholly to the Lord, and serve and glorify him with your whole hearts.

[Jeremiah 3:12-15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.12-15)

DISCOURSE 1033

GOD'S INVITATION TO HIS PEOPLE

[Jeremiah 3:12-15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.12-15). Go, and proclaim these words toward the north; and say, Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord, and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am merciful, says the Lord, and I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against the Lord your God, and have scattered your ways to the strangers under every green tree, and you have not obeyed my voice, says the Lord. Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord; for I am married unto you: and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion: and I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding.

IF we would see the Divine character exhibited in the brightest possible colors, we need go no further than to the passage before us, with the preceding and following context. Let any one read the second and third chapters, with the two first verses of the fourth chapter, and he will be perfectly amazed at the condescension and kindness of God; who, having expostulated with the Jews on account of their multiplied transgressions, urges them, by every argument that can be devised, to give up themselves unto him: and when no consideration that he can offer appears to affect them, he determines to take to him his great power, and, by an act of sovereign and Almighty grace, to constrain them to return unto him: "You shall call me, My Father; and shall not turn away from me verse 19." In this way he prevails over them:

Behold, we come unto you; for you are the Lord our God verse 22." No sooner does God behold this purpose formed in the minds of his rebellious people, than he says, "If you will return, O Israel, return unto me." But I shall confine myself to the passage which I have read; which is, in fact, an epitome of the whole: and I shall consider it,

I. As addressed to God's ancient people—

They are here addressed as a "backsliding" people—

This is a metaphor taken from oxen, which refuse to draw in the yoke that is put upon them [Hosea 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 4.16). God had taken them to him as his people, and nourished them for his own; but they rebelled against him, and would never execute his commands [Isaiah 1:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 1.2-3).

Yet he sends to them messages of mercy, and not of judgment—

"Go," says he to his chosen servants, "go, and proclaim to them these words; Return you backsliding Israel, says the Lord." Well might he have cast them off utterly. But he delights in mercy, and "wills not the death of any sinner, but rather that he turn from his wickedness and live." By many prophets did he thus invite them to return [2 Chronicles 36:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Chron 36.15), while they even "wearied him" with their obstinacy [Isaiah 43:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 43.24).

One thing only he requires; namely, that they shall humble themselves before him—

"Only acknowledge your iniquity." This was indispensable. God could not, consistently with his own honor, receive them, while they continued to harden themselves in their wickedness. They must call to mind their offences, which had been of such enormous magnitude: they must spread them before the Lord with penitential sorrow, and implore mercy at his hands. This was all that God expected of them. To compensate for their wickedness was impossible; but to confess it, and to humble themselves on account of it, was necessary, before they could hope for pardon from their God.

To prevail upon them, he urges the most affecting considerations:

1. The merciful disposition which, notwithstanding their iniquities, he felt towards them—

God is indeed slow to anger, and "rich in mercy to all who call upon him." When he proclaimed his name to Moses, this was the attribute by which he was to be chiefly known; "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin [Exodus 34:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 34.6-7)." Indeed this is the argument by which men are influenced, far more than by the terrors of God's avenging wrath. These, though proper to be urged in their place, operate for the most part, like the storm which makes the traveler wrap his cloak the more closely round him; whereas mercy, like the sun, penetrates with a kindly and genial influence, and induces him willingly, and of his own accord, to cast it from him. By this, therefore, does God chiefly endeavor to reclaim his obstinately offending people.

2. The relation under which, notwithstanding their departure from him, he still regarded them—

He often calls himself "the Husband" of his ancient people [Isaiah 54:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 54.5). [Jeremiah 31:32](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.32). [Hosea 2:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 2.19-20). And here he urges that relation as an inducement to them to comply with his merciful and gracious invitations. Among men, such transgressions as God's people had committed must have issued in an irreversible divorce: but with God no such impediment existed: he could, consistently with his own honor, re-admit them to his embrace; and he declares himself willing and desirous to restore them to all the privileges and blessings of a most beloved spouse.

3. The benefits which he was still ready to confer upon them—

They, like sheep, had gone astray from him; and he sought them out with all diligence: and if the whole flock would return unto him, most gladly would he receive them all [Ezekiel 34:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 34.12-14). But if only a small remnant of them would return; if only "one of a city, and two of a tribe," would come; he would not, on that account, reject them. On the contrary, he would appoint over them "pastors, according to his heart, who should teed them with knowledge and understanding [Jeremiah 23:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 23.3-4)."

Now this, I conceive, marks particularly the aspect which this passage has on the future restoration of the Jews: for not only is Israel here united with Judah (which shows that the passage was not fully accomplished at their return from Babylon), but there were not, previous to our Lord's advent, nor have there been at any time since, to the Jewish nation at large, any such stated pastors appointed as exist in the Christian Church: but, so far as they have returned to God through Christ, so far has this benefit been accorded to them: and so far as they shall yet be brought to Christ, they shall live in the enjoyment of it, and possess all the blessings that result from a stated and faithful ministry.

Thus does God, by all these kind and affecting arguments, urge his ancient people to return unto him—

But the passage may also be considered,

II. As addressed to ourselves at this day—

Blameable as it is to overlook God's ancient people in their own prophecies, or to pass them over as not deserving our attention, it would be still more blameable so to limit the prophecies to former ages, as to overlook their aspect on the Christian Church, and the still fuller accomplishment which they shall receive in the latter-day. The passage before us may doubtless be properly applied to us as well as to the Jews: for to us pertain,

1. The same duties—

We have been "a backsliding people." Who among us is not conscious that he has not put forth his strength in the service of his God? Our Lord has told us, that "his yoke is easy, and his burden is light:" yet who among us has delighted to fulfill his will, and execute his commands? Say, Brethren, whether, instead of devoting yourselves wholly to the Lord, and living altogether for him, you have not in many things transgressed against him, and manifested an insuperable reluctance to that holy and heavenly course which he has prescribed?.

To you, then, as God's servant, I come; and, as commissioned by him, I "proclaim, in his sacred name, Return," and yield up yourselves sincerely to him. Indeed you must "return," if ever you would obtain mercy at his hands. Yes, you must return in a way of penitential sorrow, confessing your sins, and humbling yourselves before him. Nor is it in a way of general humiliation only, but of particular confession. Many are the sins which all of us have committed; many which, though unknown to man, are known to God, and recorded against us in the book of his remembrance. He has seen us, when lying upon our bed: the darkness has been no darkness with him: he has seen the inmost recesses of our hearts, and has beheld our every thought and every desire. But, whether we have committed more flagrant transgressions or not, this is clear and undeniable, that "we have not obeyed the voice of the Lord our God." If we try ourselves by the requirements of his Law and of his Gospel, we shall see that, in instances without number, "we have sinned, and come short of the glory of God:" and, under a sense of our defects, we must abase ourselves before him, even as holy Job did, in dust and ashes.

2. The Same encouragements—

To us does God send the same gracious invitations—

To us, as well as to his ancient people, is he rich in mercy, and ready to forgive. Not one of us would he reject, if only we would come to him in his Son's name [John 6:37](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 6.37). No, Brethren, "his anger should not fall upon you," even though your transgressions may have been ever so great, or ever so long continued in: on the contrary, he would act towards you the part of the father in the parable; and would, upon the very first approach of your hearts towards him, "run to meet you, and fall on your neck and kiss you, and clothe you in the best robe and kill the fatted calf, and make merry with you".

And does he not stand in the relation of a husband to you? Yes, he does; and will still recognize you as his spouse, notwithstanding all your past unfaithfulness. You remember that our blessed Lord is frequently called "the Bridegroom" of his Church [Matthew 9:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 9.15). [John 3:29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 3.29). [Revelation 21:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev 21.2); [Revelation 21:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev 21.9). Paul, when apparently setting forth the duties of husband and wife, declares that, in reality, "he spoke of Christ and his Church [Ephesians 5:32](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 5.32)." Now, under this relation, does he desire to receive you, notwithstanding all that you have done amiss. I wish that every one of you could realize this figure. Conceive of a woman who had departed from her husband, and greatly dishonored him by the most licentious habits. Suppose a friend of her husband commissioned to seek for her, and to inform her, with all imaginable tenderness, that her husband was willing to receive her again; that he would freely pardon all her misconduct, and never upbraid her with it even to his dying hour. What would be the feelings of a woman under those circumstances, especially if she was not wholly abandoned to her evil ways? Now such I would wish to be the feelings of every one among you, and such the interest in the message now delivered to you. I pray you, Brethren, consider this as the very case with you; and let the advice which you yourselves would give to a woman so circumstanced, be that which you will carry into effect on the present occasion.

With all needful benefits, too, shall you be loaded. What can a straying sheep need more, than to be brought in safety to the fold, and to be put under the care of a faithful shepherd that will supply its every want? Such are the benefits that shall be accorded to you. What, though there should be only "one or two" of you so disposed? Shall you, therefore, be disregarded by your God? No: your heavenly Shepherd will take you up in his arms, and "carry you home on his shoulders, rejoicing:" and he will appoint over you "pastors, according to his heart, to feed you with knowledge and understanding," The benefit of a faithful ministry is by no means justly appreciated by the world at large. But to those who have been "brought home to Zion," it is a mercy of inestimable value. Greatly does a stated ministry, where the pastor is really after God's heart, tend to the edification and comfort of God's faithful people; and you, Beloved, if you will truly return to God, shall find that the word preached to you from time to time shall "accomplish in you all the good pleasure of his goodness;" and prove "the power of God to the salvation of your souls".

Coming now back to the subject as first proposed, I would say unto you,

1. Be like-minded with God, in reference to his ancient people—

See what tender regard God showed towards them in the days of old: and the same anxiety does he still express for their welfare: for, as I have before observed, the message sent to them has respect to a period yet future, when they shall assuredly obey the call delivered to them. And if God, who has been so greatly offended by them, and whose only dear Son "they slew, and hanged on a tree;" if He, I say, yet regards them with such tender compassion, what ought you to do, whom they have never offended, and who are in the same condemnation with them? In truth, the command of God is given to you, and to all who have access to them in their present dispersion; "Go, and proclaim to them" the mercy of their God: go, and invite them, by every tender consideration that is proposed to them in the inspired volume: and if you say, 'I cannot hope to prevail upon them;' let it suffice if you can prevail on "one of a city, and two of a whole tribe." You are not taught at first to expect the conversion of the whole nation; you are told only to look for them as "the gleanings of an olive-tree, two or three upon the top of the uppermost bough, four or five on the outmost fruitful branches thereof [Isaiah 17:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 17.6)." And if that satisfy God, shall it not satisfy you? Will you not endeavor to get in the first-fruits, because you are not yet privileged to reap the whole harvest? I say then, have compassion on them in their low estate: or, if you have no pity for them, at least perform the office which is here assigned to you, of bringing back to Jehovah the wife that has forsaken him, and whom lie desires to restore to all her former honor and felicity: If you say, 'We cannot get access to them, to deliver these gracious tidings;' let not that be any excuse for your indifference: for there are many who are at this moment employed in this very office; and if you exercise liberality to send them forth, there will be many others who will gladly go to them, and proclaim to them according to the message which is here put in their mouth. Too long have the Christian world neglected this duty: I pray you, arise to the discharge of it: and know, for your comfort, that the efforts already made, have prevailed to the full extent of the encouragement here afforded us.

2. Be examples to them of all that you require at their hands—

Do you bid them "return?" Let them see that you have returned, in deed and in truth, to the very bosom of your God. Do you bid them "acknowledge their iniquity?" Let them see you walking humbly with God; and "sowing daily in tears," that you may be privileged at last to "reap in joy." Above all, be as a wife that has returned to her husband. There is not an image in the world that so fitly marks the Christian's state as this. It may be thought that the conduct of a loving and obedient wife, who lives only for her husband, is a proper pattern for a Christian towards his God and Savior: but, lovely as that is, it comes far short of the Christian's spirit: for, superadded to all the love and fidelity of a duteous wife, there must be in that a continual sense of all our past unfaithfulness. A wife so restored, would never for a moment forget what she had been, and what she had done, while separated from her husband: and every act of love on his part would only fill her with deeper self-loathing and self-abhorrence, for having ever so dishonored one who deserved such different conduct at her hands. Now, get into this spirit; never exalting yourselves above the poor fallen Jew, or above the vilest of the human race. This is the walk that is most pleasing to God. This is the walk that will be ever accompanied with the most earnest efforts to honor God, and will lead to the highest possible attainments in every grace. So make your light to shine, before them, and they will see and know that "God is with you of a truth."

[Jeremiah 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.19)

DISCOURSE 1034

THE TRUE SOURCE OF SALVATION

[Jeremiah 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.19). I said, How shall I put you among the children, and give you a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations? And said, You shall call me, My Father; and shall not turn away from me.

IN many parts of the inspired volume, God is pleased to speak of himself after the manner of men; as though he were on some occasions reduced, as it were, to extremities, and at a loss how to act. Thus, by the prophet Hosea, he expresses himself as almost necessitated to cast off his people for their wickedness, but yet as not knowing how to bring his mind to execute on them so severe a judgment: "How shall I give you up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver you up, Israel? How shall I make you as Ephraim? How shall I set you as Zeboim," even as those ill-fated cities that were destroyed together with Sodom and Gomorrah [Hosea 11:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 11.8). So, on the other hand, by Jeremiah, he speaks as equally at a loss how to exercise towards them the mercy which he was inclined to bestow: "How shall I put you among the children, and give you a pleasant land, a goodly heritage of the hosts of nations?"

This, however applicable to the people among whom the prophet ministered, had, beyond all doubt, a reference to a period yet future, even to events that should take place in the latter day. Then will "the ark of the covenant," that bright symbol of the Divine presence, be altogether forgotten by the Jews, and all the worship connected with it be utterly renounced; the people being desirous only to "worship God in spirit and in truth." At that period they will have ceased to "walk after the imagination of their own evil heart;" and the ten tribes of Israel will partake with Judah in all the blessings accorded to them verse 16–18. Hitherto these events have never occurred. But the time is fast approaching, when, in every particular they shall be fulfilled. True, it appears almost impossible that they should be realized: but God here declares, that they shall be accomplished in their season. In confirmation of this promise, I will show,

I. How the obstructions to the restoration of the Jews shall be surmounted—

God himself appeals to them upon this very subject: "How shall I put you among the children?"

From the very beginning the Jews were a stiff-necked people. It was only for his own name sake that God did not again and again destroy them in the wilderness; and on many occasions also, after their establishment in the promised land. At last, God could no longer forbear: and therefore he gave up the ten tribes into the hands of the Assyrians, and the other two tribes into the hands of the Chaldeans. And after their restoration from Babylon, they still remained the same rebellious people, in everything like their forefathers, except idolatry: and at last they filled up the measure of their iniquity in the murder of their Messiah. For all this wickedness they have now been scattered, these eighteen hundred years, over the face of the earth; and they are still as obdurate as ever. How, then, shall they be restored to the favor of their God?: The extent of their wickedness forbids it; and the honor of God, as the Moral Governor of the Universe, forbids it. Suppose an earthly prince were to select, for his attendants and most favored servants, multitudes who had been long in rebellion against him, and had murdered his only dear Son, whom he had sent, not in a way of vindictive wrath, but in a way of love and mercy, to bring them back to their allegiance: suppose such an act of grace as this: What would be thought concerning it? Would not other potentates be ready to say, that it was an encouragement to all subjects to rebel against their governors, and to commit the greatest possible excesses? Would it not appear an excess of generosity, subversive of all moral government? If then among men, whose rights are so limited, this would be judged so replete with danger, how should it be that the great and glorious God should so relinquish all his own rights, and so requite those who have been the most forward to trample on them?

But these obstacles, however formidable, shall be surmounted—

God had before expressed his earnest desire for their restoration to him; "Will you not at this time cry unto me, My Father, you are the guide of my youth verse 4." And now he determines to effect it by his own Almighty power: "You shall call me My Father; and shall not turn away from me." This will overcome every obstacle: for, "if God will work, who shall let it?" Vain was the resistance of Pharaoh: vain the obstructions of the sea, the wilderness, and the united nations of Canaan. As God spoke the universe itself into existence;, so will he, in his own appointed time, form that "new creation" to which my text refers, when "all the nations" (of Jews certainly, and possibly, in part, of Gentiles also) "shall be gathered to Jerusalem verse 17;" and, together with all the tribes both of Israel and Judah verse 18, become one fold under one Shepherd [Ezekiel 34:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 34.23) and [John 10:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 10.16) with [Isaiah 65:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 65.17-18)."

From hence we may see,

II. How alone the difficulties in the way of our salvation also can ever be overcome—

There are immense difficulties in the way of our salvation—

The extent of our wickedness equals, and perhaps exceeds, that of the Jews. What evil was committed by them which does not also, to a fearful extent, obtain among us?: And if they crucified the Lord of Glory, have not we also "crucified him afresh [Hebrews 6:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 6.6).", by our neglect of his Gospel, and our contempt of his salvation?: The Jews of our Lord's day were more criminal than Tyre and Sidon; yes, and even than Sodom and Gomorrah; because they sinned against greater light than those idolatrous cities: and, when we reflect on the advantages which we enjoy, we have reason to fear that a still heavier condemnation will come on us, for our abuse of them: Indeed, it should seem almost impossible that a God of justice and holiness and truth should ever receive to his bosom those who have so "trodden under foot his dear Son, and done such despite to the Spirit of his grace [Hebrews 10:29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 10.29).

But these shall be overcome, even as those which obstruct the restoration of the Jews—

If we looked to ourselves only, our salvation would be altogether hopeless, But God directs us to look to Him, with whom nothing is impossible. He promises to interpose for us in a way of sovereign grace, and by the exercise of his Almighty power. His grace is his own: and he may dispense it to whoever he sees fit, according to the counsel of his own will. And he says, "You shall call me, My Father;" and shall participate all the blessings of my most favored children: And he will, by the exercise of his Almighty power, effect this; for he has said, "You shall not turn away from me;" that is, I will both restore you to my favor, and keep you, by my own power, unto everlasting salvation: Here, then, is our security; here is our hope. Nothing less than his merciful interposition can effect this work; and nothing shall ever be permitted to defeat his gracious purpose: "His counsel shall stand, and He will do all his will [Isaiah 46:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 46.10)."

ADDRESS—

1. To those who question the possibility of their own salvation—

I do not wonder that any should feel doubts on this head, when God himself seems almost at a loss to find how he shall effect it. But view God as a God of uncontrollable sovereignty and irresistible power, and you may at once dismiss all your fears, if only you cry mightily to him, and put your trust in him.

2. To those who have entertained no such fears—

How awfully must Satan have blinded your eyes, and hardened your hearts! You think salvation easy to be attained, and almost a matter of course. But you will be of a very different mind, if ever you come to see the greatness of your guilt, and the inveteracy of your corruptions. I tell you, Brethren, that nothing but the blood of God's only dear Son could ever have atoned for your guilt; nor can anything but the operation of the divine Spirit ever renew your depraved hearts: nor until you are made sensible of the difficulties of your salvation, will you have any well-grounded hope of being "numbered among the children of your God".

3. To those who profess to have been brought into the family of their God—

You doubtless wish to be informed how you may "walk worthy of your high calling." To you then I say, Obey your God in the two particulars which he here requires. "Go to him, as your Father in Christ Jesus;" and "walk before him as dear children;" committing to him your every care, and expecting from him a supply of all your wants: And let nothing prevail upon you to "turn away from him." Be ready to sacrifice every earthly consideration, and to lay down even life itself, for him. Under all circumstances, my advice to you is, "Be steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord: and you may then be assured, that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord."

[Jeremiah 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.22)

DISCOURSE 1035

INVITATION TO BACKSLIDERS

[Jeremiah 3:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.22). Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings. Behold, we come unto you; for you are the Lord our God.

THOUGH the conversion of men is the result of God's purpose, and solely the effect of his grace, yet it is wrought by rational means. He calls upon them as free agents, and enforces his exhortations with the most cogent motives. By these means he convinces their judgment, and makes them willing to comply with his solicitations. In the preceding context he had determined to effect his purpose by the constraining influence of his grace; nevertheless he does not omit the use of means, but repeats his former invitations with still stronger arguments than before. In this way he produces the change upon the reluctant soul, and makes it thankfully to embrace his offered mercy.

In discoursing on the words before us, we shall consider,

I. The Lord's address to the backsliders—

The persons addressed are either mere nominal Christians, or real Christians in a declining state—

The term "backsliding" refers to an unruly heifer that either will not at all draw in its master's yoke, or that performs its work unsteadily [Hosea 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 4.16). In the former view, it comprehends all those who in name and profession are his, but in reality are altogether regardless of his will. Alas! How many are there of this description in every place! Who among us may not consider the text as addressed to himself in particular? Who has not cast off the yoke of God, and said, like Pharaoh, "I know not the Lord, neither will I obey his voice?" In the latter view, it may describe those who, having begun to serve the Lord, turn back again in some measure to the world and to sin. And where is there a child of God who must not acknowledge himself to have been, at some time, of this number, however diligently he be serving God at this moment? Who can say that he has invariably, from the very first, pursued the path of duty in one uniform tenor of conduct? Who has not often been conscious of secret declensions, and "backslidings of heart?"

To both these descriptions of people does God address a pledge and impressive exhortation—

God well knows the danger to which all are exposed when they have turned aside from him. Nor does he "will, in any instance, the death of a sinner, but rather that he should return and live." Hence, instead of saying, as we might well expect, Depart from me, he invites us to return. He would have us not only to take his yoke upon us, but to draw in it with pleasure and delight. To enforce his exhortation, he adds a most encouraging promise. Well might he threaten us with the dreadful consequences of our transgression, and address himself only to our fears. But he is a God of infinite compassion, and would rather win us by love. Our backslidings have made a deadly wound in our souls, a wound which if not speedily closed, will destroy us forever. Behold, what astonishing mercy! He promises to heal us: to heal the guilt of our sin by the blood of Jesus, and the power of it by his good Spirit! Such is his gracious declaration to us at this instant; and such is the encouragement which he affords to all who have departed from him.

Having seen the condescension of God, we can be at no loss to determine,

II. The effect it should produce upon us—

If we have the smallest spark of ingenuousness within us, his goodness must of necessity produce,

1. A ready compliance with his will—

Such was the effect upon those addressed in the text. And, whenever the word is applied with power to our souls, the same effect will be visible on us. We shall no longer keep at a distance from God, but return to him with our whole hearts. Filled with astonishment at his forbearance towards us, and solicitous to experience the renewed expressions of his favor, we shall say, "Behold we come unto you." No pleasures of sin will be suffered to detain us from him. Having "tasted the gall and wormwood of a backslidden state, our souls will have them still in remembrance." We shall determine with the Church of old, "I will return unto my first husband, for then it was better with me than now [Hosea 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 2.7)."

I call then on this whole assembly now to unite as with the voice of one man, saying, "You Lord are our God; and we come to you" according to your commandment; yes, "behold," and bear witness to us this day, "We come unto you; for you are the Lord our God."

2. An unreserved surrender of ourselves to his service—

The love of Christ has a constraining power, which, if not irresistibly, yet invincibly, impels us to live unto him. Let it once be "shed abroad in our hearts," and we shall instantly exclaim with rapture, "My Lord, and my God." "What have I to do any more with idols," will be the natural effusion of our souls [Hosea 14:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 14.8). We shall feel a holy indignation at the thought of having so long "provoked the Lord to jealousy;" and shall address him in the language of his repenting people, "Other lords besides you have had dominion over us, but by you only will we make mention of your name [Isaiah 26:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 26.13)."

APPLICATION—

1. To those who are deliberately resisting the will of God—

While casting off the restraints of God's law, and following the dictates of your own will, you conceive yourselves to be enjoying perfect liberty. But such liberty is the sorest bondage [2 Peter 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Pet 2.19). A subjection to sin is a vassalage most abject in its nature, and most fatal in its consequences [Romans 6:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 6.16). Would to God that the slaves of sin would reflect a moment what master they are serving, and what wages they are likely to receive! Soon would they then cast off the yoke which their own lusts have imposed, and seek for freedom in the service of their God. Awake, you deluded sinners, and return to him, whose "yoke is easy, and whose burden is light."

2. To those who, having begun to serve God, are drawing back from him—

"Who has bewitched," who has infatuated, your depraved hearts? "Has God been a wilderness to you," that you are tired of his service [Jeremiah 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 2.5); [Jeremiah 2:31](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 2.31). "Is there indeed no profit in serving him?" We will venture to put the matter to this issue. Are you as happy now in your departure from God, as you were when you were endeavoring to walk with him? Has your return to secret neglects and sinful indulgences been attended with a proportionate increase of peace and comfort? Sure we are, that none can truly affirm this to have been their experience. If your consciences be not altogether seared, your wounds are festering at this instant. Beware then lest God leave you to be "filled with your own ways [Proverbs 14:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 14.14)." That would be the greatest curse that can be inflicted on you. O return immediately to God I and he will heal your backslidings and love you freely [Hosea 14:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 14.4).

3. To those who are maintaining a steadfast walk with God—

Thrice happy souls! you are highly favored of the Lord. Say, Have you not already the recompense in your own bosoms? Is not his service perfect freedom? Be thankful then to God who enables you so to live, Be fearful of anything which may "grieve that Holy Spirit, by whom you are sealed." Watch against secret backslidings in their very first beginnings. Be more and more diligent in every good word and work. "Be steadfast, immoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; and be assured that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord."

[Jeremiah 4:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 4.3-4)

DISCOURSE 1036

REPENTANCE THE MEANS OF PREVENTING RUIN

[Jeremiah 4:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 4.3-4). Thus says the Lord to the men of Judah and Jerusalem, Break up your fallow ground, and sow not among thorns. Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, you men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.

THE language of the prophets is highly figurative, and therefore sometimes difficult to be understood; but, when judiciously explained, it will always be found highly instructive. Of course, it will not be right to press a metaphorical expression too far; nor should an idea that may seem indelicate, be so touched as to offend the nicest ear This hint should be very strictly attended to, in preaching on such a text as this; but, when the general import of the metaphor is seen, the subject contained in it may be prosecuted to great advantage. It is obvious that some very important instruction is conveyed in the passage before us: and it will be found no less applicable to ourselves than to the Jews of old, if we consider,

I. The duties here enjoined—

These are set forth under two different images; the one taken from breaking up fallow ground, and the other from the Jewish rite of circumcision. To ascertain the import of those images, we need only refer to a parallel passage in the Prophet Ezekiel, where the same duties are inculcated in plain and simple terms; "Repent and turn from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin [Ezekiel 18:30](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 18.30)." Two duties then are here enjoined;

1. Repentance—

The heart of man by nature may justly be compared with uncultivated ground that is covered with thorns and briers; for it is obdurate, and altogether unfit for the reception of any good scud, until it has been "broken up," and cleared of its noxious products. Let any one examine his own heart, and he will find this representation true. As to the outward acts of men, there certainly is a great difference, yes, and in their inward dispositions too; but in respect of love to God and delight in his service, all are on the same level; "the carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be [Romans 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 8.7)." It is full of "earthly, sensual, devilish" affections, which must be rooted up, before the graces of God's Spirit can grow within it. But this cannot be done by a slight and superficial work: the plough must enter into the very soul, as it did on the day of Pentecost: we must be made to feel our desert and danger, and be brought to the condition of the poor repenting publican [Luke 18:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 18.13). Let every child of man bear this in mind; for it is "the broken and contrite heart alone, which God will not despise;" and "except you thus repent, you must all inevitably perish."

2. Amendment—

Circumcision was not only "a seal" on God's part, marking Israel for his own peculiar people, but it was a sign also on the part of Israel, denoting their obligation to "put off the body of the sins of the flesh [Colossians 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col 2.11)." and to love and serve God with all their hearts [Deuteronomy 30:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 30.6). In this sense, though the rite itself is superseded by Baptism, the term may justly be applied to us. We must have "our hearts circumcised unto the Lord:" we must "mortify our earthly members [Colossians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col 3.5). [Galatians 5:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 5.24)," and "put off the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts [Ephesians 4:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 4.22)." Whatever pain it may occasion us to part with "our besetting sins," (for circumcision was a painful rite,) it must be submitted to, even as a man gladly parts with a diseased member for the preservation of his whole body. Our blessed Lord assures us, that if we willfully retain one bosom lust, we must perish in that "fire that never shall be quenched [Mark 9:43-48](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark 9.43-48)."

This awful truth being so strongly marked in our text, we shall proceed to show,

II. The connection between these duties and the Divine favor—

In its primary sense, the threatening in our text maybe considered as denouncing temporal judgments on the Jewish nation: but it must also be understood in reference to those eternal judgments which we all have merited by our iniquities. For the averting of those judgments, repentance and amendment are indispensably necessary:

1. Not, however, in a way of meritorious efficiency—

It is not possible for man to merit anything at God's hands. As transgressors of his law, we are justly exposed to his everlasting displeasure [Romans 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 3.19); and, if we could perfectly obey his law in future, our obedience would no more cancel our obligation to punishment for past disobedience, than our future abstinence from incurring debts would discharge the debts already incurred. But the truth is, that everything we do is imperfect, and needs forgiveness on account of its imperfection: and therefore to dream of meriting pardon by deeds which themselves stand in need of pardon, must be folly in the extreme. There is but one way of obtaining deliverance from the punishment of sin, and that is through the blood and righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is his meritorious sacrifice which alone expiates the guilt of sin: and, if we look to anything else, either in whole or in part, for pardon and acceptance, we effectually cut ourselves off from all hope of his salvation. However we may "plough up the fallow ground, and sow in righteousness, we must reap in mercy," and in mercy alone [Hosea 10:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 10.12). Salvation is altogether of grace, through faith [Ephesians 2:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 2.8-9); and in point of dependence, we must renounce our best actions as much as our vilest sins.

2. But in a way of suitable preparation—

Repentance and amendment are necessary both to an honorable exercise of mercy on God's part, and to a becoming reception of mercy on our part.

If God were not to require humiliation in us, and a mortification of our sins, what evidence would there be that He is holy; and in what light would he appear as the Moral Governor of the Universe? Surely he would be thought indifferent about the honor of his law, and regardless of the moral character of his creatures. But he will not so dishonor his own perfections: and therefore, even when most anxious to display his mercy, he requires an acknowledgment of sin on our part [Jeremiah 3:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.12-13), and declares, that, if we will not humble ourselves before him, he will proceed against us with deserved rigor [Jeremiah 2:35](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 2.35).

But if we could conceive that God should pardon an un-repenting sinner, the sinner himself would not value a pardon so offered: he would rather think it an insult than a favor: for, while he is unconscious that he deserves the wrath of God, he would account it an injustice even to be supposed to merit it. Again, suppose the pardon actually conferred, what gratitude would he feel for the gift bestowed? or what endeavors would he make to glorify God in future? Would he not account sin a light matter? Would he not readily return to it, even "as a dog to his vomit, or the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire?" We may ask once more; supposing him forgiven, how could he join in the songs of the redeemed above? They are prostrating themselves with profoundest adoration before the throne of God, and singing praises incessantly "to Him that loved them, and washed them from their sins in his own blood:" but he has no heart for such exercises: instead of magnifying his God and Savior for the greatness of his mercy towards him, he would be congratulating himself that he had never merited any other portion.

Here then the connection between these duties and our forgiveness is manifest: it is founded, not in any vain ideas of merit, but in the immutable decrees of God: God cannot dishonor himself; nor can man be saved in any other way, than by "confessing and forsaking his iniquities [Proverbs 28:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 28.13)."

ADDRESS—

1. Those who have never yet been awakened to a sense of their sins—

Alas! how many among us are yet "uncircumcised in heart and ears?" How many have never yet wept and mourned in secret for their sins, and never adopted the resolution of the Prodigal, "I will arise and go to my father." But God forbid that they should continue any longer in such fatal security. Hear, every one of you, the command of God: "Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning, and your joy into heaviness: humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up [James 4:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James 4.9-10)." this, this is the great business of life: in comparison of this, every pursuit is light and vain. "To flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life!" O who can paint in sufficiently glowing colors the importance and excellency of such an employment?

Some may perhaps reply, that they cannot do these things. True, we cannot of ourselves; but will not God enable us to do them, if we seek the aid of his Holy Spirit? Has he not expressly told us, that his "grace shall be sufficient for us?" I say then, "Plough up your fallow ground;" "make you a new heart, and a new spirit:" and when you find your own insufficiency, then plead with God the promises he has made, and cry, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me Compare the command, [Ezekiel 18:31](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 18.31) with the promise, [Ezekiel 36:26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 36.26) and the petition, [Psalm 51:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 51.10)." That prayer, if offered in faith, shall surely be answered; and you shall find to your joy, that you "can do all things through Christ who strengthened you."

2. Those who make a profession of religion—

Do not imagine that it is sufficient to break up the fallow ground once: the gardener ploughs his ground often, especially if it be a soil that is full of noxious plants. Thus then must you do: there is no soil so bad as the heart of a carnal man: weeds are growing up continually: and it must be the labor of your life to pluck them up. How many professors of religion have the good seed choked and rendered unfruitful, through their negligence in pulling up the thorns and briers that grow up with it [Matthew 13:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 13.7); [Matthew 13:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 13.22). It is an awful truth, that no people are farther from the kingdom of God than they; because they are of all persons the most difficult to be brought to a sense of their danger. But Paul marks in very striking terms the difference between such persons and the true Christian: against those he cautions us, "Beware of dogs, beware of the concision: we are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh [Philippians 3:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 3.2-3)." A profession of religion, however clear your knowledge of the Gospel may be, will not suffice: for "he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God [Romans 2:25-29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 2.25-29)."

[Jeremiah 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 4.14)

DISCOURSE 1037

IMPORTANCE OF SUPPRESSING VAIN THOUGHTS

[Jeremiah 4:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 4.14). O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved: how long shall your vain thoughts lodge within you?

THE displeasure of God is never raised to such a height, but that he is willing to pardon his offending creatures, and longs for their repentance on purpose that he may exercise his mercy towards them. The denunciations of his wrath do indeed frequently appear as if they could not be reversed: but they always, even when most positive, imply a condition, and leave room for hope. The approaching destruction of Nineveh was foretold by the prophet in terms which seemed to preclude a possibility of their escape: but their penitence averted the impending storm. Thus, in the chapter before us, the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans is spoken of as hastening with the velocity of an eagle, insomuch that the prophet complains of it as already accomplished: "Woe unto us! for we are spoiled:" yet in the very next words he introduces, as in a parenthesis, a brief and pathetic exhortation to repentance, as the sure and only means of staying the Divine judgments.

It should seem that, in the midst of all their wickedness, the Jews buoyed up themselves with expectations that the threatened calamities would never come. In reference to these vain hopes the prophet addresses them in the words which we have just read. In these words we see that God notices the "vain thoughts," as well as the sinful actions, of men; and that he requires "the heart" to be purified from those, as well as the life from these.

We shall take occasion therefore from the text to show,

I. What are those vain thoughts which are apt to lodge within us—

Of course it will not be possible to notice all the vain thoughts that rush into the minds of men; (we might as well attempt to number the sands upon the sea shore:) we must content ourselves with mentioning a few, which deserve more particular attention.

St. Paul speaks of a "filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit:" agreeably to which distinction we may arrange our thoughts under two heads;

1. Spiritual—

There are many "vain thoughts," which, on account of their having their seat and empire in the mind only, may be called spiritual; but which are peculiarly hateful to God.

What proud thoughts are apt to infest the mind! It is no small delight which people feel in the beauty of their persons, the elegance of their dress, the dignity of their titles, or the extent and variety of their intellectual acquirements. Even in reference to religion itself, how common is it to behold men puffed up with vain conceit, imagining themselves wise, when they are "born like a wild ass's colt;" and good, when they are "enemies to God by wicked works!"

Unbelieving thoughts also are ever ready to arise. Indeed, these almost universally prevail. Whence is it that men are so secure, so easy in their sins? Whence is it that all the promises and threatenings of the Gospel have so little weight? Is it not from the secret thought that God's word shall never be fulfilled, and that, however they may live, they shall have peace at the last? And are not such thoughts peculiarly displeasing to God [Deuteronomy 29:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 29.19-20).

Among the most sinful thoughts that can occupy the mind, are those which are vindictive: yet how apt are they to rankle in the breast! What a tumult will they excite within us, agitating our frame, and instigating us to the most bitter invectives, hasty purposes, and violent proceedings! It is well for mankind that all are not equally susceptible of these impressions; but there are few, if any, who have not found them, on some occasions, disturbing their own peace, and operating to the destruction of Christian charity. Nothing can more strongly mark the impiety of such thoughts than God's express declaration, that he himself will never forgive any person that entertains them in his heart [Matthew 18:35](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 18.35).

2. Carnal—

Among carnal thoughts we number those which relate either to the world or to the flesh.

The world tempts us principally to anxious, covetous, or ambitious thoughts. To these all are more or less exposed: the statesman, the warrior, the merchant, the mechanic, yes, all orders and degrees of men, are impelled or distracted by them. Doubtless, it is the duty of every man to attend to the proper business of his calling: but when his mind is so occupied with earthly things as that he can find no delight in those which are heavenly, he is sinning against God, who would have him without carefulness [1 Corinthians 7:32](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 7.32). [Philippians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 4.6). [Matthew 6:25-34](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 6.25-34), and commands him to "set his affections on things above, and not on things below [Colossians 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col 3.2)."

It is scarcely needful to mention, that among the vainest thoughts which find a lodgment within us, are those which are impure. It is surprising with what violence these will sometimes assault the soul; how they will haunt it by night and by day; how they will intrude even into the holiest places, and interrupt our holiest services. Nor can we doubt in what light they are to be regarded, when God himself has declared an unchaste look to be the same in his sight as actual adultery [Matthew 5:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 5.28).

Not to enumerate any more vain thoughts, we shall rather proceed to show,

II. The necessity of cleansing ourselves from them—

We cannot cleanse ourselves from the guilt which we have already contracted, unless we wash in "the fountain opened for sin and for impurity." Nor can we purify ourselves from the pollution of sin, unless the Holy Spirit work effectually in us To this effect we pray that "God would cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of his Holy Spirit." Yet this does not supersede the use of means; for when the text exhorts us to "wash our hearts from wickedness," it implies that,

1. It may be done—

Though the power is certainly of God, yet there is much to be done by us: we should maintain a sense of God's presence with us. If the eye of a fellow-creature, even of a child, were upon us, we should be deterred by it from the commission of many sins: how then should we be restrained from evil thoughts, if we felt a consciousness that God was privy to every imagination of our hearts!

We should guard against the occasions of sin. All our senses and faculties are inlets to sin, or instruments whereby we commit it. All our fellowship with each other gives occasion to evil, if we be not much on our guard against it. We may, by flattering, or worldly, or light conversation, or even by imparting to each other the workings of our hearts, stir up unhallowed passions, and suggest thoughts that may be exceedingly injurious to the soul. We should "set a watch before the door of our mouths," and even "make a covenant with our eyes," in order to shut out evil from our own hearts, and keep from exciting it in the hearts of others.

We should frequently meditate upon the Holy Scriptures. David found this a good antidote to evil thoughts [Psalm 119:113](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 119.113). The Scriptures have in themselves an efficacy to purity the heart, when they are applied to us by the powerful energy of the Holy Spirit [2 Corinthians 10:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 10.4-5); besides which, the more we are filled with holy thoughts, the less room will be left for the intrusion of evil See [Luke 11:24-26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 11.24-26). Being intent on the promises of God, we shall more easily cleanse ourselves from all filthiness, both of flesh and spirit [2 Corinthians 7:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 7.1).

Lastly, we should "diligently keep our hearts [Proverbs 4:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 4.23)." The heart is the womb in which all evils are generated [Matthew 15:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 15.19); and we must watch all its motions, if we would keep it pure. The very instant any evil arises there, we must expel it: if we cannot prevent its entrance, we must take care it do not "lodge within us."

2. It must be done—

God notices our thoughts as much as he does our actions [Psalm 50:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 50.21). [Ezekiel 11:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 11.5); and he considers them as characterizing our state before him. "As we think in our hearts, so are we [Proverbs 23:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 23.7) with [Matthew 12:35](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 12.35);" we are either hypocritical and vile, or pure and holy, according as we indulge, or abhor, the hidden abominations of our hearts.

Thoughts as really lead to death as actions themselves do [James 1:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James 1.15); and they may be so evil in the sight of God as to render it doubtful whether they shall ever be forgiven [Acts 8:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 8.22). They must therefore be repented of as much as actions [Acts 8:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 8.22); and, if they be not repented of, they will inevitably exclude us from the kingdom of Heaven. This is strongly intimated in the text, since the mortifying of them is declared to be necessary to saltation: and the same awful truth is taught by our Lord himself, who represents the pure in heart "as the only persons who shall see God [Matthew 5:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 5.8)."

The very manner in which God addresses us in the text, is a very striking proof of the necessity which lies upon us to subdue the evil workings of our hearts. Why is all this tenderness in the exhortation, but because God, who wills not the death of a sinner, sees the fatal tendency of our evil thoughts? And why this kind impatience in the reproof, but because he sees that the evil, if indulged, will grow upon us; and that, if not speedily suppressed, it will terminate in our ruin?

Tenderly then would we exhort you all to mark the secret motions of your hearts. In respect of actions, many of you, no doubt, are virtuous, and, to a certain degree, blameless, But if you will call to mind the "vain thoughts" that have lodged within you, you will find abundant reason to blush, and be confounded before God in dust and ashes [Psalm 19:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 19.12). [Proverbs 20:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 20.9). You will see that you need the blood of Christ to cleanse you from guilt, and the Spirit of Christ to create in you a new heart, as much as the most abandoned wretch on earth: and that, unless you set yourselves in earnest to "cleanse your hands, and purify your hearts [James 4:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James 4.8)," there can be no salvation for you.

Say, Beloved, when will you begin this necessary work? With a holy impatience we would urge you to begin it instantly; lest, while you are purposing amendment, you be summoned unprepared to meet your God in judgment [Isaiah 55:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 55.7).

[Jeremiah 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 4.19)

DISCOURSE 1038

THE MISERIES OF WAR

[Jeremiah 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 4.19). My affections, my affections! I am pained at my very heart; my heart makes a noise in me: I cannot hold my peace, because you have heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war.

THE propriety of setting apart days for national humiliation is questioned by none, except those who despise all religion, or those whose extravagant principles of liberty lead them to set at nothing all human authorities. The most pious of the Jewish kings endeavored to unite their subjects in prayer and supplication, as the best means of averting the judgments which they either felt or feared: and even heathen monarchs have resorted to it, as that which their own consciences taught them was the most likely way to obtain favor with the Most High. We have reason to be thankful that this nation is now called in the most solemn manner to humble itself before God, and to implore help from him under its present difficulties: and happy would it be for us, if the people at large laid to heart, as they ought, the calamities which we suffer, or the sins which have brought them upon us!

In the words before us, we may see what ought to be our feelings on this occasion Fast-Day in 1809, and what our conduct.

I. What should be our feelings—

That we may estimate aright the feelings which a state of warfare requires, let us view it,

1. As a calamity endured—

Those who are at a distance from the scene of war, and hear of it only by battles gained or lost, are apt to overlook the miseries of their fellow-creatures, and to think of nothing but the general effects which the events may have on their national aggrandizement. But if we would form a correct judgment of this matter, let us endeavor to realize the horrors of war. Let us think of a hostile army now in our neighborhood, and marching to attack the very place wherein we live. How would fear seize hold upon us, and "all faces gather blackness!" Read the menacing descriptions given of an advancing army by the Prophets Ezekiel [Ezekiel 21:8-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 21.8-17). and Joel [Joe. 2:4-11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Joel. 2.4-11); think, from the first tidings of their approach, until you behold them just ready to spread desolation and slaughter all around them; think, I say, what your feelings would be: does the prophet exaggerate, when he compares them to the pangs of a woman travailing with her first-born child verse 29, 31. See your dearest relatives weltering in their blood; your houses spoiled; the objects of your tenderest affection treated with the most shocking indignities; and you yourselves driven, without food, without clothing, to wander in the open fields, until your exhausted nature sinks under its accumulated woes. Well may we tremble at the bare possibility of such events. Reflect, then, on a whole kingdom thus desolated; the hostile armies carrying fire and sword through all the towns and villages of a populous country; "A fire devours before them; and behind them a flame burns: the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness: yes, and nothing does escape them:" "What a day of darkness and of gloominess" must that be to the people visited with such awful calamities [Joe. 2:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Joel. 2.1-3). Say, then, Brethren, what your feelings should be at this time! What if these scenes have not been acted before our eyes; are they the less to be deplored? And who can tell how soon they may be brought home to our own doors! We entreat you, then, to lay these things to heart, and no longer to indulge a stupid insensibility to the calamities of war.

2. As a judgment inflicted—

War is one of God's "four sore judgments," with which he visits a guilty land. It is he who gives the sword a charge against this or that country [Jeremiah 47:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 47.6-7), and says, "Sword, pass through the land [Ezekiel 14:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 14.17)." And as he stirred up enemies against Solomon [1 Kings 11:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Kings 11.9); 1 Kings 11:14; [1 Kings 11:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Kings 11.23); [1 Kings 11:26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Kings 11.26),, on purpose to "avenge the quarrel of his covenant [Leviticus 26:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lev 26.25), so it is on account of sin that he is now laying upon us his chastising rod ver, 17, 18, 22; Nor can we doubt but that his anger has waxed hot against us, when the judgments inflicted for our sins are so various and of so long continuance. See in what terms he describes his anger against the people of old [Deuteronomy 32:23-25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 32.23-25). and consider whether, when its effects are so visible on us, it be not high time for us to tremble. Yes, surely, the prophet's direction is exactly such as we are now called to follow verse 8; and, if we refuse to follow it, we may well expect that our judgments will be multiplied, until they have wrought either our humiliation or destruction [Leviticus 26:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lev 26.27-28). We must be stupid indeed if we do not see reason to "cry, when he is so binding us;" and to "humble ourselves under his mighty hand," when he is so correcting us.

But it. will be to little purpose to ascertain what our feelings should be, if we do not also consider,

II. What should be our conduct—

Let us make this inquiry, in reference,

1. To Ministers—

The prophet tells us what was his conduct, to which indeed he was irresistibly impelled; "I cannot hold my peace," Ministers are watchmen, appointed by God himself to warn the people against his impending judgments. And while it is their duty to "weep between the porch and the altar," and to intercede with God to spare his heritage [Joe. 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Joel. 2.17),, and to "give him no rest" until he grant mercy to the land, [Isaiah 62:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 62.6-7). it is also their duty to "lift up their voice as a trumpet, and to show the house of Israel their sins." They must "cry aloud, and not spar. [Isaiah 58:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 58.1)."

Let us not be thought harsh, if we execute our commission with fidelity and earnestness. You yourselves would be the first to condemn a sentinel who did not give you timely notice of an advancing enemy: and you will condemn us also in the eternal world, if by "prophesying smooth things" we contribute to your ruin. We must, then, speak, "whether you will hear or whether you will forbear;" and must warn you, that nothing but present and eternal misery can be expected, while you continue impenitent in your sins [Luke 13:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 13.3); [Luke 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 13.5).

2. To the people—

Though the text does not particularly specify your duty, the context does, and warns you that an attention to it is the only means of quenching that wrath which is now flaming against you. The advice given you by the prophet may be comprised in three particulars: Seek to have your obstinate hearts softened: Put away the evils which have provoked God's displeasure against you: and, Get your hearts thoroughly renewed and sanctified by divine grace verse 3, 4, 14. It will be easy to enlarge on the three points In reference to the words of the prophet.

We accuse not all as manifesting the same obduracy, or as loaded with the same degrees of guilt; but if all would search into their own hearts, they might find much impenitence and unbelief to mourn over, and much worldliness and carnality to put away: even those who make a profession of religion, if they would examine themselves closely as in the presence of God, might rind many evil tempers and dispositions, which obstruct the efficacy of their prayers, and fearfully augment our national guilt. But if we turn not from our wickedness, it is iii vain to hope that God will turn from his fiery indignation.

ADDRESS—

1. The careless—

This comprehends the great bulk of mankind. Whatever calamities are endured by others, they feel nothing, any farther than it immediately affects themselves. "When God's hand is lifted up, they will not see;" "nor when his judgments are in the earth, will they learn righteousness." But such indifference is most offensive to God: and they who indulge it are likely to become signal monuments of the Divine displeasure See [Amos. 6:3-7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Amos. 6.3-7). [Zephaniah 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zeph 1.4); [Zephaniah 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zeph 1.6); [Zephaniah 1:12-18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zeph 1.12-18).

2. The self-confident—

They who see not the hand of God against them are ever leaning on an arm of flesh: if they have failed in ever so many efforts, they still look no higher than to their own exertions for success. What their views are, and what the declarations of God respecting them [Isaiah 9:8-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 9.8-17), may be seen in the prophecies of Isaiah. O that we may not thus provoke God to jealousy, and bring accumulated curses on our own heads, when we should be laboring by prayer and supplication to avert them [Jeremiah 17:5-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 17.5-8)..

3. The mourners—

We hope there are some who possess a measure of Jeremiah's patriotism and piety, and who understand by experience his exclamations in the text, "My affections, my affections! I am pained at my very heart!" Would to God that we could see such a spirit universally prevailing! There would be no doubt then of a happy termination of our troubles. Such persons indeed are too generally considered as gloomy enthusiasts: but they are the best friends of their country: they are the people who "stand in the gap;" they are the few righteous, for whose sake our Sodom has not long since been destroyed. Go on, beloved, like Nehemiah, Daniel, and other holy men, bewailing your own sins, and the sins of this whole nation: and then, if you should not be so happy as to see your efforts successful in relation to the kingdom at large, you may be assured that your labor will not be lost as it respects your own souls: your payer shall return into your own bosom; and your tears be had in remembrance before God, [Ezekiel 9:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 9.4).

[Jeremiah 5:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 5.23-24)

DISCOURSE 1039

GOD'S BOUNTIES, AND OUR INGRATITUDE

[Jeremiah 5:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 5.23-24). This people has a revolting and a rebellious heart. They are revolted and gone: neither say they in. their heart, Let us now fear the Lord our God, that gives rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserves unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.

AS Ministers of the Gospel, our chief employment is to open to you the hidden mystery of Redemption, and to present for your acceptance "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Yet there are times and seasons when we must assume somewhat of the sterner aspect of the prophets; and, in the name of our Divine Master, address you in the language of reproof. The Jews, no doubt, were a stiff-necked people, and needed to be reproved in terms of the greatest severity Would to God that we, under our more liberal dispensation, were not obnoxious also to the same charge! But really, the commission given to the prophet is far from being unsuitable to us at this time, or improper to be executed towards you: "Declare this in the house of Jacob, and publish it in Judah, saying, Hear now this, O foolish people, and without understanding; who have eyes, and see not; who have ears, and hear not: Fear you not me? says the Lord: will you not tremble at my presence, who have placed the sand for the bound of the sea, by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it: and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it? But this people have a revolting and a rebellious heart; they are revolted and gone: neither say they in their heart, Let us fear the Lord our God, that gives rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserves unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest."

In these words the prophet reproves the Jews,

I. For their contempt of God's authority—

They were indeed "a rebellious and gainsaying people [Romans 10:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 10.21)."—

God had chosen them for his own peculiar people; and had given them his law, written with his own hand on tables of stone. But from the very beginning they were a rebellious people, casting off their allegiance to God, and revolting from him, to the service of "gods that could not profit nor deliver them." And though God called them to him by a succession of prophets, "they refused to return to him;" yes, "so bent were the whole nation to backslide from God, that none at all would exalt him [Hosea 11:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 11.5); [Hosea 11:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 11.7)."

And "what are we better than they [Romans 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 3.9)."

God has given to us also his Law. And who among us obeys it? Who desires to obey it? Who really, and in truth, endeavors to obey it? What, if we do not bow down to stocks and stones; do we not, in fact, "love and serve the creature more than the Creator," even as they did [Romans 1:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 1.25). Who among us either abstains from any act, purely because it would displease God; or performs any act, purely from a desire to please him? I grant, we may abstain from many evils, and perform many duties; but by what motive are we impelled? We shall find that our own gratification, or the approbation of man, has a far stronger influence on our minds than any consideration of God's favor; and that in "the spirit of our mind" we are as much revolted from God as over the Jews themselves were.

But God has given to us his Gospel also, saying, Whatever contempt they have shown to Moses and the prophets, "they will reverence my Son." But have we obeyed his voice, and "taken upon us his light and easy yoke?" No, indeed: we have been as regardless of Christ as if he had never come into the world. "We have indeed called him Lord; but we have not done the things which he has said [Luke 6:46](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 6.46)." Say, my Brethren, whether we have "fled to him for refuge," as the only Savior of our souls? Say, whether we have surrendered up ourselves to him as his devoted followers, and made it the one labor of our lives to "glorify him with our body and our spirit, which are his [1 Corinthians 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 6.20)." Look at all around you, and see whether this be their state: and then look within, and let conscience tell you whether it be your own state: and, if it be not, then is the reproof in my text merited by you, far more than by the Jews themselves; inasmuch as you sin against greater light, and far richer mercies than they.

God was ever endeavoring to reclaim his people: yet did his mercies only serve to mark their ingratitude, and bring reproof upon them,

II. For their insensibility to his love—

Not all the mercies given unto them could bring them to a better mind—

God had promised them a supply of all temporal blessings, if they would serve him with diligence and fidelity. And notwithstanding they violated their obligations continually, he still imparted to them the blessings they had so justly forfeited, sending thorn rain and fruitful seasons, as if they had not offended him at all. And what did he expect in return for these mercies? He doubtless expected, that, from a sense of gratitude for such unmerited kindness, they would reform their lives, and devote themselves to his service. But, behold, they still continued their disobedience; and "none of them said in their hearts, Let us fear the Lord our God, who has done such great things for us," This was a great aggravation of their guilt, and could not fail to bring down upon them God's heavy displeasure.

And what effect, let me ask, have God's mercies produced on us?

Behold, in his mercy he has now "sent us rain [Deuteronomy 11:13-15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 11.13-15)," which we so greatly needed, and has given us a prospect of a "harvest;" when, if the drought had continued much longer, we should have been reduced to a state of extreme scarcity or famine, And what does God expect at our hands, but that we say one to another, Let us now fear the Lord our God, who has given to us this seasonable relief See [Joe. 2:23-27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Joel. 2.23-27). Surely this is not more than the occasion calls for. But is this the way in which we are now requiting God for his mercies? Is this the feeling of men in general? Has it been the feeling of our own hearts? Have we humbled ourselves before him? and has "the goodness of our God led us to repentance [Romans 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 2.4).".

But what shall I say, if I put the question in reference to spiritual blessings? God has given to us, not merely "the bread that perishes, but that also which endures unto everlasting life". And not only has he sent us rain to refresh and fructify the parched ground, but he has sent us also his Holy Spirit, to revive and fertilize our barren souls. Whatever may be said of less-favored places, I trust we have reason to acknowledge the bounties of Heaven in these respects. What, then, should be the state of our minds? Should not we be penetrated with a sense of gratitude to God? Should not we determine for ourselves, and stimulate one another to fear and serve him? Yes, might we not expect that the very stones should cry out against us, if we neglected to express our gratitude in this way? But how is it with us? Where are the persons who are so impressed? Where are the persons who are so exercised? Where are the persons who thus "fear the Lord and his goodness [Hosea 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 3.5)." Alas! alas! We may condemn the Jews for their obstinacy; but sure I am we have far greater reason to condemn ourselves as the most ungrateful of men, when not even the mercy of redemption itself has been able to bring us effectually to our God.

And now, what shall I say unto you? Two requests I would make:

1. Mark the dealings of God with you—

Mark those which relate to you as members of the community at large; for in those you are deeply interested: let not the gift of rain, or genial seasons, and of abundant harvests, be overlooked, because they are common; but let them all lead you in devout thankfulness to your God. And mark still more especially his dealings with you as individuals, his mercies, and his judgments, of whatever kind they be; for they all have a voice to you, and may be improved to your spiritual and eternal good. Have you mercies? Let them incline you to a willing and unreserved surrender of yourselves to God [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 12.1), Have you judgments? "Hear the rod, and him that has appointed it [Micah 6:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Micah 6.9)." Only improve the providences that occur: and you shall never want a providence to improve.

2. Cultivate the mind which God requires—

He requires all to "fear and tremble at his presence verse 21." And, I beseech you, account not that a legal and undesirable frame of mind. Indeed, indeed, it is the safest state for all of us. I would not undervalue exalted joys: but I confess I love most the religion of a sinner: I love humility and self-abasement: I love the fleeing to Christ, and the washing daily and hourly in the fountain of his blood. I love religion, under the character of holy fear; and I would have you to "be in the fear of the Lord all the day long." Not that it is a slavish fear that I would recommend, or a fear that is constrained by an apprehension of God's displeasure. No; it is a fear that proceeds from love; a fear that is inspired by a sense of gratitude, and that is dictated, as it were, by your own hearts; saying, "Come, let us fear the Lord our God," who has done such great things for us. It is this, this cordial willingness, this impatient desire, that puts all the value into the disposition which I am now recommending to you. And be not contented to experience this fear in your own hearts, but endeavor to impress it on all around you. Let it grieve you to see the hardness and obduracy of all your neighbors: and take occasion from every mercy, whether temporal or spiritual, to stimulate all, even to the remotest ends of the earth, to love, and serve, and glorify their God.

[Jeremiah 6:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 6.16)

DISCOURSE 1040

THE GOOD OLD WAY

[Jeremiah 6:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 6.16). Thus says the Lord, Stand you in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and you shall find rest for your souls.

WHATEVER bears the stamp of antiquity upon it, finds, for the most part, a favorable reception in the world, while innovations are admitted with caution and reserve, The Gospel itself is often discarded under the idea that it is new. Even as far back as the days of Jeremiah, serious religion was deemed a novelty: but the prophet claimed the people's regard to it, no less from the consideration of its antiquity than of its inherent excellence—

To elucidate the words before us, we shall inquire,

I. What is that old and good way here spoken of?

The explanation, which our Lord himself has given of this passage [Matthew 11:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 11.28-29), shows, that we are not to confine its import to holiness alone, but must understand it as comprehending,

1. A penitential affiance in God—

Christ declares that he himself is "the way," the only way to the Father [John 14:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 14.6). To him we must come, trusting in his mediation and intercession, and looking for acceptance through him alone, Now this is certainly the old way, marked out by all the Jewish sacrifices, and trodden by Abel and our first parents. Nor can we doubt of its being the good way, since it was appointed of God himself, and has been approved by all his saints from the beginning of the world.

2. A cheerful obedience to him—

Our Lord expressly says, "Take my yoke upon you;" nor can this ever be dispensed with. Though faith in Christ be the way of acceptance with God, yet obedience to him is the only means of manifesting the sincerity of our faith. Hence holiness is by the prophet called, "The Lord's highway [Isaiah 35:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 35.8)." This too is of great antiquity, and must be traced up through prophets and patriarchs to the days of "righteous Abel." And it must be acknowledged to be good, since it tends so much to the perfecting of our nature, and to the adorning of our holy religion.

This however is not a mere speculative point; as we shall see, if we inquire,

II. What is our duty with respect to it?

God having so plainly revealed it to us, it becomes us all,

1. To inquire after it—

We should not go on in a presumptuous confidence that we are right; but should "stand and see," and attentively consider where we are going. We should "ask" of those whom God has appointed to be as way-marks to the people, and whose lips should both keep, and dispense, knowledge. Moreover we should search the sacred oracles (which, as a map, delineate our path with infallible precision) comparing with them the various steps we have taken, and noticing with care the footsteps of Christ and his Apostles. Not however trusting in our own researches, we should above all implore the teaching and direction of God's holy Spirit, who would bring us back from our wanderings, and "guide our feet into the way of peace."

2. To walk in it—

To possess knowledge will be of little service unless it produce a practical effect. Having found the right way we must come into it, renouncing every other path, how pleasant or profitable soever it may have been. Nor must we only get into it, but "walk therein" continually, neither diverted from it by allurements, nor discouraged in it by any difficulties. Whatever advances we may have made, we are still to prosecute the same path, trusting in Christ as our advocate with God, and rendering to him an uniform and unreserved obedience.

Nor will this appear hard to us, if we consider,

III. The encouragement given us to perform this duty—

To those who are out of this way, whatever they may boast, we are sure there is no solid peace: but they who walk in it shall find rest,

1. In their way—

Sweet is the rest which a weary and heavy-laden sinner finds in Jesus Christ: he sees in his blood a sufficiency of virtue to expiate all his guilt, and to cleanse him from all his sin: he perceives that the foundation of his hope is sure and immoveable; and therefore, "having peace in his conscience, he rejoices in hope of the glory of God." In the way of holy obedience, he enjoys, moreover, a present and a great reward: for while he vests from turbulent passions and tormenting fears, he finds, that "the work of righteousness is peace, and the effect of righteousness is quietness and assurance forever."

2. In their end—

If the ungodly have no peace in this world, much less have they in the world to come: but the obedient believer will enjoy perfect rest, when he shall have ceased from his present labors. "There is a rest remaining for the people of God;" and such a rest as neither eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor heart conceived: at the instant of their dismissal from the body, they shall be borne on the wings of angels into the regions of the blessed, and lie in the bosom of their Lord to all eternity.

ADDRESS—

1. To those who disregard religion—

You indeed may plead long prescription (even from the days of Cain) and general practice too, in favor of your habits: but do you doubt which is the better way? Do you not in your hearts envy those who walk in the good old way; and wish that you were able to live as they live? If then you would not persist in following a track, which you knew would lead to a place extremely distant from that which you were desirous to reach, attend to the warning now given, and turn unto God in the way marked out for you in his Gospel.

2. To those who seek indeed the paths of religion, but find no rest in them—

There are many who approve of coming to Christ for salvation, but wish to be excused from taking his yoke upon them; while others, on the contrary, would be content to render obedience to his law, if they might be at liberty to decline the humiliating method which he has prescribed for their acceptance with God. Others, again, profess to approve of the good old way; but cannot renounce the cares and pleasures of the world which retard their progress in it. No wonder then if such persons find no solid rest: indeed, it is well for them that they do not; since it would only deceive them to their eternal ruin. If we would have rest, either here or hereafter, it must be obtained in the way that has been pointed out; nor can it be obtained in any other to all eternity [John 3:36](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 3.36). [Hebrews 12:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 12.14).

3. To those who are walking comfortably in the good way—

Be not contented to go to Heaven alone; but labor in your respective spheres to bring others along with you. This was the disposition of the Church of old Son. 1:4; and should be the desire of all who have a hope towards God. It is scarcely to be conceived how much the exertions of Christians in their several families would extend the benefits of ministerial labors. The public ministration of the word would be far better attended, and incomparably more improved. Since then all are commanded to seek instruction, let all endeavor to communicate it If this were the subject of a Sermon for Charity Schools, the propriety of subscribing liberally for the support of such institutions might be stated here. So will the good way be more frequented; and more abundant blessings flow down on all who walk in it.

[Jeremiah 8:4-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 8.4-8)

DISCOURSE 1041

EXPOSTULATION WITH THE IMPENITENT

[Jeremiah 8:4-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 8.4-8). You shall say unto them, Thus says the Lord; Shall they fall, and not arise? Shall he turn away, and not return? Why then is this people of Jerusalem slidden back by a perpetual backsliding? They hold fast deceit, they refuse, to return. I hearkened and heard; but they spoke not aright; no man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done? Every one turned to his course, as the horse rushes into the battle. Yes, the stork in the Heaven knows her appointed times; and the turtle, and the crane, and the swallow, observe the time of their coming; but my people know not the judgment of the Lord. How do you say, We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us? Lo, certainly in vain made he it; the pen of the scribes is in vain.

WHATEVER difference civilization may produce in the external habits of men, it makes no change in the dispositions of their minds towards God. The advantages of religious instruction may rectify their sentiments in many things, and raise the standard of morals among them; but Divine grace alone can reach their hearts or dispose them to devote themselves to the service of their Maker. Hence the unregenerate among us are, in their general character, the same as they have been in all ages, and under all the different dispensations of religion. Papists and Protestants, Jews and Christians, differ only in name, and in a few outward observances: their hearts are all alike; and the same warnings and exhortations may be fitly addressed to them.

The Prophet Jeremiah was commanded to expostulate with the Jews upon their wickedness, their impenitence, their folly, and their presumption. On these same topics we would address ourselves to you. We shall not however make a formal division of our discourse, or mark our transition from one part of it to another, but shall prosecute our subject in the precise order of the words before us.

Permit me then to observe to you, that,

Men will endeavor to remedy any misfortune that has happened to them—

"If a man have fallen, he will rise again;" he will not be contented to lie where he is, in a state of stupid indifference, but will exert himself to regain the posture that is better suited to his nature and pursuits. "If a man turn out of the way," when prosecuting a journey of great importance, "will he not, us soon as he finds his error, return," and get into the right path? No one can doubt what his conduct would be on such an occasion, Such is the conduct of all men in relation to temporal matters.

But they do not act thus in reference to their souls—

It is undeniable, that, we "have slidden back" from God, "like a backsliding heifer" that will not submit to the yoke [Hosea 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 4.16); Of this we cannot but be convinced, seeing that we violate his law in unnumbered instances, and neither can, nor will, endure its restraints [Romans 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 8.7). But, "having fallen, do we strive to arise; having turned aside, do we endeavor to return?" On the contrary, have not our "backslidings been perpetual," without any serious endeavors to amend our ways? Had our deviations from duty been only occasional, and under the influence of some violent temptation, or had they been intermitted, with seasons of penitence and contrition, there would be something hopeful in our case: but we have been contented to continue in our devious paths, and to lie wallowing in the mire of sin.

We have even labored to persuade ourselves that we were not so faulty as God's word represented us, We have gladly embraced any principle, that might justify this opinion; and satisfied ourselves with any excuse, that might keep us from self-reproach. When our delusions have been pointed out, and the vanity of our excuses plainly shown, we still have "held fast deceit," and have taken refuge again in the same lies, just as if they had never been at all exposed. The invitations and promises which have been held forth to us in the name of God, have produced no beneficial effect: we have "pulled away the shoulder," and "refused to return," and "made our faces harder than a rock [Jeremiah 5:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 5.3)."

But, notwithstanding our obstinacy,

God is ever looking wishfully for our return—

"He looks down from Heaven, to see if there be any that will understand and seek after him [Psalm 14:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 14.2)." "He wills not the death of any man, but rather that he should come to repentance and live [2 Peter 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Pet 3.9)." He even swears that this is the state of his mind towards us [Ezekiel 33:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 33.11). He "hearkens" with more than parental anxiety 'Cannot I hear some acknowledgment among them; cannot I hear so much as one groan, or one sigh? O that I could! O that they would suffer me to exercise mercy towards them [Jeremiah 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.4); [Jeremiah 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.13); [Jeremiah 13:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 13.27) and [Hosea 11:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 11.8). Would they but "speak aright," and condemn themselves for their iniquities, I would soon show them how gracious and merciful I am.' Thus does God listen, as it were, in hopes that some will repent and turn unto him;

But scarce any will repent of their wickedness, or even consider their ways—

We hope that impenitence is not quite so universal among us, as among those whom the prophet addressed. We cannot quite adopt his complaint, and say that "no man" repents. We trust there are some among us, who have "called their ways to remembrance," and sought for mercy in God's appointed way This must be amplified, or not, according to the state of the persons addressed; But certainly there are very few that will turn their thoughts inward, or seriously ask themselves, "What have I done?" Reflection is painful to the generality; and, instead of cherishing it, and setting apart seasons on purpose for it, the greater part do all they can to stifle it; they run to pleasure, to company, to business, in order to shake out of their minds all painful recollections. In all the concerns of time, they will examine carefully enough, whether they have prospered or not: nor would they be averse, in a journey through woods and forests, to compare their steps with the directory that had been given them, and to inquire occasionally whether they were in the right path. But in the concerns of their souls they harbor no doubts; they go on even in direct opposition to the strongest evidence s and take for granted that they are right, when, if they would make the smallest inquiry, they could not but find that they are in the most fatal error.

Too many among us seem even to glory in their sins—

The image by which this truth is represented in the text, is as just and beautiful as any that can be conceived. Look at the description given of the war-horse in the book of Job: "He paws in the valley, and rejoices in his strength: he goes forth to meet the armed men. He mocks at fear, and is not affrighted; neither turns he back from the sword. The quiver rattles against him, the glittering spear and the shield. He swallows the ground with fierceness and rage; neither believes he who it is the sound of the trumpet. He says among the trumpets, Ha, ha; and he smells the battle afar off, the thunder of the captains and the shouting [Job 39:21-25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 39.21-25)." What a lively representation is this of sinful man! he hears of God's judgments, but laughs at them: ho in a measure feels them; and is only stirred up by them to a more resolute defiance of them, Destructive as his sin is, he "makes a mock at it," and accounts it sport: and, whatever his ways have been, whether those of a proud self-righteousness, or open profaneness, he "turns to his course, as the horse rushes into the battle."

In these respects they act a more irrational part than even the brute creation—

"The stork, the turtle, the crane, the swallow, observe" invariably the approach of summer or of winter; and adopt measures either to escape the impending calamities, or to secure the blessings which God has prepared for them, They loiter not until the season for action is past, but avail themselves of the first intimations which they receive, to avoid the evil, and obtain the good. But sinful men possess not that wisdom; they "know not the judgment of the Lord;" God tells them of approaching blessings, but they labor not to possess them: he warns them also of approaching miseries, but they use no means to escape them: though they feel in themselves, and behold in all around them, striking intimations of the way in which God will ultimately proceed with men, they take not one step to avert his wrath, or to conciliate his favor.

To complete the whole, they persuade themselves that they are safe and happy—

They call their own ways wisdom, and the conduct of those who differ from them, folly. Surprising! "We are wise!" Would they account any one wise that should pursue a similar conduct in reference to the things of this world? Would it be wise in a merchant never to inquire into the state of his affairs? Would it be wise in a person to reject wholesome food, and to eat nothing but what was sure to bring upon him disorders and death? Yet the folly of such persons would not be worthy to be compared with that which the inconsiderate world are guilty of, in reference to their everlasting concerns. And strange it is to say, that they will even quote the word of God, as countenancing their ways; and, without once considering the true import of the passages they adduce, they will cry, "The law of the Lord is with us They will quote [Proverbs 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 3.17) and [Micah 6:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Micah 6.8)." But let them bring forth their strong reasons; let them show us from the word of God, that no "difference shall be put between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serves the Lord and him that serves him not:" let them prove to us, that a course of sin and impenitence, and an unconcern about our future state, are innocent, or at most only trifling faults, which will not be regarded in the day of judgment. Let them show us these things from the word of God; and then we are prepared to say, "In vain has God made it, and the pen of the scribes (who have either recorded or expounded it) is in vain." Certainly, if they succeed in that attempt, the Bible is the most worthless book in the universe; for men could live in sin and neglect God, without any book to direct or encourage them in such ways.

That our expostulation may not fall to the ground, we entreat you to listen to a few words of beneficial advice—

1. Consider your ways—

This is a reasonable duty; and can do you no harm: if your conduct have been conformable with the will of God, you will have great comfort in ascertaining that it has been so: if, on the contrary, it has been such as God decidedly condemns, you will have an opportunity of altering it before it be too late.

2. Renounce your sins—

This must be connected with the former, and indeed must result from it [Ezekiel 18:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 18.28). You cannot but know that there has been much amiss, both in your heart and life: search it out therefore, and, whatever it may be, put it from you: if it be useful as a right hand, or precious as a right eye, spare it not, but cast it utterly away. Attempt not to justify or extenuate it; but acknowledge your criminality and danger; and cast overboard the goods that would sink the ship.

3. Obey the Gospel—

Sinful as your state has been, the Gospel proposes to you an infallible remedy: it sets forth a Savior; and invites you to come to him. Obey the call: come to him, who bought you with his blood: and accept the salvation which he freely offers to the chief of sinners: At the same time "Be wise indeed, and let the word of the Lord be truly with you." Let "the glorious Gospel of the blessed God" be indeed the one ground of your hope, and the one rule of your conduct. Let the light which it exhibits be desired by you; and let all "your deeds be brought to it, that it may be manifest that they are wrought in God."

[Jeremiah 8:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 8.11)

DISCOURSE 1042

HEALING OUR WOUNDS SLIGHTLY

[Jeremiah 8:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 8.11). They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace.

THERE were, among the Jews, false prophets, who accommodated themselves to the corrupt taste of their hearers, who said to them, "Prophesy unto us smooth things; prophesy deceits." In particular, they assured the people that the judgments denounced against them by Isaiah, Jeremiah, and others, should never come upon them; that the king of Babylon should never succeed in his efforts against Jerusalem; and that, though they should still continue to walk after the imagination of their own evil hearts they had nothing to fear [Jeremiah 23:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 23.17). Thus they lulled the people asleep in their sins, "promising them peace, when in reality there was no peace;" but the heaviest judgments of Almighty God were impending over them [Ezekiel 13:10-16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 13.10-16).

Such prophets have existed at all periods of the Church, "with lies making the heart of the righteous sad, whom God has not made sad; and strengthening the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life [Ezekiel 13:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 13.22) with [Deuteronomy 29:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 29.19-20)."

But while we lament the effect of such delusive ministrations, and refer all persons to the written word, as the only true standard of sound doctrine; we would not forget, that men love to deceive themselves, and, by indulging vain conceits of their own, in opposition to the written word, to silence the convictions of conscience, and to "speak peace to themselves, when there is no peace." For the benefit of such persons, we will endeavor to show,

I. What need we all have of healing—

Sin has infected all the powers of our souls: This melancholy truth is,

1. Asserted in the Scriptures—

"God made man upright; but he has sought out many inventions [Ecclesiastes 7:29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eccles 7.29)." His very heart is corrupt [Jeremiah 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 17.9); so that "every imagination of it is evil, and only evil, continually [Genesis 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen 6.5)." The extent of his depravity can scarcely be overstated: as the Apostle clearly shows [Romans 3:9-18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 3.9-18); and the description given of the Jewish people may be well applied to every people, yes, and to every individual also in the whole world: "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart is faint: from the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in us; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores [Isaiah 1:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 1.5-6)."

2. Confirmed by experience—

Who is there among us that must not confess this to be his own state? Who does not find darkness in his understanding, rebellion in his will, sensuality in his affections? Who is there that does not perceive a partiality in his conscience, and, as far as spiritual things are concerned, a forgetfulness in his memory; so that, in all his faculties, he is unlike what he was when he came out of his Creator's hands? That there are some traces of his original excellence, I willingly admit. There is in some persons a measure of benevolence towards man: but towards God there is in all the same rooted indisposition and enmity: "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be [Romans 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 8.7)."

But, as many think themselves healed while yet they are in a perishing condition, I will proceed to show,

II. Who they are that heal their wounds slightly—

Of these there are many classes: many "speak peace to themselves, when there is no peace." Among these are,

1. They who rely on the uncovenanted mercy of God—

Many have an idea that God it too merciful to inflict on men the judgment he has denounced against sin: and on this presumption they dismiss all fear of future punishment, As for the justice or holiness of the Deity, they altogether overlook them; supposing that their claims may be superseded without any difficulty, and that truth itself also may be violated without any dishonor done to God, But all this is a delusion, which will betray them to their ruin, God is merciful, no doubt; yes, merciful beyond all conception: but then his mercy flows only in that channel which he himself has prepared, even through the Son of his love: and to expect it in any way that is inconsistent with the Divine attributes, is fatally to deceive our own souls.

2. They who take refuge in a round of duties—

It is common for persons, when convinced of sin, to engage in religious duties, with a hope of making thereby their peace with God, They will begin to read the Scriptures in private, and to attend on divine ordinances in public, and exercise a greater measure of benevolence to their fellow-creatures; trusting that God will accept their services, and for the sake of them will pardon their past transgressions, But this is only to "heal their wounds slightly;" for there are two things necessary to their perfect restoration; the one is, to make an atonement for sin; the other is, to get their souls renewed after the Divine image: but neither of these can ever be effected by any exertions of their own, The attainments of the Apostle Paul, eminent as they were, could not stand in the place of Christ, either before his conversion or afterwards: and therefore he desired "to be found in Christ; not having his own righteousness, but the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 3.9)." Much more, therefore, must we renounce all hope of acceptance with God through any works of our own; and seek salvation by Christ alone, if ever we would "behold the face of God in peace,"

3. They who rest in a faith that is unproductive of good works—

True it is, that we must be saved by faith alone: and equally true it is, that faith does not save us, because it produce! good works. It saves us simply as apprehending Christ, in and through whom we are reconciled to God. But the faith which apprehends Christ aright, will work; it will "work by love," and "purify the heart," and "overcome the world;" and if the faith which we possess do not operate in this way, it is dead, and of no more efficacy for our salvation than the faith of devils, The only faith which will be of real service to us, is that which unites us unto Christ, as branches to the vine; and enables us, by virtue derived from him, to bring forth fruit to his glory.

Yet, as there is a perfect remedy, it becomes me to state,

III. How we may have them healed effectually—

The Lord Jesus Christ has provided a remedy for sin—

He has, by his own obedience unto death, atoned for sin, and "brought in an everlasting righteousness" for his believing people. Hear the blessed tidings brought to us by the Prophet Isaiah: "He was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed [Isaiah 53:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 53.5)." Stupendous thought! We healed by stripes! by stripes inflicted on Jehovah's fellow! What a mystery is this I how utterly incomprehensible! Well does the Apostle say, "How unsearchable are God's judgments, and his ways past finding out [Romans 11:33](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 11.33)."

That remedy, applied by faith, shall be effectual for all who trust in it—

The man who believes in Christ, has all his guilt purged away; so that "though his sins may have been as crimson, they shall be as wool; though they have been as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow. [Isaiah 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 1.18)." Nor is this all: the man who believes in him, shall receive out of his fullness such a supply of grace as shall be effectual for the restoration of his soul to the Divine "image, in righteousness and true holiness." The declaration of an inspired Apostle is, that "We, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 3.18)." Thus, by this simple remedy, shall our guilt be removed; and, at the same time, the corruption of our nature, like the waters of Jericho, be healed by the salt of divine grace infused into the soul. [2 Kings 2:19-22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Kings 2.19-22). If any be not healed, it is not for want of a Physician s but because, with the balm of Gilead in their hands, they will not apply if. verse 22.

ADDRESS—

1. Those who feel not their need of healing—

Many, who are sensible that our nature is imperfect, have yet no conception that they are infected with a fatal malady; or that, without a most stupendous effort of divine grace, they must eternally perish. But, though they are called Christians, they are ignorant of the very nature of Christianity. I say again, they know not what Christianity is; and if they were asked to give in one word such a description of Christianity as should suffice to characterize it in all its parts, they would be utterly at a loss, and would say that an impracticable task was imposed upon them. But Christianity is a remedy: it necessarily supposes a deep malady, which it is not in the power of any finite being to heal; and it prescribes such means of healing as shall be effectual for our recovery. The malady and the remedy correspond with each other: whichever be seen, the lineaments of the other may be inferred from it: they answer to each other, as accurately as the impression to the seal. There is nothing in us, for which there is not a correspondent provision in Christ: nor is there anything in Christ, of which there is not a correspondent want in us. Were this duly understood, there would be no persons of the description that I am now addressing. But to all, without exception, must I declare, that "it was not the righteous that Christ came to save, but sinners;" ("the whole need not a physician, but they that are sick:.") and if we feel not our lost estate, we can receive no benefit from Christianity, no salvation from Christ. "It is the broken heart whom he heals, and whose wounds he binds up [Psalm 147:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 147.3)."

2. Those who, after having derived some benefits from Christ, have relapsed into sin—

Such persons there are, in great abundance: and greatly is their guilt augmented by their misimprovement of the mercies conferred. If they continue in their declension, "it were better for them that they had never known the way of righteousness;" for "their last end will be worse than their beginning." But they are not beyond the reach of healing, Rather, I should say, their Lord is more particularly anxious respecting them, and gives this injunction to his servants: "Go, and proclaim these words; Return, you backsliding Israel, says the Lord; and I will not cause mine anger to full upon you. [Jeremiah 3:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.12)." "I will heal your backsliding, and love you freely: for mine anger is turned away from you. [Hosea 14:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 14.4)." If you are ready to despond because of your unworthy conduct, he cuts off at once all ground of despondency, by saying, "For the iniquity that he committed I was wroth, and smote him: I hid me, and was wroth; and yet he went on frowardly, in the way of his heart. But I have seen his ways, and (What? will cast him off, and execute my heaviest judgments on him? No: I have seen his ways, and) will heal him; and will restore comfort also to him and to his mourners [Isaiah 57:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 57.17-18)." Avail yourselves then, my Brethren, of the opportunity now afforded you; and go to Him who is able to save you to the uttermost", and "will cast out none who come unto him." But remember, you must be content to have your wounds probed to the very bottom; lest, after all, the healing of them should be only superficial.

3. Those who are enjoying health in their souls—

Happy indeed is your state. You have the true enjoyment of life. We feel the benefit of health, as it respects the body: for it enables us to perform every office of life with ease and pleasure; while to the sick and the infirm even the smallest labor is difficult. So, to the man that is under the power of sin, all spiritual exercises are irksome: but to him whose "soul prospers, and is in health," the ways of God are beyond measure delightful. Be careful then, beloved, to preserve your health. Be living near to your heavenly Physician; and, at the very first appearance of disorder in your soul, apply to him. So will he "keep you in perfect peace," and "preserve you blameless unto his heavenly kingdom."

[Jeremiah 8:20-22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 8.20-22)

DISCOURSE 1043

THE REMEDY FOR THOSE WHO HAVE LOST THEIR SEASONS OF GRACE

[Jeremiah 8:20-22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 8.20-22). The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. For the hurt of the daughter of my people am I hurt; I am black; astonishment has taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered This may be more simplified, by taking the character of the text as the ground of the distribution and discussion. Thus, consider,

I. His affectionate lamentation—

The people had hoped to receive support from Egypt, but the time for marching armies was past away, and they wore left without support. But I rather think the sense to be, God had given them time for repentance, and had warned them by his prophets, but all in vain. Now therefore they were left to the fury of their invading foes. On account of their impending calamities the prophet was greatly distressed. And is there not similar occasion for lamentation over you? How many warnings from the Lord have you received! How many opportunities for your souls, as favorable as the summer for harvest! Yet in what a state are your souls! as far from salvation as if you had never heard of a Savior, or had salvation offered to you in his name! If the prophet then wept over the temporal calamities of his people, how much greater reason have I to weep over you! (chapter 9:1.) Were your impending calamities temporal only, they were not worthy of a thought, in comparison of those which are shortly coming upon you: If your souls be not sated, no language can express, or imagination conceive, the misery that awaits them.

II. His tender expostulation—

Gilead was famous for balm, which physicians were accustomed to use for their patients. Under that image the prophet tells them how effectually they might have been recovered, if they had sought help from God. Their destruction therefore was wholly of themselves. And may I not make the same appeal to you? Has not Christ been set before you as the heavenly Physician? Has not the efficacy of his blood to cleanse from sin been pointed out to you? Would not the Lord Jesus have healed your souls, if you had applied to him?: Yes, truly it is your own fault that you are not recovered. "You will not come to Christ that you may have life."

ADDRESS—

1. Those who are insensible of their danger—

Your danger is indeed both great and imminent; and I entreat you to delay no longer, what in a short space of time there will be no possibility of effecting

2. Those who after hopeful symptoms of recovery have relapsed—

It were better never to have sought the Lord at all, than to have turned back again to your sins. O bless your God that the summer is not yet quite ended; and cease not to apply to the great Physician, until perfect health is restored to your souls.

3. Those who are in a course of recovery—

Fear not, but that the balm of Gilead will prove sufficient. Live near to God in the daily application of that balm to your souls, and you may set all your enemies at defiance. Your sins shall all be healed; and Satan himself, as a vanquished foe, he bruised under your feet.

EVERY one acknowledges that it is his duty to trust in God; but we are prone to creature-confidence. Hence we are often left to faint under difficulties from which we might easily have been extricated. Thus the Jews increased their distress by relying on the Egyptians for support, when, if they would have trusted in God, they might have been delivered. The prophet therefore's takes up this affectionate lamentation over them:

I. Who are they of whom it may be said "their harvest is past, their summer is ended, and they are not saved?"

In its primary sense this passage is applicable only to the Jews, when they were attacked by the Babylonians; but it may be applied to those who have lost seasons of spiritual relief; The "summer and harvest" may be considered as seasons afforded us by God for providing for the necessities of our souls. Many of these we have suffered to pass unimproved and unnoticed. They therefore may be said to have lost their summer, etc. who have neglected to improve the seasons afforded,

1. By nature—

Youth is well fitted by nature for the work of conversion. The mind is then more flexible, the passions more governable, and the conscience more tender. But many have lost that favorable season.

2. By Providence—

Mercies are sent by God to invite, judgments to alarm. But many who should have been drawn by them to seek after God, have remained impenitent. The Sabbath also was instituted by God for the promoting of man's spiritual welfare. On that day more especially God calls and converts sinners to himself. But many have let those seasons pass, without obtaining the knowledge of salvation.

3. By grace—

There are times when all experience the strivings of God's Spirit. If they improved those seasons, God would "give them more grace." But many stifle their convictions, and "resist the Holy Spirit."

They who are in this predicament would do well to reflect on,

II. The misery of their state—

The distress of the prophet's mind on account of the calamities that were coming on the Jews is most pathetically expressed. But a view of the miseries impending over those who have lost their seasons of grace might well excite yet more painful apprehensions.

Their seasons lost are irrecoverable—

Present time is often wasted, as though it were of no value. But many would be glad on a death-bed to recall the seasons in which they had heard the tidings of salvation, or felt the motions of God's Spirit, Such wishes, however, are all in vain.

Their seasons lost may never be renewed—

We are apt to promise ourselves days and years to come [Acts 24:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 24.25). But how often does death disappoint our expectations!

Every lost season has greatly aggravated their guilt—

The means of grace are most important and valuable "talents." The neglecting to improve them will be severely punished [Matthew 25:26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 25.26); [Matthew 25:30](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 25.30).

Every season they have lost has hardened their hearts—

The word that does not quicken and save will stupefy and condemn [Matthew 13:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 13.14-15). [2 Corinthians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 2.16).

Every lost season has grieved the Holy Spirit more and more—

God will not always strive with those who resist his motions [Genesis 6:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen 6.3). If he cease to strive with us, our destruction is inevitable [Hosea 9:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 9.12).

How should we compassionate those who are in such a state! How should every one adopt the words following my text [Jeremiah 9:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 9.1). But their condition is not desperate:

III. The remedy that yet remains for them—

We might be ready to suppose that such persons were incurable; but the animated interrogatories in the text show the contrary—

Christ is a "physician" able and willing to save those who come unto him: His blood is a "balm" that heals the most deadly wounds [Isaiah 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 1.18). [1 John 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 John 1.7); The true reason that so many die in their sins is, that they will not come to Christ for salvation [John 5:40](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 5.40); Let every one then acknowledge that it is his own fault if he be not saved.

[Jeremiah 8:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 8.22)

DISCOURSE 1044

CHRIST OUR PHYSICIAN

[Jeremiah 8:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 8.22). In there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

AS the Eastern languages in general, so the inspired writings in particular, abound in metaphors. In this view, they are peculiarly calculated to convey instruction; because they embody truth, as it were; they dress it in the most inviting colors, and bring it home to the mind with most commanding energy. Metaphors are of necessity founded on some acknowledged truth: if therefore the figure itself be just and apposite, the sentiment contained under it becomes so much the more luminous and impressive. The general idea intended to be conveyed in the words of our text, is this; that, though God was so severely punishing the Jewish nation, he was willing to remove his judgments from them, and to restore them to his favor, if they would use the means which his prophets had prescribed: lamentable as their state was become, they were not beyond the reach of mercy, if they would repent themselves, and turn unto their God. Now this sentiment is conveyed in metaphorical expressions; the literal import of which is, that no one with the means of recovery before him would be foolish enough to continue under the pressure of a painful and dangerous disorder. This truth every one feels and acknowledges: and consequently we must acknowledge yet more strongly the folly and wickedness of continuing under the displeasure of God, when we have at hand the certain means of deliverance from it.

To impress this thought upon your minds, we shall,

I. Show what is that state of recovery to which God desires to bring us—

That man is disordered by means of sin, is so evident, that we scarcely need insist upon it. We justly say in the general confession of our Church, "There is no health in us:" and we may as justly apply to our state that description of the Prophet Isaiah, "From the sole of our foot even to the head there is no soundness in us, but wounds and bruises and putrefying sores." Still however there is such a thing as a state of health: and what that is, we may learn,

1. From the condition of some who had never known sickness—

Adam in Paradise was made after the Divine image: every perfection of the Deity, as far as it was communicable to a creature, was found in him. His dispositions were altogether in unison with the will of God. He communed with his Maker daily, as with his familiar friend; and sought all his happiness in the performance of his will, and in the enjoyment of his presence.

Our blessed Lord and Savior also is another example of one who never knew sin. In his early years we have but little information about him, except that he was subject to his parents, and obedient to them in all things: and though we cannot consider this as the whole of a child's religion, we do not hesitate to say, that it is a most essential part of it, and that religion never can exist where this proof of it is wanting. When he had attained the age of twelve, we are enabled to speak determinately concerning him. Then, we know, that he loved the house of God, and found all his delight in the services of religion. Yes, with such intenseness was he engaged in communicating and receiving instruction, that he let his parents go from Jerusalem without him; and, when they found him in the temple after three days, expressed his wonder that they felt any solicitude about him, and that they did not at once conclude him to be occupied "about his Father's business," When he entered on his ministry, he made it "his meat and drink to do his Father's will:" after laboring in his vocation the whole day, he would sometimes spend whole nights in prayer. He went about doing good among the poorest and vilest of mankind: and when his love was recompensed only by the most cruel insults and persecutions, he rendered nothing but good for evil: "when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not:" yes, rather, he wept over his enemies, and prayed for his very murderers.

2. From the condition of some who had experienced a recovery—

We cannot easily find persons more diseased than those to whom Peter addressed himself on the day of Pentecost. They had withstood all the discourses and miracles of our blessed Lord; and their hands were yet reeking with the Savior's blood. But as soon as the grace of God reached their hearts, they were humbled for their sins, they believed in Christ as their only Savior, they addicted themselves to the ministry of the Apostles, they felt the most cordial affection towards all the despised followers of Jesus, they sold all their possessions for the support of his Church and people, and they found all their happiness in the exercises of devotion, and the service of their God [Acts 2:41-47](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 2.41-47).

The Apostle Paul is another instance of a most astonishing recovery. He had been filled with such a murderous zeal against the followers of Christ, that he "breathed out nothing but threatenings and slaughter against them." But when he was stopped in his career, he became the most zealous and active of all the Apostles. No trials could deter him from prosecuting his Master's work: he counted not his life dear unto him; yes, "if he should be offered upon the sacrifice and service of his brethren's faith," and pour out his blood as a libation for the Church, he considered it as a ground of most exalted joy and thanksgiving [Philippians 2:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 2.17-18).

3. From these instances we may learn, I say, what a state of recovery is—

It consists, first of all, in turning to the Lord Jesus Christ, with deep humiliation, and with lively faith, It consists, next, in mortifying all those corruptions which formerly led us captive, and in devoting all our powers to the service of our God. In a word, it consists in following the steps of our adorable Emmanuel, in being "pure as he was pure," and "perfect as he was perfect." And to this it is the earnest desire of our God to bring us: "Will you not be made clean?" says he; "O when shall it once be [Jeremiah 13:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 13.27)."

Now, if God really desire to bring us to this happy state, we should,

II. Inquire, Whence it is that we do not already enjoy it?

It is not for want of adequate provision for us on the part of God—

God himself appeals to us respecting this: "Is there not balm in Gilead; is there not a Physician there?" Has not God sent us a Physician from Heaven, even his only dear Son, who perfectly knows the extent of our disorders, and is able to prescribe a remedy for them? Other physicians find their remedies in the productions of nature and of are; but this blessed Physician "heals his people with his own stripes:" he shed his own precious blood for us upon the cross, that it might be applied, as a sovereign balm, to our souls, to restore us to perfect health. And now we appeal to all of you: Is there any want of skill in this Physician, or any want of virtue in this balm? Have not thousands and millions of persons, dying of the malady of sin, experienced a perfect restoration of health through the application of the blood of Christ to their souls? Is there any reason to doubt, but that it would be as efficacious for you, as for them? And is not this remedy offered you "without money and without price?"

Behold then, you are witnesses for God this day, that no blame attaches to him, and that the continuance of your maladies can in no respect be imputed to him.

It is altogether owing to yourselves—

1. You do not believe that your disorders are so great and fatal as God has represented them—

That sin has in a measure disordered your souls, you will readily acknowledge; but that your diseases are mortal, and that you must die to all eternity if they be not healed, you do not believe. We ask only what you would do, if you felt within yourselves a bodily disorder, which you were certain would destroy your life in a few hours if a remedy were not instantly applied? Would you not send for a physician without delay, and be in the utmost solicitude until he arrived for your relief? Why then is there not all this anxiety about your souls? Why are you not seeking the Lord Jesus Christ with your whole hearts? Our Lord assigns the true reason; "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick;" and you feel no need of him, because you are not duly sensible of your sickness.

2. You do not like the prescriptions which the good Physician has appointed for you—

Repentance is regarded by you as a bitter pill, which you are very averse to take. Faith in the atoning blood of Christ is so humiliating, that you cannot make up your minds to submit to it: you think that you may be excused going to him with all that contrition and self-renunciation which the Gospel requires. "The living henceforth not to yourselves, but unto him," and "the having your whole selves, body, soul, and spirit, sanctified" and devoted to the Lord, is also regarded by you as an insufferable restraint. You would be far better pleased to be left in possession of those gratifications which are pleasing to your corrupt nature, and which foster the most deadly diseases of your souls.

3. You hope for some more convenient season for returning to your God—

You have a general persuasion that you must experience a change before you go hence; but you wish to put it off to some future period. You are too young at present, or have too many engagements; and you think a time of sickness will be more favorable to reflection; and, as God has shown mercy to many in their last hours, you hope he may to you. This completes what the other errors have begun. This lulls you asleep in fatal security. If ignorance slays its thousands, this procrastinating habit slays its ten thousands.

Having shown you the true reasons why your health is not recovered, I would impress the subject yet further on your minds, by asking two questions:

1. Would not the recovery of your souls tend to your present happiness?

Grant that the votary of pleasure obtains all that he seeks after; is not he who has his sins forgiven, his corruptions mortified, his soul transformed into the Divine image, the sting of death removed, and a glorious inheritance secured to him, the happier man?: We will abide the decision of your own consciences.

2. Will not the consequence of dying in your present diseased state be terrible?

Terrible it will be to all; but most of all to those who have their diseases faithfully pointed out to them, and the heavenly Physician brought before them. O how pungent will that question be to them in the day of judgment, "Why were not you recovered, you, who had the balm of Gilead freely offered you, and who withstood the most pressing solicitations to accept of mercy?" O that you may be wise in time! and that, instead of having then to regret the opportunities you have lost, you may now be enabled to say with the Psalmist, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; who forgives all your sins, and heals all your diseases!"

[Jeremiah 9:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 9.3)

DISCOURSE 1045

FORTITUDE RECOMMENDED ON THE SIDE OF TRUTH

[Jeremiah 9:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 9.3). They are not valiant for the truth upon the earth.

IT is by no means uncommon to see men valiant in their country's cause, or fearless in the commission of iniquity. But courage on the side of religion is a quality but rarely seen. This virtue attaches not itself to strength of nerves, nor is it a necessary attendant on constitutional intrepidity. It is a grace, produced in the heart by the Holy Spirit; and is found equally to adorn the weaker as the stronger gender. The want of natural courage is a fault in those only who enter into professions where the exercise of it is essential to a proper discharge of their duty: but the want of spiritual valor is a crime, for which we must answer before God: yes, it is a great and heinous crime, for which we have reason to dread his heaviest judgments. The prophet, when enumerating the sins which prevailed among the Jews, and which caused him to weep over them day and night, mentions this as one that called for his severest reprehension; namely, that when they could "proceed with undaunted effrontery from evil to evil," they "were not valiant for the truth upon the earth."

In illustrating these words, we propose to show,

I. That valor is requisite on the side of truth—

Let "truth" be taken in the lowest sense, as meaning nothing more than common justice and equity, and there will still be found need of valor for the maintenance of it in the world. Let a magistrate set himself vigorously to reform abuses, and he will soon find that vice and profaneness will maintain a violent contest against him, and that he has need of courage to carry his plans into full effect.

But if we understand "the truth" as comprehending the whole extent of our duty not only as men but as Christians, our need of valor in maintaining it will be still more apparent. We stand in need of it,

1. To profess the truth—

Who does not know that a profession of religion subjects us to contempt? What was said of the Christians of the first ages, is equally true at this day; "We know that this sect is everywhere spoken against." Men will "gaze strangely at us, as soon as we cease to run with them into their excess of riot [1 Peter 4:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Pet 4.4)." As soon as we "depart from evil, we make ourselves a prey [Isaiah 59:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 59.15)," which every one feels himself at liberty to hunt. What the Gibeonites experienced, when they made peace with Joshua and with the children of Israel, is a striking emblem of what must be expected by all who submit to Jesus, and associate themselves with his people [Joshua 10:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Josh 10.3-4); And does it not require courage to endure this?: Truly, there are many who would find it easier to walk up to the mouth of a cannon, than to brave the contempt and obloquy to which a profession of religion would expose them.

2. To practice it—

Let a person be solicited by his friends to unite with them in courses which he disapproves; let him be ridiculed as indulging needless scrupulosity and preciseness, or perhaps as hypocritically pretending to more sanctity than his neighbors; will he find it easier to be steadfast in his obedience to God, dissembling no truth, omitting no duty, conforming to nothing dubious or sinful? Will he need no courage to stem the torrent, to disregard the appearances of singularity, and to maintain a conscience void of offence towards God and man?.

3. To recommend and enforce it—

The Gospel enjoins us, not only to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them." Now we know what have been the consequences of such faithfulness in all ages; "I hate Micaiah, because he does not speak good concerning me, but evil:" "The world hates me, because I testify of it, that the works thereof are evil [John 7:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 7.7)." And is it a light matter to encounter the hatred of our friends, and relatives, yes, and of the whole world? When we foresee these consequences, are we in no danger of withholding the admonitions and instructions which we ought to give? Are we in no danger of "putting our light under a bushel," when we know what offence will be taken at us, if we suffer it to shine forth? Are we under no temptation to indulge that "fear of man which brings a snare?"

If we cannot recommend, or practice, or even profess, religion, without valor, we can have no doubt about,

II. The duty of exercising it—

It is a duty we owe,

1. To God—

God has not told us to obey his commandments only as far as the world will approve, but to "follow him fully," and to love and serve him with our whole hearts, Will he then be contented to see us "partial in the law?" Will he accept our plea, if we urge our fear of man as a reason of our not fearing and obeying him? No: he has bidden us "not to fear man, who can only kill the body; but to fear him, who can destroy both body and soul in Hell [Luke 12:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 12.4-5)."

2. To our neighbors—

What will they think of religion, if they see us, who profess it, violating its most sacred obligations through feat of offending man? Will they not imagine that it is not worth contending for? Will they not be emboldened to show the same preference to the world that we do; and to regard the opinions of men more than the commands of God? On the contrary, Would not a firm, bold, decided conduct tend to convince them, that God is worthy to be served, and that "his loving-kindness is better than life itself?"

3. To ourselves—

Our own everlasting welfare depends upon our steadfastness in the ways of God. "If we are ashamed of him, he will be ashamed of us:" "if we deny him, he will deny us;" "if we draw back, it will be unto perdition; for his soul can have no pleasure in us:" "he only that overcomes, shall inherit all things;" and "he only that endures unto the end, shall ever be saved." If then we have any regard for our own souls, we must be valiant, and "quit ourselves like men:" for if even life itself be suffered to stand in competition with his will, our souls will be forfeited and lost forever [Matthew 10:39](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 10.39).

It is not however sufficient to possess valor: we should also understand,

III. In what way it should be exercised—

Here we are very liable to err: true Christian valor should be shown,

1. In meek and patient sufferings—

Passive valor is by far the most valuable. Would we see it illustrated? Let us see how it operated in the Apostle Paul: "Being defamed," says he, "we entreat; being persecuted, we suffer it." Would we behold the most striking exemplification of it that ever existed? Let us behold Jesus, who had just before evinced his power over his enemies by striking them all to the ground with a word, yielding up himself to them, and led as a sheep to the slaughter. Behold him, "dumb before them, even as a sheep before her shearers; giving his back to the smiters, and his cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, and not hiding his face from shame and spitting:" "when he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not, but committed himself unto him that judges righteously:" yes, here was precisely the valor which we are called to exercise. We must "possess our souls in patience," and "let patience have its perfect work." If once we recede from this ground, we are vanquished, If we would "not be overcome of evil, we must overcome evil with good."

2. In firm and steady perseverance—

Obedience to God is the great point: to that we must adhere at all events. We must resemble Daniel and the Hebrew youths, and determine to suffer the most cruel death, rather than violate the dictates of our conscience [Daniel 3:16-18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan 3.16-18), or neglect any known duty whatever [Daniel 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan 6.10). Next to our blessed Lord, Paul perhaps endured more for the truth's sake than any of the children of men: in every place, bonds and afflictions awaited him: but "none of those things could move him, neither counted he his life dear unto him, so that he might but fulfill the ministry" committed to him: he was "willing not only to be bound, but also to die," at any place, at any time, and in any manner, for his Master's sake: when he had been stoned, and left for dead, at Lystra, he returned again speedily to that very city, regardless of his own life, and intent only on executing the commission which he had received of the Lord Jesus [Acts 14:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 14.8); [Acts 14:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 14.19); [Acts 14:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 14.21). Thus must we go on, "steadfast, immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord:" and in such a course we shall approve ourselves "good soldiers of Jesus Christ."

We would add to what has been said, a word,

1. Of caution—

Let not any imagine that Christian fortitude at all militates against the duties which we owe to our parents, or to any that are placed in authority over us. Many are apt to mistake pertness and forwardness as marks of valor: but "they know not what spirit they are of;" they are, in fact, displeasing God as much as man, while they indulge a petulant, froward disposition. We need look well to ourselves in this particular, and see that we are not gratifying our own self-will, under a pretended regard for the commands of God. We should never forget the respect due to our superiors: and when we are forced to act contrary to their commands, we should strive as much as possible to conciliate them in our manner of doing it; and show them, that our opposition to their will is not a matter of choice, but of necessity.

2. Of encouragement—

None need to fear, as though they should not be able to act valiantly in the hour of trial: for God has promised, that we shall not be tempted above our ability to withstand, or without a way for us to escape [1 Corinthians 10:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 10.13). We are told of women, who, under the most grievous sufferings for conscience sake, would not accept deliverance, when it was offered as an inducement to recede from their principles [Hebrews 11:35](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 11.35). We need not fear therefore but that "our strength also shall be according to our day [Deuteronomy 33:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 33.25)." God will "strengthen us by his Spirit in our inward man, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness:" and "his strength shall be perfected in our weakness." In the weakest among us shall that promise be exemplified, "They that do know their God, shall be strong, and do exploits [Daniel 11:32](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan 11.32)."

[Jeremiah 9:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 9.23-24)

DISCOURSE 1046

THE ONLY TRUE AND SUFFICIENT GROUNDS OF GLORYING

[Jeremiah 9:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 9.23-24). Thus says the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glories glory in this, that he understands and Knows me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth. The Author's first Sermon before the University, preached in 1785, now above forty-six years ago, and never before published. TO know the Creator is the supreme excellence and chief good of man. The Jews enjoyed greater opportunities of obtaining this knowledge than any people upon earth: yet they neglected to improve their advantages; and, like the nations around them, sought their happiness in the creature, and confided in it for their security; having forsaken him who was their Rock of Defense. They treated Jeremiah's predictions of their captivity in Babylon with contempt. This the prophet saw and bitterly lamented: and hoping still if possible to reclaim them and thereby to prevent their calamity, and to secure to them a permanent enjoyment of their privileges, he exhorted them in the name of God himself to renounce all dependence on their own wisdom, might, or riches; and to glory rather in the knowledge of their God, and an acquaintance with him as their Protector and Deliverer. To us who have a much clearer revelation of God's nature and perfections, the exhortation may be applied with still more propriety and stronger energy.

Let us then (as the text requires) first remove the false and insufficient grounds of glorying, and then propose such as are true and sufficient.

The usual grounds of glorying the prophet here proscribes:

"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches."

It is by no means to be imagined that earthly things are to be utterly disregarded, and that Christians in these days are to expect those miraculous gifts of wisdom and power which were bestowed in the days of the Apostles, or that we are now called to forsake our several occupations as they were: this would be enthusiasm indeed. At the first promulgation of Christianity, it was necessary that the instruments used for that purpose should be both weak and illiterate, that the excellency of the power might more evidently appear to be of God: but the person who should now hope to speak by inspiration, to work miracles, or live like the birds of the air, without any thought for the morrow, would grossly misunderstand the Scriptures, and become an object of ridicule or pity to all rational and sober-minded. Christians.

Wisdom is highly necessary in religious concerns and in every department of social life; it capacitates us for instructing others; it enables us to make improvements in arts and sciences; it qualifies us for superior usefulness at the bar and in the senate: nor less in religious exercises; it gives a deserved pre-eminence to all who possess it; and a want of it (especially in a seat of learning) is deservedly attended with proportionable ignominy.

Power also is desirable; inasmuch as it may be used for the preservation of due order in society and most beneficially employed in punishing vice and rewarding virtue. Nor are riches to be disregarded, for they afford us many opportunities as well of encouraging industry, as of relieving the necessitous; and they give full scope for the exercise of our most benevolent affections. Each of them has its peculiar uses; and each is a precious talent capable of the highest improvement. Yet however they lay no solid foundation for glorying: and the prophet's injunction is that we should not glory in them; by which he means, that we are not to esteem them too highly, nor to regard them as the principal objects of our pursuit, nor to place our chief happiness in them, nor to make them our trust and confidence.

And indeed what is there in our wisdom wherein to glory? The more knowledge we possess, we are only more fully convinced that we know nothing in comparison of what is yet veiled from our eyes: besides, the wisest counsels are often frustrated for want of power to carry them into execution; and though we excelled even Solomon himself, disease or accident may reduce us in a moment to a level with the brutes.

What is there in power? To have it is no little temptation to exercise it in an unfitting manner and for selfish ends: it universally stirs up opposition in those who are subjected to our authority, and creates much trouble and anxiety to ourselves in the dispensing of it.

And what is there in riches? They often generate in our hearts covetous and sordid tempers (for it is seldom that our "riches increase, but we immediately set our hearts upon them"), they make us proud, overbearing, and oppressive: yet all the wealth of the Indies can furnish us with very little more than food and clothing: and there are so many thousand ways in which we may be impoverished, that Solomon observes of riches, "they make themselves wings and fly away."

What ground then is there for glorying in any, or all, of these? There is not any in wisdom; for it is limited in its extent, defective in its operations, and uncertain in its continuance. There is not in might; for the very possession of it is dangerous, and the exercise of it vexatious to ourselves and others. There is not in riches; for they are defiling in their influence, contracted in their uses, and precarious in their tenure.

Besides all which in the hour of death all our thoughts perish, our rank and dignity are annihilated, and our wealth is transferred to another owner. And in the day of judgment, not all the wisdom, might, or riches, that ever were possessed by man will be sufficient to bribe our Judge, withstand his power, or elude his search.

Let us proceed then to consider what is the true and sufficient ground of glorying: "Let him that glories, glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth."

The knowledge of God as far excels all other attainments, as God, the object of that knowledge, surpasses all created excellencies. But it is not every knowledge of God that lays a foundation for glorying. It is not the knowledge that there is a God; for that is common to the evil angels as well as the good. It is not the knowledge of God from the works of creation; for that comes as much under the observation of heathens as of Christians. But it is a knowledge of God as revealed in the inspired writings. This is strongly intimated in those two expressions in my text, "understands" and "knows," which are designed to teach us, that it is only in a practical and experimental knowledge of God that we are to glory; or in other words, such knowledge as makes us stand in awe of his majesty, tremble at his threatenings, and seek an interest in his love and favor. Several reasons might be offered for glorying in this rather than in the aforementioned possessions or attainments. I will assign three which will comprehend them all: First, because the knowledge of God is not subject to any of those defects, which are almost inseparable from wisdom, might, and riches. They are above the reach of far the greater part of mankind; this is equally attainable by all: they too often debase the mind; this invariably elevates and ennobles it: they leave us still longing for something unpossessed; this supplies all the wants, satisfies all the desires, and fills all the capacities of our immortal souls: they, through the depravity of our nature, often become means and instruments of pride, oppression, and avarice; this changes the proud, tyrannical and avaricious man into the image of God in righteousness and true holiness: they are destroyed at death; but this is perfected.

Again we may glory in this knowledge of God, because it transcends all their excellencies. Human wisdom may enable us to discharge the duties of civil life with advantage; but the knowledge of God rectifies our judgments about things of far greater moment; it makes us both see and feel the evil of sin, the beauty of holiness, the vanity of time, and the importance of eternity. It teaches us (which is indeed the very essence of wisdom) to pursue the best ends by the fittest means; to seek a crown of glory by a renunciation and abhorrence of every known sin, a firm reliance on the Savior's merits, and an uniform obedience to his commands. Power also may be improved for the good of the community; but the knowledge of God endues us with might for better purposes; it renders us mighty to resist temptations, mighty to subdue our evil tempers, mighty to mortify our lusts and passions, mighty to endure the bitterest afflictions, and mighty to vanquish the united forces of the world, the flesh, and the devil. Riches, too, it is granted, are highly beneficial; but the knowledge of God imparts more profitable riches: through it we are rich in possession, and in reversion too; it brings into our souls a sense of pardon, it fills us with a peace which passes all understanding, and entitles us to all the blessings which God himself can bestow: for Solomon, on making this very comparison, observes that "wisdom is a defense, and money a defense, but the excellency of knowledge (that is of spiritual knowledge) is, that wisdom gives life to them that have it." And a greater than Solomon still more plainly affirms, that "to know God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, is eternal life;" that is the way to it, and the very beginning and earnest of it.

Once more. We may glory in this knowledge of God, because it comprehends and unfolds to our view wisdom, power, and riches that are indeed infinite. The text particularly directs us to consider God as exercising loving-kindness (to his friends), judgment (to his enemies), and righteousness or justice (in the distribution both of his rewards and punishments). Now this is a view of God which we have not any where, but in the Gospel of Christ. In his dealings towards the fallen angels we behold only his judgments; but in his dealings with man we behold the exercise of mercy and loving-kindness, because he accepted the mediation of his Son on our behalf. The Apostle directs us therefore to look for the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. The intent of the types and prophecies in the Old Testament, as well as the historical and epistolary writings in the New, is to hold forth Jesus Christ as that illustrious person in whom the Father would be glorified: He therefore, as being "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," is the proper object of our glorying: and so inestimable is the knowledge of Him, that Paul (the most learned and powerful, if not the richest of the Apostles) counted all things as dung and loss in comparison of it. Now the knowledge of this our incarnate God comprehends, I say, and unfold to our view, wisdom, might, and riches that are indeed infinite. Infinite wisdom—In the person, work, and offices of our Lord, are contained mysteries, which, though hid from all eternity in the bosom of the Father, were displayed with the fullest evidence upon the cross. It is true that the doctrine of a crucified Savior was "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness; but," says the Apostle, "to them that are called, it is the wisdom of God;" or, as he elsewhere terms it, "the wisdom of God in a mystery:" and so indeed it is; for it reconciles things which, to unhumbled, unenlightened persons, would appear contradictory and absurd. It shows us how sin may be punished, and yet the sinner saved: and this too not only without countenancing sin or dishonoring the law, but in such a manner as to bring more honor to the law, than if it never had been broken, and to manifest more indignation against sin, than if the offender had endured its deserved penalty. It shows us also how the divine perfections unite and harmonize in the great work of redemption; how God may pardon those whom he had threatened to destroy, without any violation of his word; and how he may restore rebels to peace, without any infringement of the demands of justice; or, as the Psalmist beautifully expresses it, how "mercy and truth may meet together, and righteousness and peace kiss each other." It shows us further (which is wonderful indeed) mercy displayed in a way of punishing sin, and justice in a way of pardoning it; yes, more mercy than if the whole world had been pardoned without any such atonement, and more justice than if the whole human race had been, like their predecessors in iniquity, cast into the depths of Hell. In God, as shining forth in the person of his Son, we behold also infinite might. Jesus Christ is called by the Apostle "the Wisdom of God and the Power of God," because that, when mankind had destroyed themselves, and not a combination of all created powers could effect their deliverance, his own arm brought salvation. He sustained the dreadful weight of their iniquities in his own body on the tree, and ransomed an apostate world by his own most precious blood. To all appearance indeed he "was crucified through weakness:" he fell a sacrifice to the envy of the priests, the treachery of Judas, the cowardice of Pilate, and the rage of an incensed populace: yet by that very fall he bruised the serpent's head and triumphed over principalities and powers. He submitted also to an imprisonment within the affections of the earth; yet soon burst the gates of death, by which it was not possible he should be detained, and showed himself to be "the Son of God with power by his resurrection from the dead."

Infinite riches also are manifested in this our adorable Redeemer. How glorious, how unsearchable were the riches of the Father's love, which rather than we should perish, bestowed, not an angel or archangel, but his only-begotten Son, yes, gave him up for rebels, to the most bitter, ignominious, and accursed death of the cross! How rich was the Son's compassion, to obey that law which we had broken, to humble himself that we might be exalted, to endure the penalties which we had incurred, and to die that we might live forever! What unbounded mercy! Inasmuch then as this knowledge of God is not subject to the defects that are in wisdom, power, and riches, but transcends their excellencies, and comprehends them all in the highest degree; we may, we ought to glory in it: we cannot value it too highly, we cannot seek it too earnestly, we cannot contemplate it with too exalted joy, or trust in it with too confident assurance: this was evidently the sentiment of the Apostle when he said, "I am determined to know nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified." And again, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Here it will be proper to observe the manner in which the inspired writer prefaces his exhortation in the text; "Thus says the Lord." The voice of the world is quite different; even they who are esteemed the wisest in the world hold up wisdom, power, and riches as the grand, if not the only, objects worthy of our pursuit: the whole multitude are following these with unabated ardor: all their affections are set upon them: their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows, are excited alternately by these, as the loss or acquisition of them shall give occasion: these are the things most envied and admired: and, when obtained, are ever made the ground of glorying. But the knowledge of God and of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ is deemed scarce worthy our attention. If it were at our option to be the wisest, greatest, and richest person upon earth, but at the same time destitute of this knowledge; or to be endued with it, but at the same time live in a state of poverty, baseness, and ignorance, how few would show themselves like-minded with God in this matter! Indeed, how few seek this knowledge at all, or even give it the least place in their thoughts! On the contrary, the generality treat it with contempt; and too many seem to apprehend, that we cannot glory in our God, but we must presently be beside ourselves: but (as says the Apostle) "let God be true, and every man a liar;" let the whole universe combine to extenuate the guilt of neglecting God, and to exalt wisdom, power, and riches, as the chief good of man; their opinions are of no avail: for "thus says the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glories, glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth;" that I am He, who will amply and eternally reward those who glory in me, and will assuredly execute judgment upon those who idolize the world. While therefore we pay a just attention to those things which God allows, and the interests of society require us to pursue, let us take shame to ourselves for having preferred the perishing things of time and sense, to an acquaintance with our God; let us fear lest we be left to take the fruit of our choice, and to have our portion only in this life; let us receive the united testimonies of reason and revelation; and, in compliance with their dictates, let us prize above all things, follow with unwearied assiduity, and supremely delight ourselves in, the knowledge of this Savior; that through him we may be mighty in subduing our evil habits, rich in faith and good works, and wise unto salvation; so shall we have cause to glory here, and be partakers of everlasting felicity in the world to come. Now to God, etc. The analysis of this is added, to show how easily the short skeletons may be formed into entire sermons. [Jeremiah 9:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 9.23-24). Thus says the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might; let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glories, glory in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth.

WE need no other introduction to our subject than that of the prophet [Isaiah 1:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 1.2).—

Bearing in mind therefore the Savior's repeated admonitions [Mark 4:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark 4.9); [Mark 4:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark 4.23), we shall

I. Remove the false and insufficient grounds of glorying—

Wisdom, Power, and Riches, are highly esteemed among men—

And, if rightly improved, they certainly are valuable talents

Wisdom enables a man to conduct his own affairs with discretion—

It qualifies him also for instructing his fellow-creatures—

It may lead a person to make many valuable discoveries—

Thus it may profit individuals and the community at large—

Might also is useful for the preserving of order in society—

And it may be improved to suppress vice, and encourage virtue—

Riches too may serve for the rewarding of industry—

Or they may be employed in relieving the necessitous—

None of these things therefore ought to be depreciated—

But they are by no means proper objects of glorying—

To glory in anything, is, to value it highly, pursue it eagerly, and seek our happiness in it—

But we must not thus glory in Wisdom—

The wisest know that they know but little—

Their best concerted plans they often want power to accomplish—

Disease or accident may soon reduce them to a level with the beasts—

Nor should we glory thus in Might—

Power is a source of temptation to those who are invested with it—

It indisposes a man to comply with reasonable restraints—

It generally excites opposition in those who are subjected to it—

Nor are Riches at all more worthy objects of our glorying—

Wealth is very apt to produce covetous and sordid tempers—

It frequently renders its possessors proud and oppressive—

At best it can furnish us with little more than food and clothing—

And we are liable to be deprived of it in a thousand ways [Proverbs 23:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 23.5).—

To glory therefore in any of these things would be absurd Who that considers what Wisdom is, would ever glory in it; so limited as it is in its extent—so defective in its operations—and so uncertain in its continuance? Or who in Might, the possession of which is so dangerous—and the exercise of which is so vexatious to themselves and others? Or who in Riches, which are so defiling in their influence—so contracted in their benefits—and so precarious in their tenure? If to this we add, that all these things perish and depart at death, and are utterly useless in the day of judgment, we can have no doubt but that the prohibition in the text is as reasonable as it is decisive.—

Having removed these common but insufficient grounds of glorying, we shall,

II. Propose such as are true and sufficient—

The knowledge of God in Christ Jesus is the only object of glorying—

The knowledge that there is a God is not the knowledge here spoken of—

Nor is it the knowledge of God as He is seen in the works of creation—

But the knowledge spoken of in the text is a view of him in redemption—

It is in the Gospel only that God's loving-kindness to his friends appears—

In that too especially He denounces his judgments on his enemies [Mark 16:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark 16.16).—

And in both He displays equally his unspotted righteousness [Psalm 85:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 85.10).—

Not that a speculative knowledge even of this will suffice—

The words "understand and know" imply a practical knowledge—

This is a just ground of glorying to all who possess it—

1. It is free from all the defects which are found in the foregoing grounds—

They render the mind low and groveling; This elevates and ennobles it—

They never satisfy the soul; This affords it perfect satisfaction [Isaiah 55:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 55.2).—

They may become sources of craft, tyranny, and avarice; This always changes us into God's image [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 3.18).—

They end with our present existence; This is perfected at death—

2. It transcends all the excellencies that are in the foregoing grounds—

It imparts more excellent wisdom—

It rectifies our judgments about more important objects—It teaches us to seek the best ends by the fittest means—

It endues us with more excellent might—

It renders us mighty to mortify our lusts and passions 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.—

It qualifies us to conflict with all the powers of darkness [Ephesians 6:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 6.11-12).—

It conveys to us more excellent riches—

It puts into our hands "the unsearchable riches of Christ"—

It makes us rich in possession, and in reversion too [Ecclesiastes 7:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eccles 7.12).—

3. It comprehends all the foregoing grounds in the highest degree:

Wisdom—

This knowledge of God unfolds the deepest mysteries [Colossians 2:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col 2.2-3).—

It shows how sin may be punished, and yet the sinner saved—

It shows how mercy is exalted in punishing, and justice in rewarding—

Might—

The salvation of a ruined world is a marvelous display of power—

Hence Christ is called "the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God"—

We have no idea of almighty power, until we know a redeeming God—

Riches—

Infinite are the riches of divine grace—

In the glorious mystery of redemption they are all contained—

The knowledge of God exhibits them all to our view [Ephesians 2:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 2.7).—

In this we cannot possibly glory too much—

We cannot possibly set too high a value on this knowledge [1 Corinthians 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 2.2).—

We cannot pursue it with too much earnestness—

We cannot delight in it with too exalted joy—

Let us therefore seek to know God as He is revealed in the Gospel—

Let us take encouragement from that declaration of our Lord [John 17:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 17.3).—

Let the fixed purpose of our hearts resemble that of the Apostle [Galatians 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 6.14).—

[Jeremiah 13:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 13.11)

DISCOURSE 1047

THE CONTEMPT WITH WHICH GOD'S RICHEST MERCIES ARE TREATED

[Jeremiah 13:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 13.11). As the belt cleaves to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, says the Lord; that they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise, and for a glory: but they would not hear.

IT pleased God in former times frequently to instruct his people by signs, as being more calculated to awaken the attention of those who were but, as children, slow to understand the plainest declarations of his word. Sometimes those signs were represented to the prophets in visions: as when Ezekiel was taken up by the hair of his head, and earned to the north gate of the temple to see all the wickedness that was transacted in the sanctuary; the thing was done only in a vision [Ezekiel 8:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 8.3). At other times the prophets actually did the things which were to be signs to the people; as when Ezekiel, for the space of three hundred and ninety days, reclined on his right side, with a representation of Jerusalem before him, to figure to the Jews the siege that should assuredly be formed against it by the Chaldeans [Ezekiel 4:1-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 4.1-17). A most surprising account altogether! See also [Ezekiel 12:2-12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 12.2-12); [Ezekiel 24:15-24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 24.15-24). Whether the sign which Jeremiah was here directed to use was in a vision only, or in reality, commentators are not agreed. Certainly the going repeatedly several hundred miles only to carry a belt to the Euphrates and bring it back again, seems a labor unlikely to be imposed upon him: but on the other hand, that very labor might tend the more powerfully to awaken the attention of the Jews to the subject which was thus emblematically represented to them: and it is safer, on the whole, to take literally the Scripture account in all cases where reason and common sense do not necessitate us to understand it figuratively Such an instance occurs, [Jeremiah 25:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 25.27).

The sign here used by the prophet was this. He took a belt, and, after wearing it some time, carried it to the river Euphrates, and hid it there in the hole of a rock; and then, after a considerable lapse of time, he went and fetched it back again, and exhibited it to the people in its decayed state; declaring that they, notwithstanding their present strength and power, should before long be reduced to the lowest ebb of misery by the Chaldeans; because when God had formed them for himself, they had refused to adhere to him, or to regard his overtures of love and mercy.

Such is the explanation given us by God himself in in the words of our text; which, while they elucidate the emblem used by the prophet, will naturally lead me to show you,

I. The honor which God has designed for his people—

The primary use of a belt is to bind up the garments around the loins—

In conformity with this idea, God had caused his people to cleave to him, that they might be, as it were, in continual contact with him. This he had caused them to do, when he brought them out of Egypt, and made them altogether dependent on himself for direction, preservation, and support. In like manner he may be said to have caused us also to cleave to him, having in our very birth imposed on us a necessity to depend upon him for life, and breath, and all things; for "in him we live, and move, and have our being." Our proper state is that of a little infant clinging to its mother, or, as our text expresses it, "a belt cleaving to the loins of a man." We should at all times be "taking hold of God by prayer [Isaiah 64:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 64.7)," and by faith uniting ourselves to him, so as to be one with him, and he with us. If this was the duty and privilege of the Jews, much more is it ours; because our God and Savior has actually assumed our nature, and become bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh: nay more, by the fuller communication of his Spirit he "dwells in us," and lives in us, and is "our very life [Colossians 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col 3.4)." so that they who are joined unto him by faith are "one Spirit with him [1 Corinthians 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 6.17)." This then, I say, is the honor which God designs for us: he would have us all renouncing every kind and degree of creature dependence, and to live as near to him and cleave as close to him, as a belt to the loins of a man; yes, in spite of every opposition and discouragement, he would have us "cleave unto him with full purpose of hearts [Acts 11:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 11.23)."

But a belt is also of use for ornament—

And to this our text has especial respect. The belt of the high-priest was, as it is repeatedly called,"a curious belt," given him "or glory and for beauty [Exodus 28:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 28.4); [Exodus 28:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 28.8); [Exodus 28:40](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 28.40)." and our great High-Priest desires that we should be to him what that curious belt was to Aaron. Vile and worthless as we are in ourselves, ho would form and fashion us anew, interweaving in our nature all the graces of his Spirit, and transforming us into the very image of our God in righteousness and true holiness. Surrounded by us, he would esteem himself more richly adorned than with the brightest jewels [Malachi 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mal 3.17), and more enriched than with all the treasures of the universe [Exodus 19:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 19.5-6) with [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Pet 2.9). It appears almost impious to say, that such ornaments would be a glory to our God and Savior; yet we will venture to affirm that they would be regarded so by our Lord himself, who says, "All mine are your, and your are mine; and I am glorified in them [John 17:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 17.10). See also [John 15:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 15.8), and [Isaiah 61:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 61.3)." What a royal diadem is to an earthly monarch, that are we designed to be to the King of kings and Lord of lords [Isaiah 62:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 62.3). As Christ was "the image of the invisible God," because God who is invisible in his own nature was visible in him [Colossians 1:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col 1.15). so are we according to the measure of grace given unto us: we are to "shine as lights in the world, holding forth" in our whole deportment "the word of life [Philippians 2:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 2.15-16)." we are made his on purpose that we may "show forth his virtues [1 Peter 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Pet 2.9). See the marginal reading;" we are to be "epistles of Christ, known and read of all men 2 Corinthians 3:3;" and showing in the whole of our spirit and temper what the will of the Lord is: we are to "have the same mind as was in him [Philippians 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 2.5)," and to "be changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord [2 Corinthians 3:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 3.18)." This will surely become our state, if once we cleave, like a belt, unto him; and all who see us shall be constrained to "glorify our Father who is in Heaven [Matthew 5:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 5.16)."

Who would conceive, that when such honor is offered unto man, there should be found a creature in the universe unwilling to accept it? Yet the sequel of our text leads us to show,

II. The way in which this honor is contemned—

The melancholy testimony that was almost invariably borne against the Jews was, that "they would not hear Compare with the text, [Jeremiah 6:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 6.16-17).—

See how they conducted themselves in relation to the very offer before us! "they refused to hear God's words, and walked in the imagination of their own hearts, and worshiped and served other gods verse 10."

And what can be a more just description of ourselves?

Unspeakable as the honor is which God desires to confer upon us, we will not seek it at his hands: we are, like those who were invited to the wedding-feast, all with one consent making excuses, and pleading the urgency of our worldly affairs as a reason for neglecting our spiritual concerns [Luke 14:16-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 14.16-20). If we bow not down to stocks and stones, we "worship and serve the creature more than the Creator [Romans 1:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 1.25)." We have idols in our hearts; and to those we dedicate all our powers and faculties, whether of soul or body. We are justly characterized as "walking after the imagination of our own hearts See [Isaiah 53:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 53.6);" each serves the God that suits him best. One follows all his vicious propensities, and seeks his happiness in sensual indulgence: another grasps after riches; another aspires after honor; another affects rather the more refined pleasures of science and philosophy: but all by nature, however differing in their particular pursuits, agree in this, that they "are of the world, and not of God;" and that they "seek honor from man, and not the honor that comes of God only." They need no exhortation to cleave unto worldly vanities; that they do naturally of themselves: and if we could point out to them how to come in closer contact with the objects of their ambition, and how to secure to themselves a larger measure of them, we should find them very attentive to our counsels. But when we exhort them to cleave only to the Lord, they have no ears to hear us, no disposition to regard us. In vain do we expatiate upon the honor which God designs for them; that appears to them no better than "a cunningly-devised fable," or at best as a subject that may well be deferred to a more convenient season. "Though we call them to the Most High, none at all will exalt him [Hosea 11:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 11.7)." so that God may complain of us as he did of his people of old, "All the day long have I stretched out my hands to a rebellious and gainsaying people [Romans 10:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 10.21)."

ADDRESS—

1. In a way of appeal—

We may justly say to you, "What more could have been done for you than God has done [Isaiah 5:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 5.3-4)." and why do you so requite him? Judge, all of you, between God and your own souls, and say what such conduct merits at his hands. I will tell you in God's name what you may assuredly expect. Behold the belt when it was brought back from the river Euphrates, how "marred and worthless" it was verse 7; see too how that emblematic judgment has been executed on the Jewish nation, not only in their Babylonish captivity, but in their present dispersion, where they are "a hissing and an astonishment" to all the rest of the world. So will God's indignation against you be manifested on account of the contempt you pour upon him; according to that express declaration of his, "Them that honor me, I will honor; and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed." As they who made light of his invitation were "not suffered even to taste of his supper [Luke 14:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 14.24)," so you shall never taste of that honor and happiness which he offers to you: and as they were shut out into outer darkness, so will you at the last day awake "to shame and everlasting contempt [Daniel 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan 12.2)."

2. In a way of encouragement—

Nothing does God desire more, than to take even the vilest of mankind, and bind them to him as a belt. Yes, there is not one so worthless, but he should be made a partaker of this honor, if only he would comply with the invitations of his God. O that every one of us might now obey his voice; and that he would "make us willing in the day of his power!" Would you see more clearly what God would do for you? This same prophet tells you without a figure, that "he will pardon all your iniquities" that ever you have committed, and so load you with his benefits, that all who behold you shall be filled with utter astonishment at his goodness to you [Jeremiah 33:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 33.8-9). Only resist not his strivings with you, but "run after him when he draws you," and beg him to "fulfill in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, even the work of faith with power: then shall the name of our Lord Jesus Christ be glorified in you, and you shall be glorified in, and with him, according to the grace of our God, and the Lord Jesus Christ 2 Thessalonians. 1:11-12."

[Jeremiah 13:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 13.15-17)

DISCOURSE 1048

A CALL TO REPENTANCE Preached February, 1801.

[Jeremiah 13:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 13.15-17). Hear you, and give ear; be not proud: for the Lord has spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and, while you look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness. But if you will not hear it, my soul shall weep in secret places for your pride; and my eye shall weep sore, and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive.

REPENTANCE is at all times a proper subject to be enforced; but more especially on a day professedly set apart for national humiliation. The words before us were addressed to the Jews when God was about to send them into captivity in Babylon: and they may well be considered as addressed to us, now that his hand is lifted up for the punishment, and, for anything we know, for the destruction of our land.

They manifestly contain the prophet's exhortation; his arguments to enforce it; and his determination in case he should not be able to prevail on the people to repent.

But the occasion, and the text itself, call rather for exhortation than discussion. We shall therefore, though not without a due attention to the order of the words, proceed to urge upon you the great, the seasonable, the indispensable duty of repentance—

Know then, that it is "God who speaks." The words delivered to you in his name, as far as they accord with his mind and will, are his words, and are to be received as though you heard them uttered by a voice from Heaven [2 Corinthians 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 5.20). [1 Thessalonians. 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Thess. 2.13).

"Hear you, and give ear," and let not the pride of your hearts obstruct your attention. Often has God spoken to you by the dispensations of his providence, and the declarations of his grace; yes, moreover, by the still small voice of conscience: but you, the generality of you at least, have turned a deaf ear, and refused to hear the voice of the charmer, charm he never so wisely [Job 33:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 33.14). But "be not proud," You must hear at last, whether you will or not. Let then your stout hearts be humbled; and receive with meekness the engrafted word [James 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James 1.21).

In the name of God we say to you, Repent. "Give glory to the Lord your God." It is by repentance only that you can do this [Joshua 7:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Josh 7.19). [Revelation 16:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev 16.9). Repentance glorifies all his perfections; his omniscience that sees your transgressions, his justice that punishes them, his mercy that pardons them, and his wisdom and goodness that have provided such a marvelous salvation for ruined man.

O glorify his omniscience: say, 'Lord, you are privy to all the secrets of my heart; you know that I am inexpressibly vile [Jeremiah 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 17.9). [Job 40:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 40.4); [Job 42:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 42.2); [Job 42:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 42.6).'

Glorify his justice; and acknowledge, that if he cut you off, and consign you to the lowest Hell, you have no more than your just desert [Matthew 22:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 22.12-13). [Romans 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 3.4). [Psalm 143:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 143.2).

Glorify his mercy; and plead it with him as the only, the all-sufficient ground of your hope and confidence [Psalm 51:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 51.1).

Glorify his wisdom and goodness, that have opened a way for your return to him through the incarnation and death of his only dear Son. Declare that you have no trust whatever but in the blood and righteousness of that almighty Savior [Philippians 3:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 3.8-9).

To persist in impenitence is the certain way to bring down the heaviest judgments upon your souls. The darkness that hangs over the nation [Joe. 2:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Joel. 2.2-3). perhaps a true picture of our present state, cannot be dispelled in any other way; much less can that with which God menaces your souls. O consider "the darkness, the gross darkness," in which they are involved, who are shut up under judicial blindness and final obduracy [Isaiah 6:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 6.9-10); or who, under the terrors of a guilty conscience, "stumble on the dark mountains" of unbelief, and, like the Jews (who thought they had clean escaped from their pursuers) are overtaken by the sword of vengeance This is the literal meaning of the text, so that "while they look for light, it is turned into the shadow of death," and they are plunged into "the blackness of darkness for evermore [2 Thessalonians. 2:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Thess. 2.11-12). Jude, verse 13."

But repentance may yet avert the storm, both from the nation, and from our own souls. Numberless are the declarations of God to this effect To nations, [2 Chronicles 7:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Chron 7.14); and to individuals, [Isaiah 55:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 55.7). and numberless the instances wherein it has been verified Nineveh, the dying thief, etc. But let us remember what kind of repentance it is which will thus prevail: it is not a mere formal confession of sin with a partial reformation of the life, but such a repentance as glorifies all the perfections of the Deity; such a repentance as has an especial respect to Christ, who alone can procure our pardon, and in whom alone we can ever find acceptance with God.

Would to God that we might prevail with you, and that you were all, in good earnest, turning unto God! Could we once behold this, O how should we rejoice: and how would "the very angels in Heaven rejoice" on your account! But, "if you will not repent," (as it is to be feared too many of you will not,) "my soul," and the souls of all who are aware of your condition, "shall weep in secret places for your pride; yes, our eyes shall weep sore and run down with tears," on account of your present and approaching bondage. The godly in all ages have wept over those who felt no concern for their own souls [Psalm 119:136](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 119.136). [Ezra. 9:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezra. 9.3); [Ezra. 10:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezra. 10.6). [2 Peter 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Pet 2.8). [Romans 9:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 9.1-2); above all, [Luke 19:41](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 19.41); and we trust that there are many, who will lay to heart the evils which you are too proud to acknowledge, too obdurate to deplore. But we entreat you to consider, Is there one among us all, that is not a sinner before God [1 Kings 8:46](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Kings 8.46). [James 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James 3.2). and does not the broken law denounce a curse against us [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 3.10). and if God be true, will not that curse be inflicted on the impenitent? Why then will you not humble yourselves before an offended God, a merciful Redeemer? Alas! for your "pride," and stoutness of heart! How lamentable is it, that you, who have been baptized into the name of Christ, and are therefore properly "the Lord's flock," should be so "carried captive" by your lusts, and by your great adversary, the devil [2 Timothy 2:26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Tim 2.26). O think, it is but a little time and your captivity will be complete; and, lost beyond a possibility of redemption, you will be bound in chains of everlasting darkness Jude, verse 6. And is not here a cause for sorrow on your account? "O that mine head were waters, and my eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night" for your unhappy state [Jeremiah 9:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 9.1).

We will not, however, conclude, without once more entreating you to "give glory to the Lord your God;" that so "your light may rise in obscurity, and your darkness may be as the noon-day [Isaiah 67:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 67.8); [Isaiah 67:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 67.10)."

[Jeremiah 13:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 13.23)

DISCOURSE 1049

THE POWER OF EVIL HABITS

[Jeremiah 13:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 13.23). Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may you also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.

OF any particular acts which we have done amiss, we have been conscious: they have, as it were, obtruded themselves upon our notice, and we could not turn our eyes from them: but of an evil principle operating within us, we have been strangely insensible; though, if we had been at all observant of our daily habits, we could not but have both seen and felt it. It is owing to this that we have, for the most part, so high a conceit of our own sufficiency for what is good. We imagine that we have but to make a resolution, and any change which we propose will take place of course: but experience shows, that our habits of sin are not so easily broken, nor our resolutions respecting holiness so easily carried into effect. The truth is, that "the Ethiopian may as soon change his skin, or the leopard his spots, as we, by any power of our own, get into a course of what is good, after having been so long and so habitually accustomed to do evil."

From the words before us, I will take occasion to point out,

I. The power of sin, as inherent in our nature—

No wonder that we are entirely led captive by it: for,

1. It pervades all our faculties, whether of mind or body—

Our understanding is blinded by it; our will is rendered perverse; our affections are made earthly and sensual; our conscience is stupefied; and our very memory is enfeebled with respect to everything truly good. By it, also, is the whole of our body defiled. Paul, with a remarkable particularity, specifies the subjection of our several members to this evil principle, from head to foot [Romans 3:12-15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 3.12-15); so that what the prophet speaks of the Jewish people, may well be said of us: "From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in us; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores [Isaiah 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 1.6)." The whole man is corrupt; insomuch that "every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts is only evil continually [Genesis 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen 6.5);" and "all our members are instruments of unrighteousness unto sin [Romans 6:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 6.13)."

2. It finds in us nothing to counteract its influence—

True indeed, man, in his fallen state, possesses both reason and conscience: but neither of these perform their office, in opposing the evil principle within us, any farther than to testify against such flagrant acts as may expose us to shame before men, I deny not, but that there are at times some secret stirrings in the mind, even at a very early period of life; some remonstrances against sin; and some intimations that we ought to serve our God, But these arise not from any remnant of good in our fallen nature: they are the fruits of divine grace, produced by the operation of the Spirit of God upon the soul; even of that blessed Spirit who wrought on Samuel, and John, and Timothy, from the very womb. The Scripture says expressly, that "in us, that is, in our flesh, dwells no good thing [Romans 7:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 7.18);" we cannot so much as will what is good, and much less do it, unless God work within us to that end [Philippians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 2.13); "nor have we a sufficiency even to think a good thought [2 Corinthians 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 3.5)," unless it be put into our hearts by the only Giver of all good. In reference to all spiritual exercises, reason and conscience are rather on the side of the corrupt principle; justifying, rather than condemning, the neglect of them; and substituting in their place such services as are altogether unworthy of Him who "claims to be worshiped in spirit and in truth."

3. It receives aid from everything around us—

"All that is in the world" is comprehended by the Apostle under these three designations; "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life [1 John 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 John 2.16)." And what are these, but confederates of the evil principle within us, giving it continually fresh scope for exercise, and soliciting it in every possible way to enslave our souls? Everything we see, everything we hear, has a tendency to draw us from God, to gratify our corrupt nature, and to give to the evil principle within us an advantage against us to our destruction. Even the Savior himself, while to God's elect "he is made a sanctuary," is, to those who are destitute of divine grace, "a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, yes, as a gin and a snare, whereby multitudes stumble and fall, and are broken and snared, and taken [Isaiah 8:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 8.14-15), with [1 Peter 2:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Pet 2.7-8)."

4. It conceals its influence under specious names—

There is not an evil which the corrupt principle does not lead us to palliate by some gentle name, while on vital godliness it invariably casts reproach. What will it not commend to us, under the idea of innocent amusement? and what will it not sanction, under the terms conviviality and good breeding? Covetousness, worldliness, ambition, yes, and licentiousness itself, all lose their hateful qualities under the less offensive terms of prudence, and honor, and youthful indiscretion.

Is it any wonder, then, that men are led captive by sin and Satan, and that godliness is in so great a degree banished from the world?

But, to get a just notion of this evil principle, we must yet further mark,

II. Its power, as augmented and confirmed by evil habit—

Habit is to us as a second nature: and by it, sin is greatly augmented and confirmed.

1. Its odiousness is diminished—

I have already said, that there are certain acts of sin which, notwithstanding their general approbation of it, men are agreed to stigmatize as evil; and into these, men do not plunge themselves, without some checks of conscience, and some remorse after they have fallen into the commission of them. And, if a person were warned that he was in danger of abandoning himself to these, he would be ready to reply, "Is your servant a dog, that he should do this thing [2 Kings 8:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Kings 8.13)." But we see to what lengths of wickedness men will proceed, when once these restraints are broken through; and how they will even come at last to "glory in their shame [Philippians 3:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 3.18-19)." Who that walk the streets with shameless impudence, or that addict themselves to theft and robbery until they bring themselves to an untimely end, would ever have believed, that sin, which, when first committed, caused in them a blush of conscious guilt, should ever be carried by them to such a fearful extent, and be familiarized to them as their inseparable companion?

2. Its power is strengthened—

It is of the very nature of habit to strengthen the principle that is called into action, whether it be good or bad. The mind, the memory, the judgment, are strengthened by exercise; as the bodily organs are also: and they acquire a facility in doing things which at first are difficult. And thus it is also with evil habits: a man may have so accustomed himself to anger, intemperance, impurity, or sloth, that he shall not be able to withstand the smallest temptation: every trifle will irritate him; every opportunity of indulgence ensnare him; "his eyes will be so full of adultery, that he cannot cease from sin [2 Peter 2:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Pet 2.14);" and "on his bed he shall become like a door upon its hinges," that knows of no motion but from one side to another [Proverbs 26:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 26.14). This is placed in a peculiarly strong point of view by our blessed Lord, who tells us that "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God [Matthew 19:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 19.24)." And why is this? It is because his habits of indulgence have so enslaved him, that he cannot overcome them; nor can anything but Omnipotence itself effect his deliverance [Matthew 19:26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 19.26).

3. Its opportunities for exercise are multiplied—

Habit calls around us those persons and temptations that are most subservient to its indulgence. The man of pleasure moves in a round of gaiety and amusement. The man who is in the pursuit of wealth, is to be found, wherever his favorite object may be best accomplished. The man who affects pre-eminence and distinction, is ever prosecuting his plans by such methods as lie within his reach. Thus all put themselves in the very way of temptation, and of indulging the sin which most easily besets them. If they even fled from the occasions of sin, they would be in great danger: but when they accumulate to themselves occasions of falling, and lay continually stumbling-blocks in their own way, it is no wonder that they fall. For, "can a man take fire in his bosom, and his clothes not be burnt? or can he walk upon hot coals, and his feet not be burnt [Proverbs 6:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 6.27-28)." So if, instead of watching against temptation, we court it, and rush into it, and familiarize ourselves with it, there can be no hope but that we shall fall and perish. "A bird hastening to the snare, is not more sure of ruin than we [Proverbs 7:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 7.22-23)."

4. The powers whereby it should be resisted are destroyed—

We have before said, that against enormous wickedness there are some barriers, arising from conscience, and a desire of man's applause. But by habits of sin, "the conscience becomes seared as with a hot iron," and is rendered altogether incapable of discharging its proper office [1 Timothy 4:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Tim 4.2). A fear of detection, or of God's displeasure, may sometimes operate to restrain from great iniquity: but the mind may become altogether "hardened through the deceitfulness of sin [Hebrews 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 3.13)," until we resemble those of whom the prophet speaks in a preceding chapter: "You have stricken them, but they have not grieved; you have consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock: they have refused to return [Jeremiah 5:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 5.3)." What can be expected of such persons, but that they will "wax worse and worse [2 Timothy 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Tim 3.13)," and continue "treasuring up wrath," until it shall come upon them to the uttermost?"

5. Everything that is good is put, by it, at an unapproachable distance—

"How shall they do good that have been accustomed to do evil?" If "the putting off the old man" be so difficult, what hope is there of such persons "putting on the new [Ephesians 4:22-24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 4.22-24)."? The loving, serving, honoring of God, are things which come not into the mind of one who is addicted to the commission of evil: in this sense, "God is not in all his thoughts [Psalm 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 10.4)." And if any man think that of himself he can turn unto the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and truth, let him first wash an Ethiopian white; and then he may hope to accomplish the task of converting his own soul, and of "creating himself anew after the Divine image, in righteousness and true holiness."

Learn then, beloved,

1. Your need of converting grace—

You need it for the subjugation of sin, and much more for the implantation of holiness in your souls. Yes, indeed, Brethren, "you must be born again, and be made new creatures in Christ Jesus." No power, but that which formed the universe at first, can ever make you what you ought to be; and what you must be, if over you would behold the face of God in peace.

2. The difference between sin and grace, as affected by our habits—

You have seen the terrible effect of habit in relation to sin. But it is far different in relation to grace: for though it is true that gracious habits render the exercise of grace more easy, they will never, in any degree, supersede the need of fear and watchfulness. Behold David, the man after God's own heart: he catches but a glimpse of Bathsheba, and what becomes of all his gracious affections? See Peter, also, who was so bold that he would die with his Divine Master: a maiden does but point him out as a follower of his Lord, and he denies him with oaths and curses. The truth is, that habits of sin increase the corrupt bias that is in the soul, and render its departure from a right line more easy and more certain than it was before: but habits of grace are only like an augmenting of a man's power to roll a stone up hill: but if he intermit his labor, whatever advance he may have made, the stone will instantly roll down, and he will have all his labor to begin again. "Let him, then, that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall [1 Corinthians 10:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 10.12)." Still has the most eminent among us "the flesh lusting against the Spirit, as well as the Spirit lusting against the flesh [Galatians 5:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 5.17)." Yes, and still has the corrupt principle within him the force of "a law, which wars against the law of his mind, and brings him more or less into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members [Romans 7:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 7.23)." And this I say to humble you, and to put you on your guard. Yet, let not any of you be discouraged: for "the grace of Christ is amply sufficient for you," if you will but seek it; "nor shall any temptation occur to you without a way to escape, that so "you may be able to bear it [1 Corinthians 10:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 10.13)." Be weak, then, in yourselves, and "strong in the Lord [Ephesians 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 6.10);" so shall "his strength be perfected in your weakness [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 12.9)," and his name be glorified in your salvation.

[Jeremiah 13:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 13.27)

DISCOURSE 1050

GOD IS DESIROUS OF SAVING MEN

[Jeremiah 13:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 13.27). Woe unto you, O Jerusalem! Will you not be made clean? When shall it once be?

THROUGHOUT all the sacred writings we behold the goodness and severity of God: sometimes the one attracts our notice, and sometimes the other; and in many places, as in that before us, we are struck with the union and combination of them both. Jerusalem was the city of the living God, the residence of his peculiar people; yet he denounces woe against them: but at the same time he declares, in very pathetic language, the ardent desires of his soul to exercise mercy towards them.

From these most affecting words we shall take occasion to show,

I. The woes which impenitent sinners have reason to expect—

This is a painful, but necessary, subject of our inquiries—

The punishment that awaits sinners is most tremendous—

The loss of Heaven is one part of it: and who shall declare how great a loss this is?: The miseries of Hell (which is the other part) are equally beyond the powers of language to describe, or of imagination to conceive.

This, however, the impenitent have but too much reason to expect—

"Woe unto you!" says my text: and this is the voice of reason There must be a difference between the righteous and the wicked; of Scripture Against ten thousand passages to this effect, there is not one syllable that has an opposite aspect; of experience The union of sin and misery is felt by all. Where is there a sinner that is truly happy? See [Isaiah 57:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 57.20-21); of the compassionate Savior himself See how often woe is denounced, [Matthew 23:13-16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 23.13-16); [Matthew 23:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 23.23); [Matthew 23:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 23.25); [Matthew 23:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 23.27); [Matthew 23:29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 23.29); [Matthew 23:33](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 23.33); What stronger evidence can any man wish for? and how blind must he be that is not convinced by it!

But however merited and awful these woes are, we see from the text,

II. How unwilling God is to inflict them—

He complains of men's obstinacy in rejecting the overtures of his mercy—

It is their sin only that exposes them to his displeasure: were that once removed, he would "rejoice over them to do them good." And whence is it that they are not cleansed from it? Has not God provided such means for their cleansing, us should certainly be effectual, if only they were applied? Has he not opened a fountain to cleanse them from guilt [Zechariah 13:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zech 13.1). [1 John 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 John 1.7). ?: Has he not promised to sprinkle them with water that should purify and renew their very inmost souls [Ezekiel 36:25-27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 36.25-27).: Yes: but they are averse to that purification: they hate the very means by which it is to be attained, and the regimen whereby it is to be preserved: God would gladly effect the work for them, if only they would submit to it; but they will not [Ezekiel 33:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 33.11). Hence those complaints so often uttered by the prophets [Psalm 81:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 81.11-13). [Jeremiah 7:23-26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 7.23-26), and by Christ himself [John 5:40](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 5.40). [Matthew 23:37](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 23.37).

He expresses also an impatient longing for an opportunity to bless their souls—

Long has he waited to no purpose: yet still "he waits to be gracious unto us:" "he stands at the door of our hearts, and knocks." His address to us is, "Turn you, turn you from your evil ways I for why will we die, O house of Israel?" Every day appears to him an age [Hosea 8:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 8.5). [Jeremiah 15:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 15.6). "I am weary with repenting.": he is at a loss, as it were, what to do, whether to give us up, or to use any further means [Hosea 6:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 6.4); [Hosea 11:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 11.8). [Jeremiah 3:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.4); [Jeremiah 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.19). The complaint in the text is scarcely less the language of despondency than of compassion; "When shall it once be?" It is us though he said, 'My patience is almost exhausted: your return to me is the most earnest desire of my soul: but I fear I shall be forced, in spite of all my efforts to save you, to abandon you at last, and to execute the judgments which you so obstinately provoke.'

ADDRESS—

1. Those who imagine that they have no need of cleansing—

What child of man has not need to be cleansed from that taint which we inherit from our first parents [Job 14:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 14.4); [Job 15:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 15.14); [Job 25:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 25.4). And who has not contracted much moral defilement by means of actual transgression?: Let none entertain such proud conceits. The best among us, no less than the worst, need to be washed in the blood of Christ, and be renewed by his Spirit; and, without this cleansing, must inevitably perish.

2. Those who are unwilling to be cleansed—

Many are unwilling to part with even the grossest lusts. What then must we say to them? Must we speak peace to them, instead of denouncing woes? If we were to do so, God would not confirm our word: so that we should only delude them to their ruin. But indeed they themselves would not be deluded by any such assertions: for, with whatever confidence they utter them themselves, they would not endure to hear them if uttered from the pulpit.

But it is not gross sin only that must be put away: we must be "cleansed also from secret faults:" whatever stops short of this, is ineffectual. The right hand, the right eye, must be sacrificed; and the whole heart be turned unto God.

3. Those who desire the cleansing of their souls—

It is of infinite importance that you seek this blessing aright. It is not in floods of tears that you are to be cleansed; though floods of tears are proper and desirable: it is the blood of Christ alone that can cleanse from the guilt of sin; and the Spirit of Christ alone that can cleanse from the power and pollution of sin. To apply these effectually, we must embrace the promises, and rest upon them, trusting in God to accomplish them to our souls. We must not first cleanse ourselves, and then embrace God's promises of mercy; but first lay hold on the promises, and then, by virtue derived from them, proceed to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit [2 Corinthians 7:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 7.1) with [Acts 15:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 15.9)."

[Jeremiah 14:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 14.7)

DISCOURSE 1051

GOD'S NAME THE SINNER'S PLEA

[Jeremiah 14:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 14.7). O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do you it for your name's sake.

PRAYER is both our duty and our privilege: and God often suffers trials to come upon his people, in order to stir them up to prayer, and to manifest himself to them in a more conspicuous manner as "a God that hears prayer." On some occasions, indeed, he has forbidden his people to intercede with him; as when he said to Moses, "Let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against these idolaters, and that I may consume them." But, in such cases, the prohibition has not been considered as absolute, but rather in a qualified sense; as intimating only, that any petitions offered under those particular circumstances could scarcely be expected to prevail; yet as implying a permission to the person to make the attempt. Certainly Moses understood it thus; for he, notwithstanding the prohibition, besought the Lord for Israel, and enforced his petitions with the most powerful pleas; and never ceased from urging his requests, until he obtained an answer of peace [Exodus 32:10-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 32.10-14). The Prophet Jeremiah, in like manner, was repeatedly forbidden to intercede for Judah and Jerusalem: "Pray not you for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me: for I will not hear you [Jeremiah 7:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 7.16); [Jeremiah 11:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 11.14)." Yet the prophet could not forbear; but urged his pleas with all imaginable tenderness and compassion verse 7–9. He acknowledged, that the sins which had provoked God to anger were great and undeniable: but though he could find no excuse for Israel, he could find a plea in the very character of God: and therefore he entreated him to do, for his own sake, what he could not venture to ask for theirs.

In respect of outward circumstances, we at this day do not resemble the Jews; yet, as sinners, we need to make the same acknowledgments, and to offer the same pleas, as are recorded in our text.

Let us then, with a more immediate application of the passage to our own case, consider,

I. The sinner's acknowledgment—

The prophet's confession is precisely such as befits the world at large—

Truly, their iniquities do "testify against them, even to their face [Hosea 7:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 7.10)." Their whole lives show that they have not the fear of God before their eyes. It is impossible to see their conduct, and not feel the force of this melancholy truth [Psalm 36:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 36.1). If it be said, that "they cannot serve the Lord;" I reply, "They will not frame their doings to turn unto the Lord [Hosea 5:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 5.4-5)." There is much which they might do, and yet will not do. They might abstain from many things which they willfully commit; and might perform many duties which they willfully neglect. They might put themselves into the way of receiving good to their souls, by reading the Scriptures, and other religious books, in private; by a more diligent attendance on public ordinances; and by conversation with persons capable of instructing them in the things of God. But their contempt of all religious advantages, and the determined preference given by them to the things of time and sense, clearly prove the language of their hearts to be, "Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of your ways."

With too great reason, also, may it be adopted, even by the best of men—

There is doubtless an immense difference between the godly and the world at large: for while the world are willing slaves of sin and Satan, the godly resist to the uttermost their spiritual enemies, and maintain, on the whole, a successful warfare against them. But though "the Spirit in them lusts against the flesh, the flesh still lusts and fights against the Spirit; so that they neither do, nor can do, the things that they would [Galatians 5:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 5.17)." I would ask of all, Whether their consciences do not bear testimony, that yet there is much amiss within them; and that they have yet much to deplore, in respect of commission, and especially in sins of omission and defect? Who among us have not reason to confess, that, on some occasions, through impatience or inadvertence, they have been betrayed into tempers which were unfitting their holy profession? And who, through weakness and infirmity, have not given way to sloth and negligence in the secret exercises of the closet? And who, if they compare their very best duties with the holy requirements of the Law, and the boundless obligations of the Gospel, have not reason to blush and he confounded before God? Truly, the very best among us may well say with the prophet, "Our transgressions are multiplied before you, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions are with us; and, as for our iniquities we know them [Isaiah 59:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 59.12)."

But are we, therefore, without hope? By no means: for, together with these acknowledgments, we are free to offer,

II. The sinner's plea—

The particular request which the prophet offered is not specified: but, in accordance with the subsequent part of his address, we may suppose it to have been for the restoration of God's favor. For this we also may ask, not indeed on that is in us, but solely for the sake of God's honor, and for the glory of his name.

This plea is open for all—

God's honor is deeply involved in his dealings with us. His justice and his holiness require him to manifest his abhorrence of sin, and his indignation against it: but his mercy inclines him to receive the mourning penitent, and to pardon his transgressions, however greatly they may have been multiplied against him: and if he were to spurn from his footstool a repentant sinner, he would consider himself as acting in a way that was unfitting his divine character. He esteems the exercise of mercy as his highest glory, and his chief delight. And, when he can find nothing in his creatures to call forth, or even to justify, his kindness towards them, he takes the motive from within his own bosom, and shows mercy towards them for his own name's sake. It was from this motive only that he brought his people out of Egypt, and conducted them in safety to the Promised Land. "Not for any righteousness of theirs" did he display his mercy towards them [Deuteronomy 9:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 9.5). but, as he repeatedly tells them, "he wrought for his name's sake [Ezekiel 20:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 20.9); [Ezekiel 20:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 20.14); [Ezekiel 20:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 20.22)." Seeing, then, that he has shown such a regard for his own honor, it cannot be, but that he should be pleased when he sees a similar concern in us, and hears us urging it with him as our only plea. But that we may not found this on mere conjecture, let me refer you to an instance wherein this plea was urged exactly in the way that was most pleasing to God. On an occasion wherein God had appeared to have forsaken his people, Joshua addressed him in these memorable words: "O Lord, what shall I say, when Israel turns their backs before their enemies? For the Canaanites, and all the inhabitants of the land shall hear of it, and shall environ us round, and cut off our name from the earth: and what will you do unto your great name [Joshua 7:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Josh 7.8-9)." Here then we see, that, however much we may have provoked God to anger, and whatever reason we may have to fear that he is become our enemy, we may still approach him with this plea, and entertain a good hope that we shall find acceptance with him.

This plea shall never be urged in vain—

In the instance just mentioned, it was attended with good success. The Lord immediately answered Joshua, "Get you up: why lie you upon your face? Israel has Sinned [Joshua 7:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Josh 7.10-11);" and on the putting away of their sin, I will return in mercy towards them. A yet more striking instance we have in the intercession of Moses for Israel, when God had determined to consume them on account of their worshiping of the golden calf. Moses pleaded with him the oath by which he had bound himself to Abraham and his seed; and immediately "the Lord repented of the evil which he had thought to do unto them [Exodus 32:9-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 32.9-14)." Will not, then, the same plea be efficacious still; or rather, I should say, be, if possible, far more efficacious, now that we can plead the name of Jesus? Hear what Jesus himself has said: "Whatever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it [John 14:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 14.13-14)." Here is no limitation, no exception: nay more, the very glory of God is pledged for the fulfillment of this promise, and shall be advanced in its accomplishment.

The passage, thus opened, affords me a peculiarly fit occasion to declare,

1. What should be the effect of sin upon the soul—

That it should humble us, will be universally acknowledged. But to many it appears as if it were a proper ground for dejection and despondency; and more especially when it has been committed by one who has been numbered with the Israel of God. But I would wish the terms of my text to be very particularly noticed; for in them the plea is urged in the very face of all the iniquities that had been committed: "Though our iniquities testify against us, do you it for your name's sake." Here you will see that conviction of sin is, not to keep us from God, but to bring us to him. We must on no account give way to discouragement, as though our sins were too great to be forgiven, or as though it were presumptuous in such sinners to draw near to God. Presumptuous it would be, if we were to seek any plea from ourselves: but it cannot be so when our plea is derived from God alone. One or two passages of Scripture will place this matter in a clear and beautiful light. David prays, "For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon mine iniquity: for it is great [Psalm 25:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 25.11)." And again, "Iniquities prevail against me: but as for our transgressions, you shall purge them away [Psalm 65:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 65.3)." Here he makes the greatness of his sins a reason for his more earnest application to God, and for his more entire affiance in him. Let us then learn a truth but little known, and a truth on which our spiritual welfare most essentially depends; namely, That sin is a just ground for humiliation, but not for discouragement. In our first conversion to God, we must come as the chief of sinners to the Lord Jesus Christ, and believe in him as both able and willing to save us to the uttermost. And is there any other way for us to come to God at a subsequent period? I know of none. Whether our sins be many or few, we may come as sinners, and we must come as sinners; founding all our hopes, not on any righteousness of our own, but on the multitude of his tender mercies [Psalm 51:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 51.1). The mercy of God is our only hope, from first to last: and though we may have changed, He changes not: nor is the way of access to him through the Son of his love closed against us. Let me not be misunderstood, as if I meant by these observations to speak lightly of sin; for sin, indulged and unrepented of, will infallibly destroy the soul: but we must be aware of a legal spirit; and guard against the idea, that the possession of any personal worthiness entitles us to God's favor, or that the want of it is a barrier to our acceptance with him. From first to last our hope is in Christ alone; and his name, as it is our only plea, so shall it be effectual, if it be urged in humility and faith. Let this, then, be remembered by every mourning soul, that sin is a ground of humiliation, but not of discouragement. It is not possible for us to be too deeply humbled: but, on the other hand, it is not possible to hold fast too strongly our hope and confidence in God.

2. What shall surely be effectual to remove it from the soul—

Prayer, fervent and believing prayer, shall infallibly succeed at last. Where do we find an instance of a weeping penitent spurned from the footstool of the Lord? Never, never did a repenting sinner pour out his cries in vain. Only we must remember the requisites of acceptable prayer. It must be humble and contrite. We must "acknowledge our iniquity," and our desert of God's judgments on account of it [Jeremiah 3:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.12-13); [Jeremiah 3:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.25). It must be fervent and persevering, like that of Daniel: "O my God, incline your ear, and hear! for we do not present our supplications before you for our righteousnesses, but for your great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken, and do; defer not, for your own sake, O my God [Daniel 9:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan 9.18-19)." It must be offered solely in dependence on God's promised mercies in Christ Jesus: "We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers; for we have sinned against you. Do not abhor us, for your name's sake; do not disgrace the. throne of your glory, remember, break not your covenant with us verse 20, 21." The truth is, that God has solemnly engaged that "he will not cast out one who comes to him in his Son's name [John 6:37](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 6.37);" and sooner shall "Heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or tittle of his word shall fail."

[Jeremiah 14:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 14.7-9)

DISCOURSE 1052

A PATTERN FOR NATIONAL HUMILIATION For a Fast-Day—Drought, etc.

[Jeremiah 14:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 14.7-9). O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, do you it for your name's sake: for our backslidings are many; we have sinned against you; O the hope of Israel, the Savior thereof in time of trouble, why should you be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry for a night? Why should you be as a man astonished, as a mighty man that cannot save! Yet you, O Lord, are in the midst of us, and we are called by your name: leave us not.

NATIONAL humiliation is the only mean of averting national judgments: it is that which God himself has prescribed; and to which he has often given the most signal success. The repentance, and consequent deliverance of Nineveh, a heathen nation, stands as an encouragement to all the kingdoms of the earth. The instances of God's regard to the united supplications of his people are so numerous, that it has ever been judged expedient to appoint days for general fasting and prayer, in seasons of great calamity. Surely such an appointment was never more necessary than now! To assist you in improving this solemn occasion, we shall propose to your imitation the Jews, who, in a season of grievous drought and famine, humbled themselves before God. In the words before us, we see,

I. Their humble acknowledgments—

Conscious of having merited the Divine judgments, they confessed their guilt—

And may not we justly adopt their language as our own?

"We have sinned against God" as much as any people upon earth: "our backslidings have been very many," and "our iniquities do indeed testify against us," Look through the land; see what profaneness everywhere abounds!: We have indeed professed on many solemn fast-days to repent, and turn unto the Lord; but our humiliation has not survived the day appointed for it, nor has any national reformation been visible among us: If we enter, every one of us, into our own hearts, we may see an epitome of all that is passing in the world: we may say with the Psalmist, "My heart shows mo the wickedness of the ungodly [Psalm 36:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 36.1). Prayer-Book Translation.": What ingratitude for mercies, what impenitence under sin, what unmindfulness of God's presence, what disregard of his word, what evil dispositions, corrupt affections, and vile propensities, may be laid to our charge!: Let any one say, Whether these and innumerable other sins, do not testify against him: We would hope that there are but few among us who have not resolved, and for a time endeavored, to repent: but has not our "goodness been as the morning-cloud, or the early dew that passes away?" Have not our "backslidings been multiplied? And could we have thought, some years ago, that we should have made so small a progress in the Divine life, or, perhaps, that we should at this day have been as far from God as ever?: Let us then make these acknowledgments to God with most sincere contrition, and lie before him in dust and ashes.

With equal propriety also we may imitate,

II. Their mournful expostulations—

Nothing indeed can be more offensive to God than arrogant expostulations [Isaiah 58:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 58.3); but nothing more acceptable than such as are presented with sincere humility—

Such were those with which the Jewish penitents addressed the Lord—

The titles, by which they address the Deity, are expressive of the deepest reverence: God is indeed the hope, the only "hope of his people:" and he is their willing and all-sufficient "Savior in the time of trouble." Nor did they intend to question either his inclination or ability to save them; but only to say, Will you be like a stranger that cares not for us; or like one, who, though mighty in himself, is yet, through perturbation of his mind, or the insuperable difficulty of the case, unable to afford support? Similar expostulations were frequently used by David [Psalm 44:23-26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 44.23-26); and however they may at first sight appear expressive of too great familiarity, are indeed the genuine effusions of a contrite soul—

Let us approach our God in terms of like import—

To whom can we look as our "Hope," but Jehovah? and who but he has been our "Savior in times of trouble?" But, alas! He is at present but as "a stranger in the land, or as a mighty man that cannot save." We have cried to him, and we are not delivered; though he has graciously interposed on some occasions, yet still we are left in deep affliction; nor can we at all divine what shall be the issue of our troubles. The greater part of us too, we fear, are no less in doubt respecting the issue of their spiritual conflicts: If they June ever cried to God, their enemies yet prevail; and it is uncertain whether they shall not finally be overwhelmed by sin and Satan. With what earnestness, then, should they look to Christ, as to "the hope set before them," and plead with him as their Savior in this hour of need!

But to their expostulations let us not forget to add,

III. Their fervent petitions—

The penitents before us seemed conscious as well of their unworthiness as of their impotency—

Hence, both in their petitions and their pleas, they expressed their entire reliance upon God's grace and mercy—

Sensible, that if God forsook them, or refused his aid, they must perish, they cried, "Leave us not!" "Do you it" which we desire: and having no goodness or worthiness of their own to plead, they entreated him "for his name's sake," and because of his presence with them, and his relation to them; "You, O Lord, are in the midst of us, and we are called by your name: leave us not!"

A more excellent pattern for our imitation we cannot find—

What can we do as a nation, if God forsake us, or withhold his powerful interposition? In vain will our fleets and armies go forth to meet the enemy, if God be not with them, to succeed their efforts. But can we plead the superior piety of our nation? Is there anything in the land so excellent, that we can urge it with God as a ground whereon we may expect his favor? Alas! the superior light of which we boast, and the distinguished blessings which we enjoy, have greatly aggravated our national guilt: we can therefore ask nothing but mercy, for mercy's sake. It is true, "God is still (blessed be his name!) in the midst of us;" and while our enemies have professedly cast off their allegiance to him The time of the French Revolution, we glory in being "called by his name." In this view we may plead his presence with us, and his relation to us; yet not in a spirit of proud boasting, but of humble and thankful acknowledgment. And the more God is honored in the midst of us, the more may we expect a continuance of his favor towards us.

It is almost needless to observe, that, with respect to our personal necessities, we must have no other plea than that before mentioned. He must be ignorant indeed who will presume to ground his hopes upon any merit of his own; though certainly, if we belong to God, we may plead his past mercies as a ground on which we hope for the continuance and increase of them. In this manner therefore let us approach our God; and we may rest assured that our supplications shall not go forth in vain.

APPLICATION—

Let this day be truly set apart for the humbling of your souls before God: And let the pattern now set before you be not only approved, but imitated in all its parts. There is a day coming when we shall either look back upon our present humiliation with unspeakable comfort, or regret bitterly that we trifled with God and our own souls. Defer not then this necessary work. The nation, of which you are members, demands it of you. Whatever be your judgment with respect to politics, there can be no doubt but that you have contributed to augment the guilt of the nation, and are therefore bound to deprecate the judgments that are hanging over it. The salvation of your own souls too depends on your sincere repentance; and the sooner you turn to God in his appointed way, the sooner will you obtain a sense of his favor, and the brighter will be your prospects in the heavenly world. Let us all then turn to Christ, as the Hope of Israel, and the Savior thereof: and however unable or unwilling to save we may have foolishly supposed him, we shall find him both "able and willing to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him."

[Jeremiah 14:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 14.20-21)

DISCOURSE 1053

HOW TO PLEAD WITH GOD

[Jeremiah 14:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 14.20-21). We acknowledge, O Lord, our wickedness, and the iniquity of our fathers: for we have sinned against you. Do not abhor us, for your name's sake; do not disgrace the throne of your glory: remember, break not your covenant with us.

"LORD, teach us to pray," was the request of the Apostles to their Lord and Master: and may Almighty God teach us to pray, while we consider the passage we have just read. Here is prayer indeed, such as it becomes us all to offer; and such as we shall surely offer, if ever we be duly sensible of our state before God. It was offered by the prophet in a season of great affliction. The whole land was in the utmost distress by reason of a drought, which put a total stop to vegetation, and destroyed all the fruits of the earth: and the prophet was assured, that that distress would speedily become extreme by means of the Chaldeans, who would invade the country, and desolate Jerusalem with the sword and famine. Under these circumstances, he was commanded not to pray for the people, since the measure of their iniquities was full verse 10, 11, But, like Moses of old [Exodus 32:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 32.10-11), the prophet could not forbear: he first indeed warned the people of the judgments which God was about to inflict upon them verse 15–18, and then, in a most earnest and humble manner, pleaded with God in their behalf verse 19–22.

We propose,

I. To explain this prayer of the prophet—

His acknowledgments are plain and easy to be understood—

He confesses, as he might well do, the sins of the whole nation; as well those contracted by their ancestors, as those which they had themselves committed: and he entreats God "not to abhor them" on account of their extreme wickedness. Now this expression, while it marked his sense of their vileness, had particular reference to what God himself had threatened by Moses, and to what he had promised also in the event of their humbling of themselves before him [Leviticus 26:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lev 26.10-12), with 27–30; in both of which passages especial mention is made of famine as connected with God's abhorrence. Hence, in the verse before the text, the prophet asks, "Have you utterly rejected Judah? has your soul loathed Zion?"

His pleas require some explanation—

Being exceedingly earnest in his petitions, he offers the most powerful pleas that could possibly be urged: he entreats God to have mercy on them for his own sake, and to show regard to the honor of his name, the glory of his administration, and the sanctity of his engagements.

The first of these pleas, the honor of God name, is frequently urged in the Holy Scriptures [Joshua 7:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Josh 7.9). [Psalm 79:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 79.9-10), and is particularly acceptable to God; who "is jealous for his holy name [Ezekiel 39:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 39.25)," and delights to sanctify it" in the sight of an ungodly world [Ezekiel 36:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 36.21-23).

The second of these pleas involves in it somewhat of greater difficulty. The words, "Do not disgrace the throne of your glory," are generally interpreted as importing no more than this;" 'Do not give up the city and temple into the hands of the enemy.' The words will undoubtedly bear this sense: for both the city and the temple are represented as God's throne [Jeremiah 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.17); [Jeremiah 17:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 17.12). See this latter in particular; and he threatens to give them up into the hands of his enemies to be polluted and defiled by them [Ezekiel 7:21-22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 7.21-22). But, if we attend to the manner in which this petition is introduced, we shall see that it is, like that which precedes, and that which follows it, a plea; in which view its sense will be, 'You are our King, who are engaged to provide for and protect your people; and if you give up the city and the temple into the hands of our enemies, as you have threatened, your government will be dishonored; and they will say, that you are not able to afford them the support which you have promised them.' In this view the passage exactly accords with the plea urged by Moses [Numbers 14:13-16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Num 14.13-16), and with that also which Jeremiah himself has urged more fully, and in the very same connection, in the preceding part of this chapter verse 7–9.

The last of these pleas reminds God of his covenant, which he cannot, and will not, break. This must doubtless refer to the covenant of grace, which God made with Abraham and with all his believing people to the end of time [Galatians 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 3.16). The national covenant that was made with Moses was broken, and annulled; because all the conditions of it had been violated: but "the better covenant" which was made with God in Christ, is "ordered in all things and sure [2 Samuel 23:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Sam 23.5)." and by it "the promise is made sure to all the seed [Romans 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 4.16)." That covenant is "confirmed by the oath of Jehovah, that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us [Hebrews 6:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 6.17-18)." This covenant God had engaged never to break [Psalm 89:35](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 89.35); and therefore the prophet urged the inviolability of it as a motive with God to fulfill to his people, notwithstanding their unworthiness, all which of his own grace and mercy he had promised to them. In this view God himself had promised to regard his covenant [Leviticus 26:41-42](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lev 26.41-42); and in this view the plea in our text may be considered as expressing what is more diffusely stated by the Prophet Isaiah [Isaiah 63:15-19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 63.15-19).

Having stated what may be considered as the import of the prayer, we proceed,

II. To point out some important lessons contained in it—

We shall confine ourselves to two;

1. The true nature of a sinner's humiliation—

Nothing can give us a more just idea of humiliation than the prophet's expression of it in our text. It necessarily implies an sincere confession of our sins, and of our desert on account of them. Think of the expression, "Abhor us not:" what a sense of extreme unworthiness does it convey! Yet is it not at all too strong: we are all, both by nature and practice, exceeding vile [Job 40:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 40.4); and ought, like Job, to "abhor ourselves in dust and ashes [Job 42:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 42.6)." Indeed this will be the state of every one that is truly penitent: he will look upon himself as "filthy and abominable [Psalm 14:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 14.3)," and will "loath himself for all his iniquities, and for all his abominations [Ezekiel 36:31](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 36.31)." Every attempt to cloak or palliate our offences argues a want of humility, and operates to the exclusion of our souls from the Divine favor. We must be like convicted lepers in our own estimation, and justify our God in whatever sentence he may denounce against us [Psalm 51:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 51.4).

2. The proper grounds of a sinner's encouragement—

Though we may justly acknowledge the work of Divine grace in us, and may give glory to God for whatever change he may have wrought in our hearts, yet we must not regard anything of our own as a ground for our confidence in God: we must look for all our grounds of encouragement in God alone, even in his infinite perfections, and in the covenant which he has made with us in the Son of his love. When David was overwhelmed with trouble, we are told, "he encouraged himself in the Lord his God." And this is what we are to do. In the prayer which the prophet offered, he drew all his pleasures from the honor and fidelity of his God. And what encouragement can we want, if we only contemplate God as he is revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures? As a mighty Sovereign, his grace is his own, and he may grant it to whoever he will; yes, and his sovereignty will be the more displayed and glorified, in the communication of grace to the very chief of sinners, and in making "his grace to abound, where sin has most abounded." The comfort to be derived from the contemplation of his love and mercy need not be stated; because that is obvious to the most inconsiderate mind. But even justice itself affords rich encouragement to a repenting sinner: for, has not an atonement been made for sin? and has not the Lord Jesus Christ discharged the debt of all those who trust in him? No doubt then, the justice of God, which has been satisfied by the ransom which his own Son has paid for us, will liberate us from our bondage, and restore us to all the privileges which his own Son has purchased for us. As he can be "a just God and yet a Savior," so he will be just to his own Son, in showing mercy to us for Christ's sake. Above all, his fidelity to his covenant-engagements leaves us no ground for fear; for never, since the foundation of the world, did one sinner perish who laid hold on his covenant, and rested in it as "all his salvation and all his desire."

Let me in conclusion be permitted to ask,

1. Have you ever pleaded with God in this manner—

Alas! if God were now to order those who have pleaded thus with him to be sealed on their foreheads, and all the rest to be smitten dead upon the spot [Ezekiel 9:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 9.1-6), what an awful spectacle would this place exhibit! Yet such a distinction will be made in the day of judgment. Beloved Brethren, consider this: and "judge yourselves, that you be not judged of the Lord": Shall it be said, that such pleadings are not necessary? What! were they judged necessary by the prophet for the averting of temporal judgments; and shall they not be for the averting of such as are eternal? Truly they are necessary for every child of man: nor can we hope to obtain mercy with God, unless we seek him thus with our whole hearts.

2. Have you ever pleaded thus with God in vain—

Never did God turn a deaf ear to one who sought him in this manner: "Never said he to any man, Seek you my face in vain!" If any say that they have prayed, and yet not received an answer, we reply, that either they have never pleaded in this manner the perfections and the promises of God; or, an answer has been given, but has been overlooked. God cannot refuse an answer to a broken-hearted suppliant. He may answer in a way that we do not expect; or be may delay his answer with a view to our greater good: but as he has promised to grant such petitions as are offered up in faith, so will we affirm, in the presence of the whole universe, that "every one that asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him that knocks, it shall be opened [Matthew 7:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 7.7-8)."

[Jeremiah 15:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 15.16)

DISCOURSE 1054

THE WORD OF GOD PRECIOUS

[Jeremiah 15:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 15.16). Your words were found, and I did eat them; and your word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart.

THE commission given to the prophets was often of a very painful nature; to harden, rather than convert, their countrymen; and to denounce judgments, rather than to proclaim mercy [Isaiah 6:9-12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 6.9-12). Of this kind was the commission given to Jeremiah verse 1–4, 13, 14; and for executing it, he was grievously persecuted and oppressed. Yet, notwithstanding the nature of his message, and the consequences resulting from a faithful delivery of it, he rejoiced in being honored with an embassy from the King of kings; assured that, whatever might be the final result either to his countrymen or himself, God would be glorified. But when the prophets were sent only to denounce judgments, they knew that there was a secret reserve in the mind of God for the exercise of mercy, in case the people who were thus menaced should repent. When Jonah was sent to Nineveh to declare explicitly that in forty days the whole city should be overthrown, he had a secret suspicion, which in the event was verified, that God would, in case they repented, exercise mercy towards them. And in like manner, Jeremiah had a hope, that the faithful execution of his office, even though it should be unavailing to the generality, would be productive of good to some; and therefore on that account God's word, which he was sent to publish, "was unto him the joy and rejoicing of his heart." Under the Gospel dispensation, ministers are sent, not so much to thunder out anathemas against the rebellious world, as to proclaim to them "glad tidings of great joy." And the scope of the inspired writings, as now collected into one volume, is to encourage the desponding, and to give rest to the heavy-laden. Well therefore may all, whether ministers or people, when they take the sacred volume into their hands, say, "Your word was found, and I did eat it; and it was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart."

In order to elucidate these words, we shall show,

I. How the word of God should be received—

In the days of Josiah the word of God had been lost: and, when it was found, it was received with avidity, as a gift from Heaven 2 Chronicles 34:14-18. We do not however conceive that any similar event is referred to in the passage before us. The true light will be cast on our text, if we consult a parallel passage in the Prophet Ezekiel, where it was said to Trim, "Son of man, eat that you find; eat this roll, and go speak unto the house of Israel:" and then he ate it, and it was in his "mouth as honey for sweetness [Ezekiel 3:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 3.1-3)." In both the passages the word is compared to food, which is to be eaten and digested as the proper nutriment of the soul. This image is just; since, like common food, the word,

1. Is necessary for all—

Who can live without it? Who can have any just knowledge of God without it, or have any conception how sinful man can obtain mercy at the hands of his offended God? The greatest philosophers of Greece and Rome were entirely in the dark on all subjects connected with the soul; nor could unenlightened reason ever have explored those mysteries which the inspired volume alone has revealed to man. Even at this present day, notwithstanding the light of revelation, the great and learned among ourselves are still ignorant of divine truth, if they have not been taught of God by the effectual application of his word to their souls. It is by the word that the knowledge of salvation is still communicated to every one of us: and we must all study it for ourselves, receiving its testimony with a believing heart, and submitting both our reason and our passions to its enlightening and sanctifying influence.

2. It is suitable to all—

In the sacred oracles there is "milk for babes, and strong meat" for those of an adult age Compare [Hebrews 6:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 6.13-14) with [1 Peter 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Pet 2.2) and [Colossians 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col 3.16). The fundamental truths are written there so plainly, that "he who runs may read them:" and so clearly do they mark out the path to Heaven, that "the way-faring man, though a fool, cannot err therein," if only he receive its directions with a humble and contrite spirit. On the other hand, there are in the inspired volume mysteries which no finite intelligence can fully comprehend. Not only may the greatest proficients in sacred literature be always advancing in knowledge, but the very angels themselves acquire more enlarged views of the manifold wisdom of God, from the revelation that is made of it in the Holy Scriptures [1 Peter 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Pet 1.12) with [Ephesians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 3.10). Moreover, so infinitely diversified is the instruction to be gathered from the sacred volume, that we can be in no situation in which it does not contain the directions and encouragements most suited to our case.

3. It is sufficient for all—

"The Holy Scriptures are able to make us wise unto salvation, through faith in Christ Jesus." We need no acquaintance with any other book, nor with any other subject which is not contained in that volume. Other books doubtless are useful, and knowledge of many other subjects is desirable; but nothing is necessary for salvation which is not contained in the Holy Scriptures, and easily to be learned from them. A strange idea is maintained by some, that the Scriptures are unintelligible to the poor and illiterate; and that they are more likely to mislead them, than to guide them aright. But what a reflection is this on God himself, as having imparted to us a book altogether unsuited to the end for which it was given! But there is no ground for any such reflection. There are doubtless in the Scriptures some things hard to be understood, and which an unstable person may wrest to his own destruction: but we again affirm, that all which is necessary to be known is easily to be gathered from the word of God; and that, if it be "received with meekness as an engrafted word, it is able," and shall be effectual, "to save the soul [James 1:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James 1.21)."

Let us now proceed to consider,

II. What effect it will produce—

As the roll, when eaten by Ezekiel, was as honey in his mouth, so to Jeremiah "the word was the joy and rejoicing of his heart." In a man that is impenitent and unbelieving, we acknowledge that the word is calculated to inspire terror: but to one that is of a penitent and contrite spirit, it speaks nothing but peace and joy. This is the proper effect of every part of the inspired volume; of,

1. Its declarations—

O, how wonderful are these! What an exhibition does the Scripture give us of God's character, and of the way which he has provided for the salvation of sinful men! What a stupendous mystery does it reveal, of the incarnation and death of his co-equal, co-eternal Son! of Christ "bearing our sins in his body on the tree," and "being made sin for us, that we may be made the righteousness of God in him!" Can such tidings as these reach the ears of a guilty and condemned sinner, and not fill him with joy? Can the voice of pardon reach the cell of a condemned criminal, and be received with indifference? or, if the offers of a free and full salvation, were now to be sent to the regions of the damned, would they excite no joyous emotions among the unhappy sufferers? If there be any, to whom the Gospel comes, that do not rejoice in the glad tidings, it is because they know not their lost estate, nor have any desire after reconciliation with their offended God. To those who know their guilty and undone state, the declarations of mercy sounding forth in the Gospel are "dearer than thousands of silver and gold."

2. Its precepts—

It may be thought, that, because these are so strict and holy, they can afford no joy to any: but the very reverse is the case; for the true believer will say with David, "Your word is very pure; therefore your servant loves it [Psalm 119:140](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 119.140)." A redeemed soul is asking, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all the benefits that he has done unto me?" and in the precepts he sees what God requires of him, and how he may bring glory to the God of his salvation. He sees that an attention to these will perfect his nature, and transform him into the Divine image: hence "he esteems them concerning all things to be right [Psalm 119:128](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 119.128);" and "because they are right, they rejoice his heart," and are accounted by him "sweeter than honey, and the honey-comb [Psalm 19:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 19.8); [Psalm 19:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 19.10)."

3. Its promises—

These are justly called by the Apostle "exceeding great and precious," more especially because "by them we are made partakers of a divine nature [2 Peter 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Pet 1.4)," and are enabled to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God [2 Corinthians 7:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 7.1)." Who can declare a thousandth part of the joy which a weary and heavy-laden sinner experiences in applying to his soul the promises of the Gospel? With what avidity does he devour them! They are like the first ripe fig which in the early spring a traveler sees, and devours, before any one, however near to him, has time to claim it [Isaiah 28:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 28.4); and the man who knows not this by his own sweet experience, has yet "to learn what be the very first principles of the oracles of God."

4. Its threatenings—

These to the believer are scarcely less precious than the promises themselves. It was one great excellence of the Scriptures in the estimation of David, that "by them he was warned [Psalm 19:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 19.11)." He regarded them as a mariner his chart, by which he is warned of the rocks and quicksands on which he will infallibly be wrecked, if he deviate from his proper course. Is there a seaman, who, when in imminent danger, is instructed by that faithful monitor to avoid destruction, will not adore his God for the warning that taught him to escape it? So it is with all who truly fear God: they love to be warned: they desire to be put upon their guard: they are afraid of turning aside in any respect, or of relaxing their efforts in the path of duty. Like Paul, they contemplate the danger of a relapse as an incentive to fresh exertions, and "keep their body under, and bring it into subjection, lest, after having preached to others, they themselves should be cast-always [1 Corinthians 9:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 9.27)." In a word, the believer views the threatenings, as the angels who took Lot and his daughters by the hand, and, by representations of their danger, accelerated their escape from the devouring element: he acquiesces in them as "just and holy;" and by their quickening influence he finds them to be "good."

May we not then Learn from hence,

1. What enemies to their own souls they are who neglect the Holy Scriptures!

Notwithstanding the Scriptures are "the wells of salvation, from whence we are privileged to draw water with joy," the greater part even of the Christian world pay but little attention to them: any other book of science or amusement is preferred before them, and, unless in a formal cursory way, they are never read at all. Now what folly is this! What man in his senses, when navigating his ship among rocks and quicksands, neglects to consult his chart? Yet, as if there were no dangers in the Christian's way, or no great evil to be incurred by negligence, the generality are quite indifferent about that book which alone can conduct us safely to a better world. But lot it not be so among you: "Search the Scriptures, in which you think, yes and know assuredly, you have eternal life." "Search them daily," as the Bereans did: "search them as for hid treasure;" and lift up your hearts to God for the teachings of his good Spirit, "to guide you into all truth." "He will open your understandings to understand them," and will work effectually by them to your salvation. They are the rod of God's strength, and the sword of his Spirit: and if you read them in humility and faith, you shall rind them "quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow; and they shall discover to you the very thoughts and intents of your hearts [Hebrews 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 4.12)." If you will not sit thus at the feet of Jesus and learn of him, it is in vain for you to number yourselves among his disciples; but if you will come to him, you need not be discouraged at your weakness or ignorance; for he says, "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and you shall find rest unto your souls."

2. What an unspeakable blessing is the Bible Society!

Though the Scriptures are not with us, as among the Papists, locked up in a language not generally understood, yet by the cost of a Bible it has been to a great extent kept out of the possession of the poor. True it is, that they who have known the value of the Bible would procure it at any rate: but those who were unacquainted with its treasures have found it too costly for them to purchase. But now he who is able to pay only a part, may have it for that part; and they who can really pay nothing, may have it for nothing. Now therefore the poor may well say, "Your word is found: yes, it is found; and I will eat it." O that there were in all of us such a heart! and that we were all determined henceforth to feed upon its precious truths; and that, like Job, we "esteemed it more than our necessary food [Job 23:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 23.12)." Now God is sending it to all of us, the poorest as well as the richest, exactly as he did the manna in the wilderness: he sends it home to our very houses, and invites us to live upon it. The king upon the throne has no richer food; and the poorest among us has now a free access to it, so that he may "eat that which is good, and let his soul delight itself in fatness [Isaiah 55:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 55.2)." Let us bless God then, who has put it into the hearts of so many to provide for us such ample supplies of this invaluable treasure: and let us all, according to our ability, labor to promote the designs of a Society, which is the most honorable to God, and most useful to man, that ever existed upon the face of the earth.

[Jeremiah 17:5-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 17.5-8)

DISCOURSE 1055

THE DUTY OF TRUSTING IN GOD

[Jeremiah 17:5-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 17.5-8). Thus says the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm, and whose heart departs from the Lord. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good comes; but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land and not inhabited. Blessed is the man that trusts in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreads out, her roots by the river and shall not see when heat comes, but her leaf shall be green: and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

EVERY created being derives its existence and support from God: yet man is prone to depend on the creature rather than on him. Though constantly disappointed, he still leans on an arm of flesh; but such conduct is justly reprobated in the strongest terms.

We shall consider,

I. The characters that are contrasted—

Every man by nature "trusts in man, makes flesh his arm, and his heart departs from the Lord." We need not go to heathens or infidels to find persons of this description. We need only search the records of our own conscience.

In temporal things, we never think of looking above the creature: if they be prosperous, we trust in uncertain riches, and take the glory to ourselves; if adverse, we lean to our own understanding and exertions, or rely for support on our friends. In spiritual things, we seek to establish a righteousness of our own; we expect to repent and serve God by our own strength.

The true Christian "trusts in the Lord, and makes the Lord his hope"—

He trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ as the God of providence: he commits his affairs to him, expecting his promised aid. He trusts also in Jesus as the God of grace: he renounces all hope in his own goodness or resolutions: he cordially adopts the language of the Church of old [Isaiah 45:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 45.24).—

These marks afford a sure line of distinction between the nominal and the real Christian—

Both may be moral, charitable, and attentive to religious duties; but the regenerate alone trust simply in the Lord. Not that all the regenerate are alike delivered from self-dependence; nor do the same persons always exercise their graces in the same degree. There are remains of self-righteousness etc. in the best of men; but the unregenerate allow these things which are abhorred by the regenerate.

Nor is this difference between them of trifling import.

II. Their respective conditions—

Men's eternal state will be fixed with perfect equity. The conditions of the characters before us are strongly contrasted:

1. Simply; "blessed," etc. "cursed," etc.

What can be more important than these declarations? They are not the dictates of enthusiasm, but the voice of God; "Thus says the Lord." And may we not adopt Balak's words in reference to God [Numbers 22:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Num 22.6).—And what can be more reasonable? God has given his Son to be our Saviors; but while some confide in him, others, by not trusting in him, reject him: how reasonable then is it that a curse should attach to these, and a blessing to those! Such a difference in their conditions seems the necessary result of their own conduct. Spiritual life or death are dependent on our trust in the Lord, just as the life of the body is on our receiving or rejecting of animal food. Let every one then inquire, which of these conditions he has reason to expect?

2. Figuratively—

To mark the contrast more clearly, it is further observed, that both the blessing and the curse shall be

Abundant—

The unbeliever "shall be like the heath in the desert;" he shall be left in a state of extreme barrenness and wretchedness: and this too amidst all his boasted fullness [Job 20:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 20.22). The believer "shall be as a tree planted by the waters," etc; he shall be made flourishing and happy by rich supplies of grace [Philippians 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 4.19).

Unmixed—

The unbeliever "shall not see when good comes:" he receives none of the heavenly dew that falls around him. The believer "shall not see when heat comes, but his leaf shall be green, nor shall he be careful in the year of drought:" he may experience "heat" and "drought," I. e. heavy afflictions; he shall, however, not be injured, but benefitted by them His afflictions lose not their nature, but effect: tribulation, which fills others with vexation, works patience in him; the furnace, which consumes others, purges away his dross. [Hebrews 12:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 12.11); free from all anxiety, he will say as the Church of old [Hosea 6:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 6.1).—

Eternal—

The unbeliever "shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land, and not inhabited:" he shall be an outcast from God in the regions of misery. The believer "shall not cease from yielding fruit:" his present enjoyments are the pledge and earnest of eternal happiness.

INFERENCES—

1. How glorious a person must Christ be!

If he were a mere creature, it would be ruinous in the extreme to trust in him; but we are expressly commanded to trust in him [John 14:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 14.1). He must then be "God over all, blessed forever." And this renders him worthy of our fullest affiance: on him must "hang all the glory of his Father's house [Isaiah 22:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 22.23-24)."

2. How are we all concerned to trust in Christ!

God regards, not merely our outward conduct, but the frame of our hearts: on this our present and everlasting happiness depends Conceive Christ as making this declaration in the day of judgment. Compare [Matthew 25:34](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 25.34); [Matthew 25:41](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 25.41). Let us then trust in him for all temporal and spiritual aid; so shall we receive his blessing, and escape his curse.

[Jeremiah 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 17.9)

DISCOURSE 1056

NECESSITY OF KNOWING OURSELVES

[Jeremiah 17:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 17.9). The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?

A MORE important subject than that before us cannot occupy the human mind. The knowledge of ourselves is fundamental to all true knowledge of religion. Religion is no longer to us what it was to man in his primeval state, the natural expression of all the feelings of his soul: it is a remedy, devised for the restoration of his soul to the favor, and to the image, of his God: and we must see in what manner, and to what extent, we are fallen, before we can understand aright the provision made for our recovery: we must know our disorder before we can appreciate the remedy. Behold then what the Scripture speaks concerning us! The expressions in our text are not an eastern metaphor, that must be softened down; or a complaint uttered against one particular individual, whose impieties far exceeded the common standard of mankind: they are a plain exposition of the state to which the heart of man is reduced by the fall of Adam: and, however we may wish, for the credit of human nature, to put a lenient construction on the terms, we cannot by any fair means explain them away: they are absolutely inflexible; and we must bow before them, as containing the infallible testimony of God concerning us. But it is not without a considerable measure of fear and diffidence that we enter upon the investigation of a subject so deep, so vast, so occult. When God himself says, "Who can know it?" we seem presumptuous in undertaking to explain it. But we hope that the acknowledged necessity of every man's attaining some knowledge of it will plead our excuse for any attempt which we may make to throw light upon it; and that you will supply our defects by lifting up your hearts to God in prayer, and entreating him to give you that self-knowledge, which, even a heathen saw, must descend from Heaven.

The subjects then for our present consideration are, the deceitfulness, and wickedness, of the human heart:

I. Its deceitfulness—

There is perhaps no stronger proof of the deceitfulness of the heart than the power it possesses to hide its deceits from us. But, that we may present somewhat of its deceitfulness to your view, we will distinctly mark it in the three following particulars:

It misrepresents the nature of all things;

It keeps out of view their tendency; And

It deceives, not others only, but itself also.

Of course, when we say, "It misrepresents the nature of all things," we must be understood as speaking only of the things which concern the soul. To advert to other things, and to consider how far the powers of the human mind are enfeebled in relation to matters of mere science, would be altogether beside our purpose.

But where shall we begin our illustration of this point? If we look up to God, there is not a perfection of his nature which the unenlightened mind views aright; and as for those perfections which he exercises as the moral Governor of the universe, they are even held in abhorrence by the carnal mind: his absolute sovereignty is denied, as though the exercise of it were an injustice to man: his holiness and justice are supposed capable of winking at the commission of sin; and his veracity is impeached, to make way for the salvation of those who rebel against him. Some are so foolish and infatuated, as to "say, There is no God:" and, of those who acknowledge his existence, there is not one, unless he have been previously converted by Divine grace, who entertains worthy conceptions of him in his heart.

If we turn our thoughts to the world around us; what is there, that the heart of man views in its proper light? Its pleasures? its riches? its honors? All these, instead of being regarded as snares and worthless vanities, are perfectly idolized, and are sought after as constituting the chief happiness of man.

Look we to morals? How erroneous are our conceptions even of the plainest duties! Pride, anger, revenge, are held forth as noble and honorable; while the virtues of humility, meekness, forbearance, and forgiveness, are despised, as indications of a weak and cowardly disposition. As formerly neither the Greeks nor Romans had a word in their language whereby to express the true notion of humility, so now the very idea of humility, as enjoined in the Christian code, never enters into the mind of an unconverted man, unless it be to load it with ridicule and contempt.

Go we, further, to religion? That is considered as consisting in little more than a profession of certain tenets, and an observance of certain forms. The entire devotion of the soul to God is deemed a foolish and culpable excess, the effect of needless timidity or of enthusiastic ardor: and, to countenance these ideas, harsh and offensive names are used to characterize all true piety; while everything contrary to the Divine commands, is palliated with soft names and plausible excuses.

In a word, the Scripture itself describes the heart of man in this precise view, as "calling evil good, and good evil; as putting darkness for light, and light for darkness; as putting bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter [Isaiah 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 5.20)."

Proceed we then, next, to observe, that the heart keeps out of view the tendency of things. Let us instance this in relation to sin. Who, on his first entrance on a sinful course, imagines where his vicious propensities will lead him? He thinks of a present gratification, but does not consider that sin is "like the letting out of water;" and that the smallest breach in a bank opens the way for the most extensive inundation. It a thought of our final account occur to the mind, the heart suggests, that the sin may be repented of with ease, and that there is no just reason to be afraid of its consequences; notwithstanding its uniform tendency is, to harden the heart, to sear the conscience, to grieve and quench the Holy Spirit of God, and to rivet upon our souls the chains which have been forged by the great destroyer of mankind. Ask any man who feels the burden and the bitterness of sin, whether, when committing it, he had any idea of its tendency to distress the soul, and to create, as it were, a very Hell within him? He will tell you, that, in following his lusts, he dreamed of nothing but pleasure; and that while he was tempted with the bait, the hook was only faintly suspected, or kept entirely out of view. Whatever be the sin to which we are tempted, the heart suggests, that there is no great evil in it; that God is too merciful to punish us eternally for such a trifle; that it is not possible for us to perish, since all around us are in the same state with ourselves; or that, at all events, a dying hour will be quite time enough for the indulging of any melancholy reflections; and that a few prayers, then offered, will answer every end that we can wish. Thus the delusions of sin, and the wiles of Satan, are all countenanced by our own evil hearts; and the awful consequences of transgression are kept out of sight, until it is too late to avert them. Against this propensity of the heart we are warned in the Holy Scriptures: If, says God, a man hearing the curses denounced against him in my word, "bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my heart, then I will not spare him; but the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under Heaven [Deuteronomy 29:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 29.19-20)."

The third mark which we mentioned as showing the unparalleled deceitfulness of the heart, is this, that it deceives, not others only, but itself also. It is said in our text to be "deceitful above all things." Riches and other things are said to be deceitful; but they are so called, only because the heart makes them occasions of deceiving us: they are themselves altogether passive in the matter. Of active agents, Satan is beyond all comparison the greatest deceiver, except the heart: but he, when he is deceiving, is conscious that he is deceiving: he does not for a moment imagine that he is speaking truth: but the heart persuades itself that it is not guilty of any imposition: it is as confident of its own integrity, as if it were really upright; and as fully convinced of the truth of its representations, as if they were really true. This is the case universally among those who are yet in a carnal and unconverted state. Those who imagine that religion consists in the observance of certain forms, are often as free from doubts as any people upon earth; and if it be insinuated that they are blind, they ask with surprise and indignation, "Are we blind also?" In like manner a ferocious bloody-thirsty persecutor will actually think, that, while he is killing the Lord's people, "he is doing God service:" just as the persecuting Saul "truly thought with himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus." But further, even the Atheist, who reduces God to a level with man, persuades himself that he is right; "You thought that I was altogether such an one as yourself [Psalm 50:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 50.21)." Indeed the same propensity of heart shows itself even after that we are converted: the Apostles themselves, when they would have called fire from Heaven to consume a Samaritan village, thought, undoubtedly, that their proposal was at least an acceptable expression of their zeal: but our Lord told them, that "they knew not what spirit they were of:" and Peter, when dissuading his Master from entertaining any thoughts about sufferings and death, supposed that he displayed most unexceptionably the tenderness of his love; while in reality he was, as our Lord himself told him, no other than an agent of the devil.

Of this power of the heart to deceive itself, all men are conscious, in relation to others; but all overlook it in relation to themselves. Nothing is easier than for a spectator to form a tolerably correct judgment of the motives and principles of others, and to see the obliquity of them, while the actors themselves imagine themselves actuated by the purest feelings. Justly therefore is it said by Him who cannot err, that "the heart is deceitful above all things," not excepting even Satan himself, the great deceiver of mankind.

We are now to consider,

II. The wickedness of the heart—

But how shall we state it, so as in any measure to correspond with the description in our text? We are almost afraid that we shall be regarded as libeling human nature: yet we must declare the truth, "whether men will hear, or whether they will forbear." Know then, that the heart by nature is universally wicked, unsearchably wicked, and incurably wicked.

It is universally wicked, both in all its powers, and in every exercise of each. We do not say, that there may not be a considerable portion of comparative good in men, so that they may be more amiable, and more worthy members of society than others; (for doubtless there is by nature a great difference in men, as well in their moral dispositions as in their intellectual powers;) but there is nothing positively good in them, in the strict acceptance of the word: for in the Book of Job it is said, "How can he be clean that is born of a woman?" "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean [Job 14:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 14.4); [Job 25:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 25.4)." And our Lord says, "There is none good but one; that is, God." The understanding of man is darkened by sin; the will is rendered perverse and obstinate; the affections are sensualized: the conscience is made partial and insensible; and the whole man is altogether become abominable; his heart being the seat of every lust, the womb from whence every sin proceeds [Mark 7:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark 7.21-23). It must be remembered, moreover, that man sins by defect, as well as by a direct and willful opposition to his duty; so that even if we should suppose human nature to be possessed of all the excellencies which its most sanguine advocates can imagine, still we must all adopt for ourselves the confession of Paul, "In me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing." We are aware that this may appear to go beyond the truth: but, if any be disposed to entertain such an opinion, we would ask, What is the meaning of that declaration, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually [Genesis 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen 6.5); [Genesis 8:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen 8.21)." This testimony, though spoken of men before the flood, was renewed in reference to men after the flood: and what can be conceived more decisive of the point than this? Not only the thoughts of men, but the imaginations of their thoughts, yes, and every imagination of their thoughts, was evil, and only evil, and only evil continually. This was the testimony of Him "who searches the heart, and tries the reins:" we may be well assured, therefore, that this record is true.

Again—The heart is also unsearchably wicked. Not only are we unable to discover all the evil that is in the hearts of others; we cannot even in our own. Suppose a man to have discovered ever so much of his own depravity, there will yet be depths within him unfathomable and unexplored. As Ezekiel, in the chambers of imagery, saw on every successive search more and greater abominations than before, so will a man to his dying hour find in his heart many and great evils which he had not so clearly seen before. Times and occasions will call them forth; so that a man will often wonder how such evils could remain within him, or, if within him, how they should have continued so long undiscovered. The truth is, a man could not bear a full sight of his own heart at once; it would drive him to utter despair: nor is any man capable of seeing it all at once: its deceits are so subtle, its corruptions so various, and its abominations so inconceivably great, that none but an infinite capacity can grasp such immeasurable heights and depths. Well therefore has God said, "Who, except the heart-searching God, can know it?"

But once more; It is incurably evil. Whether or not, as some have thought, this is the precise import of the word, it is plain that the idea is strongly conveyed in our translation, as it stands. Truly our case, as to any human remedies at least, is desperate. We call not any case desperate in relation to the Gospel; because there is no sin from which the blood of Christ cannot cleanse us, nor any corruption, which the Spirit of Christ is not able to subdue. But to human means the wickedness of our hearts bids defiance: they can no more overcome it, than Elisha's staff in Gehazi's hand could raise the Shunamite's child to life. No resolutions of ours, no exertions, can banish it from the soul. We may on many occasions restrain its actings; for even the presence of a fellow-creature will often impose a more effectual restraint than the presence of our God: but we cannot subdue it, we cannot mortify it, we cannot purge it away: it is like the leprosy in the house, that could not be in any way removed, but by pulling down the house altogether. This, it must be confessed, is a melancholy picture: but it is the very truth of God, and is known, and felt, to be so, by all who are taught of God.

Now from this view of our subject we may clearly see—

1. The true ground of the doctrine of the new birth—

It is surprising how often the Scripture speaks respecting the being "born again," the being "begotten of God," and "born of God:" which terms must of necessity import, not merely an outward change of state or profession in baptism, but an inward change of heart, a passing "from darkness to light," "from death to life." It is to be "born, not of water only, but of the Spirit also." When that takes place, we die to sin, and begin to live unto righteousness: we become "new creatures in Christ Jesus: old things pass away; and all things become new [2 Corinthians 5:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 5.17)." Baptism is the sign and seal of it, but not the thing itself. What the circumcision of the heart was, as compared with the circumcision of the flesh, that the new birth is, as compared with baptism: it is the real radical change, of which the external rite was a type or shadow The benefits arising from baptism are great, even as those, were which arose from circumcision. See [Romans 9:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 9.4-5). But we must not confound a change of state with a change of nature. The neglecting to make this distinction is the foundation of all the errors which have arisen on this subject. See [Romans 2:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 2.28-29). Now this change is absolutely and indispensably necessary to the salvation of the soul: "Truly, truly I say unto you," says our Lord, "except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." But why so? why must every child of man undergo such a change as this? For this plain reason; He is so radically corrupt in every faculty and power of his soul by nature, as to be absolutely incapable of enjoying Heaven, even if he were there: having no love to a holy God, nor any delight in holy employments here, he would be destitute of them there; being filthy here, he would be "filthy still." This, we apprehend, is the exact meaning of those words of our Lord, "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit." Nicodemus not understanding the nature, or the reasons, of the doctrine which our Lord had insisted on, our Lord told him, that the new birth was founded on our unfitness by nature for the kingdom of Heaven; since that which was born of the flesh, being only fleshly, was altogether incapable of spiritual enjoyments; whereas that which was born of the Spirit being spiritual, it was necessary to fit us for the exercises and employments of a spiritual kingdom. Let us not then deceive ourselves with vain disputations about words, but let us attend to things which admit of no doubt. Our hearts are by nature "deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked;" and they must be changed by the operation of the Spirit of God: we must have "the heart of stone taken away, and a heart of flesh given to us:" we must be "renewed after the image of our God in righteousness and true holiness;" and therefore we should not rest one hour in a carnal and unconverted state; but should cry mightily to our God for his effectual grace, saying with David, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me!" The Lord grant that this prayer may ascend up before him from every one of us, until we have obtained an answer to it in the renovation of our souls!

In the next place, We may see from hence,

Our utter need of an interest in Christ—

With such hearts as ours, how can we ever dream of meriting anything at the hands of God? To show the vanity of any such idea, let us not rest in a general notion of man's goodness, but descend to particulars, and try to find someone action that can stand the test of God's word, someone in which God himself shall not be able to find a flaw. Let a man search through the whole records of his life for one such action; and if he find one, we will be content that he shall stand upon that as the foundation of his hopes, and claim Heaven on the ground of his own merits. But if not one such action can be found by the best person upon earth, how much less can a whole series of such actions, from the beginning to the end of life, be found! yet nothing less than that could warrant a claim to Heaven on the ground of our own obedience: one single transgression, however small, is a violation of the law; and not only makes void all its promises of life, but renders us obnoxious to its curses, even to everlasting misery and death [Galatians 3:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 3.10). Let us then discard so vain, so fatal a delusion: let us be contented to stand on the same foundation as Paul: let us "desire to win Christ, and to be found in him, not having our own righteousness, which is of the law, but the righteousness which is of God by faith in Christ." We call the Lord Jesus Christ, "Savior:" let us rely upon him as our Savior: let us trust in his blood and righteousness as the only meritorious ground of our hope: and let us glory in him, as "all our salvation, and all our desire."

Lastly, Let us see from hence,

The importance of self-diffidence and self-distrust—

There is an astonishing degree of confidence in men of every class and every description. The ungodly man, who gratifies all his inclinations, and lives altogether without God in the world, has no fear that he shall perish: 'his sins are no other than trivial frailties, and God neither notices nor regards them.' The man who is a mere formalist, whose religion consists in a "form of godliness without the power of it," is equally persuaded, that no harm shall ever happen to him: he performs his duty, and has no doubt of his final acceptance with God. The man whose heart is divided between God and the world, and who will follow religion only so far as agrees with his interests and humor, is quite certain that God is pleased with him, and will accept at his hand his reluctant and mutilated offerings. The zealous talkative religionist, who disgraces his profession by his conceit, his censoriousness, his neglect of his own roper duties and calling, by his disorderly conduct both in Church and State, yes, by all manner of evil tempers and sinful practices, even he also has no doubt but that his name is written in Heaven. And, if we attempt to expostulate with any of these on their unscriptural presumption, they are quite offended at the liberty we take, and are surprised that we dare to question the certainty of their salvation To this effect is that humiliating observation of Solomon, "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weighs the spirits," And again, "There is a way that seems right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." [Proverbs 16:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 16.2); [Proverbs 16:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 16.25). Thus does Satan blind them all, and "lead them captive at his will." But let me entreat all to relax somewhat of their confidence, and to bring their expectations to the test of Scripture. It is certain that many do believe a lie; and are given over to it by God, as the punishment of their presumption. What the Apostle says respecting this, is so awful, that I almost tremble to repeat his words: yet as they are the words of God himself, I trust you will hear them, not only without offence, but with the reverence that is due to God: "For this cause," (that is, "because men receive not the love of the truth, that they may be saved,") "God shall send them strong delusion, that they may believe a lie, that they all might be damned, who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness 2 Thessalonians. 2:11-12." What a fearful judgment is this! and how should we dread the provoking of God to inflict it upon us! If then we would not be given up to judicial blindness, "let us search and try our ways, and turn unto the Lord our God." Let us be satisfied with nothing but the clear express testimony of Scripture: for God has said, "He who trusts his own heart, is a fool [Proverbs 28:26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 28.26)." If we find that we have really been born again of the Spirit, and been washed from our sins in the Redeemer's blood; if there be no sin which we knowingly indulge, nor any command of God which we do not endeavor to fulfill; if we can call God to witness, that the continued labor of our lives is to "walk as Christ walked;" then God forbid that I should attempt to destroy the confidence of such persons: they have a right to be confident; and instead of distressing their minds with needless fears, I would exhort them to "hold fast their confidence, and the rejoicing of their hope firm unto the end." But nevertheless I would entreat them to deal faithfully with their own souls; and not only to search them with all diligence themselves, but to cry mightily unto God in the words of David; "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in the way everlasting!" Yes more, to their dying hour I would urge them to be diffident of themselves, even when they are most confident in God. For even Paul felt this to be necessary: "Though I know nothing by myself," says he, "yet am I not hereby justified; but he who judges me is the Lord." There may be self-deceit in us, even when we are least aware of it: and therefore with all our might we should guard against it, lest we find out our delusions, when it is too late to apply a remedy. Of one thing we are sure, that God will not fix our state according to our imagined attainments, but according to our real character in his sight. We say therefore to all, and with those words we shall close our discourse, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap: he who sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he who sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."

[Jeremiah 17:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 17.10)

DISCOURSE 1057

GOD'S RULE OF JUDGMENT

[Jeremiah 17:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 17.10). I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings.

THE evil of the human heart is far greater than can be fully conceived either by men or angels. None but God himself can explore the depths of iniquity that are within it verse 9. But He will judge the world in righteousness at the last day; and consequently must have access to the inmost recesses of the soul, and must be able to bring forth to judgment all its hidden abominations. Accordingly, God himself informs us, that he is actually so occupied, noticing everything, and recording everything, in order that he may reward every man according to his deeds: "I the Lord search the heart, I try the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings."

We may here see,

I. The preparation which God is making for the future judgment—

"The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good [Proverbs 15:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 15.3)." Nor is he an unconcerned spectator of what is done upon earth: on the contrary, he inspects everything with the greatest accuracy; and therefore inspects it, that he may bring it forth to judgment, and pass sentence upon it.

1. He continually marks the ways of men—

All their actions he observes, not merely according to their outward aspect, but according to the principles from whence they proceed, and the ends for which they are done. However good a thing may be in itself, it is not really good in God's sight, unless it proceed from love to him, and be done with a view to his glory. Our most common actions ought to be so done: "whether we eat, or drink, or whatever we do, we should do all to the glory of God [1 Corinthians 10:31](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 10.31)." Our words also, and our very thoughts, are scrutinized by him, to ascertain how much there is of good or evil in them; and to record the same, as grounds of our condemnation or acquittal at the bar of judgment Hence it is said by David, "His eyes behold, and his eyelids try, the children of men [Psalm 11:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 11.4);" that is, as a man desiring to inspect a thing with more than usual accuracy, almost closes his eyes, in order to exclude every other object, and to fix his attention more intensely on the object before him; so does God examine with the utmost possible care the ways of every human being. This is declared yet more strongly by Solomon, who says, that God "weighs the spirits [Proverbs 16:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 16.2)." Now, in the spirits of men there is a great mixture of motives and principles, which need to be analyzed and distinguished. There is, even in good men, a mixture of faith and of unbelief, of love to God and self-love, of sincerity and hypocrisy. Hezekiah evinced this, in his treatment of the Babylonish Ambassadors [2 Chronicles 32:31](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Chron 32.31); as did James and John also, when, from zeal for their Master's honor, they would have called fire from Heaven to consume a Samaritan village [Luke 9:54](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 9.54). In fact, there is imperfection in everything that proceeds from man. Our very humiliations have a mixture of pride, and our exultations, of self-delight. But "God tries the reins," as a philosopher assays gold; and will assuredly declare, at the last day, how much there was of alloy in the very best action of our lives, and how much of the purer metal. Moreover,

2. He records everything in the book of his remembrance—

The thoughts as well as the words of men are recorded in this book [Malachi 3:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mal 3.16); and out of these books shall they be judged [Revelation 20:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev 20.12-13). Indeed, they are all "sealed up, as it were, in a bag," in order to be then brought forth as grounds of God's decision, and as evidences of his equity [Job 14:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 14.17). Nothing will escape his observation. If there be only "some good thing in any person," he will discern it, and bring it forth to light, with such tokens of his approbation as the occasion may require [1 Kings 14:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Kings 14.13). The sigh, the groan, the tear, are put to the account of those who love him; while every advantage that has been abused, and every opportunity that has been lost, will be adduced as swelling the aggregate of his enemies' guilt.

But this brings me more particularly to notice,

II. The rule by which that judgment shall be determined—

The sentence which will be passed on every man will be in accordance with his works.

This, however, needs to be explained—

We are not to suppose that our good works are put in one scale, and our evil works in another; and that, according to the scale which preponderates, our fate shall be. Nor are we to imagine that, when we have done a certain number of good works, the merits of Christ shall be cast, as it were, into the scale, in order to procure acceptance for them. The way of salvation is widely different from either of these. We all, without exception, are sinners, deserving of God's wrath and indignation. But he has given his only-begotten Son to die for us; and will accept to mercy all who come to him in his Son's name. Those who have believed in Christ will in that day be approved as having embraced the offered salvation: and those who have rejected the Savior, will be rejected of their God. But still there will be a great difference as to the measure of misery or of happiness which these different parties will inherit. Among the righteous, "one star will differ from another star in glory;" and among the wicked, some will be "beaten with many stripes, and others with few," according as circumstances have occurred to extenuate or aggravate their guilt.

Rightly understood, this strongly declares the equity of God's future judgments—

If salvation had been, not by faith, but by works; not a gift of grace, but a debt discharged; it would have been accorded to men precisely on terms corresponding with the rule which is here established. We are told, that "whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap: he who sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he who sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting [Galatians 6:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 6.7-8). We are further assured, that, "if we have sowed sparingly, we shall reap sparingly; and if we have sowed bountifully, we shall reap also bountifully 2 Corinthians 9:6." Due respect, indeed, will be paid to men's abilities and opportunities; the widow's mite being as acceptable as the largest gifts of the opulent; and "a cup of cold water, given" from a right principle, as valuable as the richest hospitality. In a word, everything that can affect the quality of an action will be taken into the account, either for the increase of our punishment or the augmentation of our bliss.

Behold, then,

1. What an awful prospect is here opened to the ungodly!

There is not a day or an hour in which an ungodly man is not providing misery for himself, and "treasuring up wrath against the day of wrath." Now, if we congratulate a person that is amassing wealth, how should we pity a man that is amassing misery for himself, even though that misery were but for a few years! But when we see men "drawing out iniquity" to an indefinite extent, by adding fresh materials to it, as they do to a cord or cable This is the proper meaning of [Isaiah 5:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 5.18), methinks we should weep over them. To such an one, even the word preached to him for his salvation "becomes to him a savor of death unto death [2 Corinthians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 2.16)." Do but reflect on this, my beloved brethren; and beg of God that you may henceforth improve every hour of your lives for the furtherance of that great work which God has given you to accomplish; that so, whenever you are called hence, you may "give up to him your account with joy, and not with grief."

2. What encouragement is here afforded to the righteous!

Not a day or an hour passes without adding to your happiness in the eternal world. The least thing which you do for God shall be rewarded; and every trial that you sustain for him, be recompensed. Moses "looked to the recompense of the reward;" and the same may you do also. How would this thought lighten all your crosses, if it were duly contemplated and firmly believed! Does Paul say, "Our light affliction, which endures but for a moment, works out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory [2 Corinthians 4:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 4.17)." Whom will you fear? or rather, What sufferings will you not welcome for Christ's sake? Go on then, my brethren, laboring to "keep a conscience void of offence" towards both God and man: and let it be your care so to approve yourselves to the heart-searching God, that, when he shall judge the world, he may say to you, "You have been faithful over a few things, be ruler over many things." "Enter now into the joy of your Lord, you good and faithful servant;" and "inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

[Jeremiah 18:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 18.6)

DISCOURSE 1058

THE POTTER'S POWER OVER THE CLAY

[Jeremiah 18:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 18.6). O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? says the Lord. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.

WHILE the grandeur of the heavenly bodies fills us with a sense of our own insignificance [Psalm 8:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 8.3-4), we may learn many instructive lessons from the meanest creatures upon earth. The instinctive wisdom of the crane or swallow, the provident care of the ant, and the grateful acknowledgments of the ox and donkey, are proposed to us as models for our imitation [Jeremiah 8:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 8.7). [Proverbs 6:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 6.6-8), [Isaiah 1:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 1.3). Nor are works of are less capable of suggesting useful hints to a reflecting mind. In the passage before us the prophet was commanded to observe a potter forming his vessels, and to declare to the Jews that they were, notwithstanding all their boasted strength, as much subject to the will of God as the clay was to the potter's will. To illustrate this we shall show,

I. The power of God over us—

We can scarcely conceive any greater power than the potter has over the clay. He forms, or mars, or varies the shape of his vessels, as he pleases. Such is God's power over us,

1. Individually considered—

Every man is altogether in the hands of God. Our bodies are instantly brought low, when he sends a fierce disease to prey upon them. Nor can the physician's aid profit us, until he be pleased to bless the means prescribed [Job 33:19-25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 33.19-25). Our souls are also entirely dependent upon him. When his time is come, the obdurate relent, the dead arise, the drooping are comforted, and the weak established. Until then, the Bible is a sealed book, and the most faithful ministers are only as sounding brass [Psalm 107:12-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 107.12-20).

2. In our collective capacity—

The most flourishing families, how soon are they brought low! And how speedily may they be restored to their former prosperity [Job 1:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 1.18-19); [Job 42:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 42.12-13). Nor are the most powerful kingdoms less at his disposal. He can raise a mighty empire from the most contemptible beginnings [Isaiah 51:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 51.1-2). [Deuteronomy 7:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 7.7), or reduce it to utter ruin in a single hour [2 Kings 19:35](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Kings 19.35). [Exodus 14:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 14.28). If this be the subject of a Fast Sermon, the circumstances of the nation may properly be adverted to in this place, and the duties inculcated under the second head must have a national, as well as personal bearing. As the smallest motion of the finger suffices to effect any change upon the potter's clay, so the secret volition of the Almighty operates with irresistible energy through the whole creation.

This truth being universally admitted, we shall proceed to show,

II. What effect the consideration of it should produce upon us—

Every perfection of the Deity should occasion some correspondent emotion in our hearts. The thought of his unbounded power over us should produce in us,

1. A holy fear—

What our deserts are, both individually and collectively, none can doubt. To repent then of all our sins, and to turn to the Lord with all our hearts, is our first duty. This is the special point inculcated on the Jewish nation by God himself Read verse 7–10 and mark emphatically verse 11. And where is the individual who does not feel the necessity of having it impressed on his own mind? Know then, all of you, that you are at this instant preparing either for Heaven or for Hell. If in your final condition you are "vessels unto dishonor," the fault will be your own. If happily you prove vessels of honor, it will be solely in consequence of God's electing love [Acts 9:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 9.15), and his new-creating power [Romans 9:21-23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 9.21-23). Distinguish between themselves, and God's agency. Cry then mightily to Goof to "accomplish for you and in you all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith with power."

2. A meek submission—

God best knows how to effect in you the purposes of his grace. For the most part he makes use of afflictive dispensations for our good; and, of whatever kind they be, we can have no just reason to complain. If the clay has no right to complain of the potter who forms of it a vessel such as he himself pleases, much less can "a living man," who is out of Hell, have right, under any circumstances, to "complain" of God [Isaiah 45:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 45.9) with [Romans 9:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 9.19-20). Under every trial, of whatever kind it be, we should say, "It is the Lord: let him do what seems him good."

3. A humble trust—

If only we lie as clay in his hands, we have nothing to fear [Isaiah 51:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 51.12-13). Both men and devils are with him but as an axe or saw, with which he accomplishes his own purposes [Isaiah 10:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 10.15). We have only to commit ourselves to him, and we shall have his work perfected in our hearts, and be made vessels of honor meet for the Master's use [2 Timothy 2:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Tim 2.20-21). How weak soever, or worthless we be, God will glorify himself in our complete salvation [Isaiah 40:27-31](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 40.27-31).

[Jeremiah 20:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 20.9)

DISCOURSE 1059

A SOUL UNDER DISCOURAGEMENT

[Jeremiah 20:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 20.9). Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones; and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.

IF we would see the corruption of human nature in its true light, we should look at it, not merely as existing in the worst of men, but as breaking forth even in the best. A more tender-hearted and pious man than Jeremiah did not perhaps exist on earth at his day: yet, under great provocation, he breaks forth into language most unseemly, both against God and man. As to the reproachful name by which he designated his persecuting enemy, we may well suppose, that, as it was justly merited on the part of Pashur, so it was denounced only in compliance with a divine impulse: "The Lord has not called your name Pashur, but Magor-missabib;" which imported, that "he should be a terror to himself, and to all his friends verse 3, 4." But we cannot offer any such apology for the language which he afterwards uttered, in reproaching God himself, and execrating even the day of his birth verse 7, 14–17. We behold here the struggle between grace and corruption, or, as Paul expresses it, "the flesh lusting against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh:" and when we see how awfully an unhallowed temper prevailed over this good man, we cannot but exclaim, "Lord, what is man, that you are mindful of him; and the son of man, that you so regard him?"

In the conflict that is here expressed, we behold,

I. The effects of discouragement on a pious soul—

Doubtless there was abundant occasion for the prophet to complain. Pashur, the chief governor in the house of the Lord during the course allotted to him in the temple, had certainly treated him with great cruelty and great indignity, "putting him into the stocks," as a public spectacle to all. Upon this, the spirit of the prophet was roused; and he complained even against God himself, in whose service he had been subjected to this heavy trial. "O Lord, you have deceived me, and I was deceived;" or, as it is translated in the margin, "You have enticed me, and I was enticed." God had not deceived him: for he had told the prophet, in the first instance, "that all the princes, and priests, and people of the land, should fight against him." But it is probable that the prophet had interpreted too strictly the promise with which God had encouraged him to undertake the prophetic office; namely, "They shall not prevail against you; for I am with you, to deliver you [Jeremiah 1:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 1.18-19)." It seems that he had expected an exemption from actual suffering; whereas, the promise referred only to final victory: and, under this disappointment, he determined to "make no more mention of God, and to speak no more in his name."

Now, somewhat of a similar spirit is apt to prevail in us, when we labor under discouragement—

1. In our efforts for the good of others—

Ministers, when, after long-continued exertions, they find that, instead of benefitting others, they have only brought evil on themselves, are apt to complain, that "they have labored in vain, and spent their strength for nothing:" and, under these painful feelings, they either desert their post, or regret at least that they ever engaged in such an unprofitable employment. Moses, the meekest of the human race, greatly erred in this very way [Exodus 5:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 5.22-23); As did Joshua also, after his entrance into Canaan [Joshua 7:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Josh 7.7); And in like manner, not only ministers, over their people, mourn, but parents over their children, masters over their servants, and teachers, over the poor whom they endeavor to instruct: and too often does their want of success, and a sad return of evil for good, make them weary of their labors, and ready to abandon them altogether.

2. In our exertions for our own souls—

Persons, when first "enticed" or "persuaded" to embrace the Gospel, fondly imagine that they shall go forward in the divine life with ease: but when they come to find what conflicts they have to sustain, and what slow progress they make, they are greatly discouraged, and almost ready to blame even God himself, as having disappointed their expectations. They may not go so far as to say, "There is no hope: I have loved idols, and after them will I go [Jeremiah 2:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 2.25);" but with a mixture of querulousness and despondency, many a pious man will harbor the thought, "My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God [Isaiah 40:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 40.27)." And how enervating such an apprehension must be, it is scarcely needful for me to declare.

But on the other hand our text exhibits,

II. The effect of piety on a discouraged soul—

Jeremiah attempted, for a season, to execute his rash determination: but he could not persist in his purpose: for the word of God was like a burning Are in his bones; so that he could not refrain from declaring it, as he had done before, if by any means he might at last succeed in bringing his audience to repentance. And thus will grace work in every soul, even under the deepest discouragements. It will operate,

1. To shame our querulous impatience—

When David had given vent to querulous and unbelieving expressions, he corrected himself, and acknowledged that they were the fruit of his own infirmity [Psalm 73:12-16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 73.12-16); [Psalm 77:7-10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 77.7-10). And we also shall blush, when we look back upon the dissatisfaction which we have expressed at the small success of our efforts. What if, in relation to others, we are constrained to say, "Who has believed our report?" It is nothing but what Prophets and Apostles have said before us. And, if we cannot benefit others to the extent we could wish, it should satisfy us that we have done what we could for them, and for the honor of our God. If He be glorified, we should be content with anything whereby his glory may be advanced [Isaiah 49:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 49.5). And if he delay to accomplish in us our desires, we should wait his appointed time, in meek submission to his will [Habakkuk 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hab 2.3).

2. To revive our languid hopes—

Grace will bring to our view the promises of God; not a jot or tittle of which can ever fail. It will remind us that God is the same as ever: his "arm is not shortened, that it cannot save; nor is his ear heavy that he cannot hear." "Against hope, it will lead us to believe in hope;" and will determine us, even "though he should slay us, yet firmly and immovably to trust in him."

3. To resuscitate our drooping energies—

Our hands may hang down for a time; but the operation of divine grace will raise them up again. Jeremiah was weary with forbearing, even more than he had been with executing the work that bad been assigned him. And so shall we be, if grace have its perfect work within us. Our labors, both ministerial and personal, will be renewed; that at least we may have the testimony of our own conscience, that whatever failure there be, it is not for want of exertion on our part to prevent it. God has said, "Be not weary in well-doing; for in due season you shall reap, if you faint not." And if he be with us, we shall, in dependence on his word, go forward, "steadfast and immoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord."

ADDRESS—

1. Expect discouragements in every part of your duty—

Who among the saints was ever exempt from them? and who is not taught to expect them? They are God's appointed means for trying our faith and love, and for increasing every divine grace within us. If we are soldiers of Jesus Christ, we must expect conflicts, and pass through them to the attainment of the crown.

2. Make them occasions of glorifying God the more—

If we have fightings without and fears within, we must go the more earnestly to God for help, and rely the more firmly on his promised aid. Instead of sinking under discouragements of any kind, we must say to every enemy that obstructs our way, "Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain."

[Jeremiah 23:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 23.6)

DISCOURSE 1060

THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

[Jeremiah 23:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 23.6). This is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

THE writings of the Prophets no less than of the Apostles testify of Christ: nor can we any where find a fuller exhibition of his character than in the words before us. As to his origin, he is "a branch from the root of David;" and, in his character, "a righteous" branch. His office is that of "a King;" and, as to the manner in which he executes that office, "he executes righteousness and judgment in the land." Look we for the effects of his administration? "In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely." Lastly, Would we know in what light he is to be regarded? "This is his name, whereby he shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness."

In these words the prophet sets forth,

I. The dignity of Christ—

The inspired writers never seem afraid of speaking of Christ in too exalted terms. The prophet, in this very place, declares,

1. His essential dignity—

There is frequent occasion to observe that, wherever the word Lord is printed in large characters, it is in the original Jehovah. Now Jehovah denotes the self-existence of the Deity, and is a name incommunicable to any creature: yet is it here assigned to Christ. By comparing similar declarations in the Old Testament with the expositions given of them in the New, we know assuredly that this name belongs to Christ; and that therefore he is and must be "God over all, blessed forever [Isaiah 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 6.5) with [John 12:41](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 12.41). or [Isaiah 45:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 45.22-23) with [Romans 14:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 14.10-11). or [Joe. 2:32](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Joel. 2.32) with [Romans 10:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 10.13-14). or [Malachi 3:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mal 3.1) with [Luke 1:76](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 1.76)."

2. His official dignity—

The title of Jehovah belongs equally to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; but the additional title of "Our Righteousness," is peculiar to Christ alone. It imports that Christ has by his own obedience unto death wrought out a righteousness for guilty man; and that "this righteousness shall be unto all and upon all them that believe in him." It is in this sense that Paul speaks of him as "made unto us righteousness [1 Corinthians 1:30](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 1.30)."

The connection between the different parts of this comprehensive name deserves particular notice: for, if He were not Jehovah, he could not be our Righteousness; seeing that as a creature, he could merit nothing; because he would owe to God all that he could do; and, "after he had done all, he would be only an unprofitable servant:" but as he is God, all which he does is voluntary; and his divinity stamps an infinite value upon his work; so that it may well merit, not for himself only, but for a ruined world—

Such is the dignity of our blessed Lord: He is Jehovah, one with the Father, in glory equal, in majesty co-eternal: nor is there one ransomed soul in Heaven, who does not ascribe his salvation to the blood and righteousness of this our incarnate God.

While the prophet thus expatiates on the glory of Christ, he intimates also,

II. The duty of man—

Our duty as sinners, and as redeemed sinners, has especial respect to Christ: and it is summarily comprehended in the ascribing to Christ the honor due unto his name. But this must be done,

1. In faith—

To compliment Christ with any titles which we do not believe due to him, would be to insult him, like those who arrayed him in mock majesty, and cried, Hail, King of the Jews! We must fully believe him to be God: we must be persuaded that we neither have, nor can have, any righteousness of our own: and we must be assured, that "He is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believes [Romans 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 10.4)." If we entertain any idea of meriting anything at God's hands by our own obedience, or of adding anything of our own to his perfect righteousness, we dishonor and degrade him; and, instead of performing our duty towards him, we violate it in the most flagrant manner: and, though we may be actuated by a blind zeal for the Father's honor, or for the interest of morality, we are indeed rebels against God, since he has commanded that "all men should honor the Son as they honor the Father," and that they should call him in faith, The Lord our Righteousness.

2. In sincerity—

As, to give him a title which we do not believe due to him would be mockery, so, to give it without a correspondent regard to him would be hypocrisy. Do we believe him to be Jehovah? we must regard him with reverential awe, and yield ourselves up to him in unreserved obedience. Do we believe him to be the only Righteousness of the redeemed? we must renounce entirely our own righteousness, and depend on him with our whole hearts. Do we view him in his complex character as Jehovah our Righteousness? We must rejoice in having such an almighty friend, such a sure foundation. We must glory in him as "all our salvation, and all our desire." A less regard to him than this, not only falls below our duty, but is absolutely inconsistent with any scriptural hope, any prospect of salvation.

From this subject we may learn,

1. The way of salvation—

There are but three ways in which we can conceive it possible for any man to be saved; namely, by works, by faith and works, or by faith without works; and the subject before us plainly declares which is the true one. Are we to be saved by our works? No: for God would never have sent his Son to be our righteousness, if we ever could have wrought out a sufficient righteousness of our own. Besides, our own works would then have been our righteousness, and the name here ascribed to Christ would not have belonged to him. Moreover, even in Heaven it self, instead of ascribing "Salvation to God and to the Lamb," we must have ascribed it to God and to ourselves.

Are we then to be saved by faith and works? We still answer, No: for in whatever degree we trust in our own works, in that degree do we rob Christ of his official dignity; and assume to ourselves the honor due to him alone. As far as our own merits are united with his as a joint ground of our acceptance with God, so far shall we have to all eternity a ground of glorying in ourselves; yes, so far salvation will cease to be of grace; whereas "it is of faith that it may be by grace, and that boasting may be forever excluded [Romans 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 4.16). [Ephesians 2:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 2.8-9)."

Salvation must then be by faith without works, (not without works as its fruits and effects; but altogether without them, as a ground of our acceptance before God:) we must not endeavor either in whole or in part to "establish a righteousness of our own," but seek to be clothed in the unspotted robe of Christ's righteousness. This is the declaration of God himself [Romans 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 4.5); nor did the Apostles themselves know any other way of salvation [Galatians 2:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 2.16). We must all therefore desire, with Paul, to be found in Christ, not having our own righteousness, but his, even his alone [Philippians 3:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 3.9).

2. The excellency of that way—

What can be conceived more comfortable to man than to hear of such a salvation as this? Were we told that we must work out a righteousness of our own that should be commensurate with the demands of God's law, who could entertain a hope of ever effecting it? If we were required to do something that should be worthy to be joined with the Savior's merits in order to render them more effectual for our acceptance, where should we find one single work of ours that we could present to God as perfect, and as deserving of so great a reward? The best man on earth must either sit down in despair, or live in continual suspense respecting his eternal welfare. But the righteousness of Jehovah appears at once, not only adequate to our wants, but to the wants of all mankind; and, by trusting in that, we find rest unto our souls. Nor can we devise any other method of acceptance so honorable to God; since it refers all the glory to him; and necessitates all the hosts of the redeemed to ascribe the honor of their salvation to him alone. In spite of all the objections too that are urged against it, we can affirm that it is eminently conducive to the practice of holiness. Can we think of God becoming man in order to work out a righteousness for us, and not feel a desire to serve and honor him? "Can we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid." An inspired writer assures us that "the grace of God which brings salvation teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live righteously, soberly, and godly in this present world."

Let us then seek our righteousness in Christ alone; but let us show by our lives, that this doctrine of faith is indeed "a doctrine according to godliness."

[Jeremiah 23:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 23.24)

DISCOURSE 1061

THE OMNIPRESENCE OF GOD

[Jeremiah 23:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 23.24). Can any hide himself in secret places, that I shall not see him? says the Lord. Do not I fill Heaven and earth? says the Lord.

MEN universally encourage themselves in sin, from the hopes of impunity. But they are under a fatal delusion: for however secret their iniquities may be, there is One who beholds them, with all their aggravating circumstances, and will bring them forth to the light, as grounds of his righteous indignation. The false prophets of old imagined that their pretensions to inspiration would subject them to no danger, provided they could preserve appearances before men; but God expostulates with them in the words before us, and appeals to their own consciences for a testimony against them. He appeals to them respecting the omnipresence of the Deity; to which important subject we would now call your attention,

I. In a way of rational inquiry—

The Heathen believed their gods to be confined to particular temples, or to certain districts [1 Kings 20:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Kings 20.23); but can we imagine that Jehovah is thus limited?

Consult reason—

Is God the Creator of the world? How then can he be absent from any part of it, seeing that he must have been present with the whole at the time he formed it? Is he the Governor of the world? how then can he be limited to any place, since he must be everywhere, to direct and manage those events, which, without his superintending providence, would throw the universe into confusion. Is he God? if he be, he must be perfect; but if he be circumscribed by space, he must be imperfect; he must be ignorant of those things which he cannot behold, and impotent in respect of those things which he cannot reach.

Consult Scripture—

The sacred records testify that he is in Heaven; for "he dwells in the high and holy place [Isaiah 57:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 57.15)." Yet they do not limit him to Heaven; for "the Heaven of heavens cannot contain him [1 Kings 8:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Kings 8.27)." He is spoken of as existing upon earth; for "in him we live, and move, and have our being [Acts 17:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 17.28)." Yet it is not in any particular part of the earth that he exists; for "he fills all in all [Ephesians 1:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 1.23)."

Consult conscience—

Every man who has ever heard of God has within him a consciousness that the Divine Being is present with him, and is privy to his most secret thoughts, In the midst of their wickedness indeed men try to persuade themselves that God does not see them [Genesis 3:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen 3.8). [Job 22:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 22.13-14). [Psalm 94:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 94.7); but in seasons of reflection they cannot divest themselves of the conviction, that his all-seeing eye penetrates the inmost recesses of their hearts. What David confessed with joy, they feel with terror and dismay; that, whether they be in Heaven, earth, or Hell, they cannot for one moment escape the notice of their God [Psalm 139:1-12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 139.1-12).

God is said indeed to have dwelt in the temple, and in the bush; and to be "far from the wicked:" but all such expressions relate, not to his essence, but to the manifestations of his presence. In every possible view, the appeal made to us in the text defies an answer, and precludes a doubt.

Not to rest in mere theories, let the same subject be considered,

II. In a way of practical improvement—

Numberless are the truths which this subject would suggest to our minds; but we must of necessity confine ourselves to a few of the most important:

1. What folly is it to commit sin under the idea of secrecy!

That such folly obtains in the world, is manifest to all. The thief takes advantage of his privacy to lay his hand upon his neighbor's property. The adulterer watches for the return of night, when he may accomplish his wicked purposes without detection [Job 24:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 24.15-17). Sinners of every description commit in secret what they would not dare to perpetrate, if they knew that the eyes of their fellow-creatures were upon them. But whence is this, unless from the atheistical conceit that God is not privy to their actions, or from an utter forgetfulness of his presence? Such conduct however is folly in the extreme: for God's eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good [Proverbs 15:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 15.3)." "The darkness is no darkness to him: the night and the day to him are both alike:" and, as he observes, so will he also "bring to light, the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the heart [1 Corinthians 4:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 4.5)." as a ground of that sentence which he will one day pass upon all the workers of iniquity.

Let this be remembered in reference to all the sins we have ever committed in secret; and let it teach us to seek the remission of them while yet the day of mercy is continued to us.

2. How vain are the hopes of the hypocrite!

It is no very difficult matter to impose upon men: yes, we may also deceive our own selves; but we cannot deceive God. However specious our conduct may be, he will discern our corrupt motives and principles, and will judge us according to the real quality of our actions. There is one way, and only one, in which we can hide our sins from God; and that is, by fleeing to the Lord Jesus Christ for refuge: then, though God will behold the sinner, he will not behold the sin; for it shall all be "blotted out as a morning cloud," and be "cast behind him into the depths of the sea:" the vilest sinner in the universe, if he "be found in Christ," shall be "complete [Colossians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col 2.10)," "without spot or blemish [Ephesians 5:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 5.27)." Such a hiding-place is Christ [Isaiah 32:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 32.2); and such shall be the felicity of all that believe in him [Acts 10:43](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 10.43). But it is in vain to hope that by any other means we shall escape the wrath of God: for "all things are naked and open unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do;" and every sin not purged away by the blood of Jesus shall be visited with just and everlasting judgments.

3. How secure are they who put their trust in God!

Many of the enemies with whom the Christian has to contend, are hidden from his view: but neither they nor any of their devices are concealed from the eyes of God. He is everywhere present to protect his people, and to defeat the plots of their adversaries. He it is that has given to our enemies the strength and wisdom which they exert against us; and he engages that "none of the weapons which they form against us shall prosper [Isaiah 54:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 54.16-17)." "Let the weak then say, I am strong:" for "if God be for them, who shall be against them?" Only let them "acknowledge him in all their ways," and depend upon him in all their trials, and they need not fear [Psalm 46:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 46.1-2); for "his eyes shall run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in their behalf [2 Chronicles 16:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Chron 16.9)."

[Jeremiah 23:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 23.28-29)

DISCOURSE 1062

FIDELITY REQUIRED IN MINISTERS

[Jeremiah 23:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 23.28-29), He who has my word, let him speak my word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat? says the Lord. Is not my word like as fire? says the Lord; and like a hammer, that breaks the rock in pieces?

OF all the different orders of mankind, there is not any that is more influential on society than that of ministers. The prophets of old, if truly faithful to their God, were means and instruments of diffusing incalculable blessings through the countries where they lived. The false prophets, on the contrary, hardened the people in their wickedness, and brought down the heaviest judgments on those whom they misled. Ministers of the present day produce similar effects, only on a more contracted scale. The prophets, whether true or false, were listened to as inspired; and, consequently, as bearing an authority far beyond what any minister at this time can assume. But still, as expounders of God's revealed will, we are listened to with much respect and deference; and we are the means of dispensing much good or evil to our auditors, according as we approve ourselves faithful or unfaithful to the office we sustain, and to the Master whom we profess to serve. This is strongly intimated in the passage before us; in which we have,

I. A solemn injunction to all who bear the office of the ministry—

As ministers, the word of God is put into our hands, and a dispensation is committed to us to preach it; and that office we must execute "faithfully:" we must speak the word,

1. Unreservedly, without concealment—

We must "declare unto our people the whole counsel of God [Acts 20:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 20.27)," and "not keep back from them anything that can be profitable unto them [Acts 20:20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 20.20)." We are at liberty indeed to consider what is suited to the state of our hearers, and what they are capable of receiving [Mark 4:33](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark 4.33). Our object must be, to benefit their souls [Proverbs 11:30](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 11.30); and, consequently, we do well to adapt our instructions to their capacities, administering "milk to babes, and meat to those who are of full age 1 Corinthians 3:1-2. [Hebrews 5:11-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 5.11-14)." But in this discrimination we must not be regulated by carnal policy; but must act as before God, "not handling the word of God deceitfully, but, by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God [2 Corinthians 4:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 4.2)." Our motto must be that of the Apostle Paul: "We are not as many who corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God, speak we in Christ [2 Corinthians 2:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 2.17)."

2. Impartially, without respect of persons—

All idea of pleasing men must be utterly abandoned: for if we please men, or seek to do so, we cannot be the servants of Jesus Christ [Galatians 1:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 1.10). Peter erred in this respect, when, for the sake of gratifying the Jewish converts, he inculcated, even on the Gentiles, the observance of the Jewish ritual [Galatians 2:11-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 2.11-14). The fidelity of Paul is that which we ought to follow. He says, "Our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of impurity, nor in deceit: but as we were allowed of God to be put in trust with the Gospel, even so we speak; not as pleasing men, but God, who tries our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness: nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others, when we might have been burdensome, as the Apostles of Christ [1 Thessalonians. 2:3-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Thess. 2.3-6)." Whether we address rich or poor, we must "use great plainness of speech; not as Moses, putting a veil upon our face [2 Corinthians 3:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 3.12-13);" but, as with unveiled face, exhibiting before our people the great mystery of godliness, if by any means "the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, may shine unto them [2 Corinthians 4:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 4.5-6)."

3. Boldly, without fear—

The prophets of old were enjoined "not to fear the face of man, even though briers and thorns should be with them, and they should dwell among scorpions:" and to speak boldly all that God had commanded, lest he should, in just indignation for their cowardice, confound them before their people [Jeremiah 1:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 1.8); [Jeremiah 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 1.17) and [Ezekiel 2:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 2.6-7). We must expect to meet with opposition: for who, among the Prophets or Apostles, ever escaped it? Even our blessed Lord himself, with all his wisdom and grace, was an object of hatred to an ungodly world: and we must expect, that "they who hate the light" will hate us who set it before them [John 3:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 3.19-20). But, however we be menaced, our answer to every opponent must be, "Whether it be right to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge you; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard [Acts 4:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 4.19-20)." And, if we be called to seal the truth with our blood, we must regard it rather as an honor than a shame [Acts 5:41](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 5.41), and rather as a ground of congratulation than a subject of condolence [Philippians 2:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 2.17-18).

This injunction is further enforced by,

II. An unanswerable appeal to the whole world—

Here is an appeal,

1. To our judgment—

Every one knows what a light and worthless thing "chaff is, in comparison of wheat." And is not the application of this image to the subject before us both clear and obvious? Of what use were the assertions of the false prophets? They only deceived the people to their ruin. Look, on the other hand, at the labors of Moses, of David, of Elijah, of Paul: who can estimate the value of their services? So it is, in a measure, with every minister of Christ, who truly and faithfully discharges the high office committed to him. He feeds many, he nourishes many, comforts many, yes, and "saves many souls from death [1 Timothy 4:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Tim 4.16) and [James 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James 5.20)." God declares, that this effect should have followed the ministrations of former prophets, if they had been truly upright: "If they had stood in my counsel, and had caused my people to hear my words, then they should have turned them from their evil way, and from the evil of their doings verse 22." And though there doubtless is a great difference between the labors of different men in point of real efficiency, even while substantially they preach the same truths, yet the labors of those who bring forth a mixed and mutilated Gospel are not to be compared with those of a faithful servant of Christ, who "preaches the truth in love," and exemplifies it in his life and conversation.

2. To our experience—

God's word, if faithfully declared, is "quick and powerful, and sharper than a two-edged sword [Hebrews 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 4.12)." Let any one, that has ever noticed its effects, say, whether it is not "like fire," which dissolves the hardest metal; and "like a hammer, which breaks in pieces" even adamant itself. Go to the populous city of Nineveh, and see all orders of men, from the greatest to the least, dissolved in tears at the preaching of one single prophet [Jon. 3:4-10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jonah. 3.4-10); or look back to the day of Pentecost, when, by the preaching of Peter, three thousand persons, with their hands yet reeking with the Savior's blood, were converted to the Lord. Are not these instances sufficient to show what wonders the word of God is able to effect? Truly, "it is mighty, through God, to the pulling down of the strong-holds of sin and Satan, and to the bringing of even the very thoughts of men into captivity to the obedience of Christ [2 Corinthians 10:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 10.4-5)."

Say, then, whether these be not cogent arguments for fidelity in the exercise of the ministerial functions? The exhibition of false doctrines saves no man, benefits no man: but a simple preaching of "Christ crucified is the power of God unto salvation" to millions of the human race [1 Corinthians 1:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 1.23-24). [Romans 1:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 1.16). To this, many of you, I trust, can bear testimony; yes, and I hope are living witnesses of its truth; in that "you have turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from Heaven, even Jesus, who has delivered us from the wrath to come [1 Thessalonians. 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Thess. 1.5); [1 Thessalonians. 1:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Thess. 1.9-10)."

And now,

1. Let me discharge, as I am able, my duty to you—

"To me is committed the word of God for you; and woe is unto me, if I preach it not with all fidelity [1 Corinthians 9:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 9.16-17)." If so much as one of you should perish through a want of faithfulness on my part, his blood would be required at my hands [Ezekiel 33:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 33.6-8). You must not expect me, therefore, to "prophesy unto you smooth things," or to "speak peace to you when there is no peace." No: I must, at the peril of my soul, "speak God's word unto you faithfully." Now, there are three things which I do, and must, require at your hands. The first of these is, repentance: And I must declare unto you, that "except you repent," truly, deeply, and from your inmost souls repent, "you shall all, all without exception, perish." The next thing which I must call for, is faith, even faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the only Savior of the world: And I must warn you, that without this there is no hope: for "there is no other foundation on which any man can build," "nor any other name given under Heaven whereby any man can be saved." In addition to this, I must also require obedience, even a spiritual, cheerful, unreserved obedience to every command of God: And in the name of Almighty God I declare, that "without works all your faith is dead," and, that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

2. Let me call on you to make a due improvement of my testimony—

True it is, that even "though Paul should plant and Apollos water," they would, if left to themselves, labor only in vain. "It is God alone that can give the increase" to the seed that is sown. But this will be no excuse for you, who make the word of no avail. If you would pray unto God, he would hear you: if you would seek his blessing, he would give it you: if you would desire him to clothe his word with power, he would accompany it with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven. Remember, I pray you, that the word delivered, if it be not "a savor of life unto life, will become unto you a savor of death unto death." True it is, that the "fire" burns but dimly, and the "hammer" is but feebly applied: still, if God would by his Spirit kindle the flame, it should be sufficient to burn even to your inmost souls: and if he would reveal his mighty arm, no rock in the universe should be able to withstand its force. "He has put his treasure in earthen vessels, on purpose that the excellency of the power may appear to be of Him:" and he delights to "perfect his own strength in his people's weakness." It is this that encourages me to speak; and it may well also encourage you to hear. Look to Him, then, to use his wonder-working rod, as in the days of old; and to accomplish by it the redemption and salvation of your souls.

[Jeremiah 25:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 25.5-6)

DISCOURSE 1063

RELIGION IS NOT A SOURCE OF EVIL TO THOSE WHO EMBRACE IT

[Jeremiah 25:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 25.5-6). Turn you again now every one from his evil way, and from the evil of your doings.…And I will do you no hurt.

SIN is the greatest of all evils; because it is the source from which all evils flow. Nor can the miseries which it has introduced be ever remedied, but by a thorough turning unto God. This, Jeremiah tells us, was the remedy prescribed by all the prophets verse 4 with the text; and certainly it is the only one that can ever prove effectual.

The passage, from whence the text is taken, contains, in addition to the words which we have cited, a dehortation or dissuasion from idolatry; together with an intimation that a continuance in that sin would accelerate their ruin, and insure their exclusion from the promised land: they would persist in it "to their hurt verse 7." On the contrary, if they would return to God, he would forbear to inflict upon them his threatened judgments, and "do them no hurt."

But we omit that which related to the temporal state of the Jews, in order that we may fix your attention more immediately upon that part of the subject which is applicable to all persons in all ages of the world.

The text consists of,

I. An exhortation—

As idolatry was at that time the national sin of the Jews, so every one has some evil way to which he is more particularly addicted. We cannot pretend to trace all the shades of difference that are found in different men: we will rather arrange the whole under three great and comprehensive classes; to one or other of which, all, except true Christians, belong. We therefore say, Turn,

1. From profaneness—

That this is a common sin among us, needs no proof: we cannot open our eyes or our ears, but we must be speedily convinced of it.

Let then as many of you as have entertained licentious principles, or indulged in vicious practices, "turn from the evil of your doings," yes, turn from it speedily, and with utter abhorrence.

2. From worldliness—

While the young and mirthful are rushing into vice, and pouring contempt upon everything that is serious, a great part of mankind are immersed in worldly cares, and are as regardless of religion as their more dissipated brethren.

True it is, that these persons have more specious grounds on which to vindicate their conduct, inasmuch as it seems nearly allied to prudence and diligence. Still, however, while we highly approve of those virtues, we cannot but condemn a worldly spirit as evil; since it is declared to be incompatible with the love of God [1 John 2:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 John 2.15-17); and therefore we say to all, "Turn from it," lest you deceive yourselves to your utter ruin.

3. From formality—

There is a very considerable number of persons, whose strictness of principle, and correctness of manners, screen them effectually against any charge of profaneness; while their indifference to riches and aggrandizement shows, that they are not open, in any great degree, to the imputation of worldliness, But their religion consists in a mere round of duties, in which they have no real enjoyment of God, but only a self-righteous, self-complacent approbation of their own minds.

That this also is evil, we cannot doubt, if only we bear in mind that God requires our hearts [Proverbs 33:26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 33.26); and that every service, in which the heart is not engaged, is declared to be vain and worthless in his sight [Matthew 15:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 15.8-9). Compare [2 Timothy 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Tim 3.5).

In exhorting such persons to turn from the evil of their doings, we would by no means be understood to discourage diligence in attending on divine ordinances, whether public or private; but only to guard against a resting in the performance of duties, and a substituting of that in the place of Christ. In appreciating our religious observances, let us judge of them by their spirituality, and by our enjoyment of God in them: and, if they be ever so devout, still let us remember that they make no atonement for sin, nor do they confer any obligation whatever upon God: yes, rather the more devout they are, the more we are indebted to God for that grace whereby we are so enabled to worship him.

To confirm the exhortation, God has been pleased to add,

II. A promise—

At first sight the promise appears to be unworthy of God, and incapable of affording any great encouragement to those to whom it is made. But, if taken altogether abstractedly, it surely is no light matter for those who deserve all the judgments that God can inflict, to be assured, that he will never do them any hurt: and, if considered in connection with our fears and apprehensions, it will be found to contain the richest consolation. In this view, we observe, God will do us no hurt in respect of,

1. Our intellect—

When we begin in earnest to be religious, our friends are ready to suppose that we are, or shall soon be, beside ourselves See [Mark 3:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark 3.21). [Acts 26:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 26.24). [2 Corinthians 5:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 5.13); nor can we altogether wonder at their judgment, when we consider how great the change is, (like a river turning back to its source,) and how unable they are to account for it. But they may spare themselves their fears; for God gives his people, not a spirit of delusion, but "of a sound mind [2 Timothy 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Tim 1.7)." The prodigal's return to his father's house was the first proof of sanity, not of insanity: nor has any person a spark of true wisdom in him, until he begin to fear the Lord [Psalm 111:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 111.10). In conversion, a man is made to form a correct judgment respecting his most important concerns; and not only to view things in the same light that God views them, but to act agreeably to those views. As well therefore might the man whose eyes Jesus had opened be said to have suffered injury in his organs of vision, as a person thus enlightened in his judgment be said to have suffered in his intellect That people who are insane, may fix their thoughts upon religion, or that a person may become distracted by misapprehensions of religion, is confessed: but if religion would drive a man mad, the more religious he was, the more likely to be mad. Who does not shudder at the consequences that would result from that opinion?.

2. Our friends—

We are taught to expect, that, on our becoming decided followers of Christ, "our greatest foes will be those of our own household [Matthew 10:35-36](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 10.35-36);" and experience accords with the declarations of Scripture on this head. But are we therefore injured in this respect? Our Lord has told us, and experience accords with that also, that if we lose any friends for his sake, he will repay us in kind, as it were, an hundred-fold [Mark 10:29-30](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark 10.29-30). A merchant who should part with his goods to such an advantage as this, would surely not be thought to have sustained any loss. But besides this recompense in the present world, God himself will be our friend, both now and forever. And would not this amply repay the loss of all earthly friends?

3. Our reputation—

Though the whole of our conduct be visibly improved, yet snail we, on turning to God, be loaded with opprobrium and contempt; and though something may be gained by prudence, or conceded to us on account of our celebrity in learning, there is no religious person that occupies the same place in the estimation of the world that he would do if he were not religious. If our Lord himself was "despised and rejected of men [Isaiah 53:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 53.3)," and the Apostles were deemed "the off-scouring of all things 1 Corinthians 4:13.", it is in vain for us to expect honor from man [Matthew 10:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 10.24-25) with [John 5:44](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 5.44). But are we therefore without honor? No: our very disgrace, when so procured, is a very high honor, inasmuch as it assimilates us to Christ [1 Peter 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Pet 4.13), and is a testimony to us of our fidelity [Luke 21:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 21.13). But suppose that ignominy had nothing to counterbalance it here, should we have any reason to regret it when Christ "confessed us before his Father, and his holy angels;" and when they who despised us, shall "awake to shame and everlasting contempt [Daniel 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan 12.2)."

4. Our interests—

The laws of the land certainly afford us a very great protection. Nevertheless it is no uncommon thing at this day for children and servants to be called to make very great sacrifices for the Gospel sake. But be it so: they are forced, like Paul, to serve the Lord "in coldness and nakedness," and in a privation of all earthly comforts. But are they eventually "hurt?" What if their spiritual consolations be proportioned to their temporal afflictions; have they not made a good exchange? Is not peace in the bosom incomparably better than money in the purse? The riches of this world are easily appreciated: but those which Christ imparts, are "unsearchable." Their despisers would, at a future day, give all the world for a drop of water only to cool their tongue. How rich then must they be who are drinking living waters eternally at the fountain head!

5. Our happiness—

Doubtless the godly have grounds of mourning peculiar to themselves: but are they therefore losers in respect of happiness? No: their sorrows, if I may so speak, are sources of joy: they would on no account be without them: they rather regret that they cannot sorrow more: they mourn because they cannot mourn, and weep because they cannot weep: and if at any time they have been enabled to abase themselves before God in dust and ashes, they look back upon such seasons as the most precious in their whole lives, But if they have sorrows unknown to others, have they not "joys also, with which the stranger intermeddles not?" Let a promise be applied with power to their souls, or "the love of God be shed abroad in their hearts," have they not a very foretaste of Heaven upon earth? Compare their state with that of others, on a dying bed: follow them in the instant of their departure from the body: see them welcomed to the bosom of their Lord: contemplate their eternal state, in contrast with that of those who despised them; and then say whether they have any reason to complain, that their fidelity to God occasioned on the whole a diminution of their happiness?

ADDRESS—

1. Those who are yet following their evil ways—

One question I beg leave to put to you: Will God "do YOU no hurt?" Inquire, I pray you: search the sacred records: see what God has spoken respecting sin and sinners: Will it do you no hurt to bear his wrath, and to drink of the cup of his indignation to all eternity?: We inquire not, What are the ways you follow? If you do not turn from every evil way to God, and devote yourself unreservedly to your Lord and Savior, the issue will be the same, whatever course you take. Your guilt may be more or less aggravated, and your misery be apportioned accordingly: but, without entering into the different degrees of punishment, let me ask, Will not sin be visited with the wrath of God? and will that do you no hurt?: On the other hand, would not God do you good, if you would return unto him?: "Turn then from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin [Ezekiel 18:30](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 18.30)."

2. Those who are turning from their evil ways—

Halt not between two opinions: strive not to reconcile the inconsistent services of God and mammon [Matthew 6:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 6.24). "If Baal be God, follow him: but if the Lord be God, then follow him." There is a certain kind of turning unto God, by which you will suffer hurt on every side, and receive no benefit whatever. If your "heart be not whole with God," no good can accrue to you, nor can any evil be averted from you. The world will not approve of you, because you are too precise for them: and God will not approve of you, because you are not upright before him. Be not then temporizing and hypocritical, But open, decided, and consistent characters. "Follow your Lord fully:" "follow him without the camp, bearing his reproach [Hebrews 13:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 13.13)." Thus, though "your life may be accounted madness, and your end to be without honor, yet shall you be numbered among the children of God, and have your lot among his saints."

[Jeremiah 29:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 29.11-13)

DISCOURSE 1064

GOD WILL BE FOUND OF SINCERE WORSHIPERS

[Jeremiah 29:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 29.11-13). I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end. Then shall you call upon me, and you shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you. And you shall seek me, and find me, when you shall search for me with all your heart.

THE calamities which God inflicts upon mankind in this world are intended to bring them to repentance; and though he often removes his rod in anger, when he sees that it produces not the desired effect, yet he often continues to punish until he sees that the heart is humbled for its iniquity. Thus he dealt with the Jews whom he sent captive to Babylon. They at first despised his chastening, and promised themselves a speedy return to their native land: but he declared that their captivity should be protracted to the end of seventy years; and that, at the expiration of that time, when they should have learned to acknowledge him, he would again appear for them, and bring them back in answer to their fervent petitions. His declaration respecting this suggests to us two important observations:

I. God's purposes of love and peace shall all in due time be accomplished—

God has "thoughts of peace" towards many who never think of him—

Even before the foundation of the world God determined to remedy the evils which he foresaw sin would bring upon mankind. When our first parents were ruined, and fled from his face, he sought them out and communicated to them his gracious intentions relative to the substitution of his Son, in their stead. And while the Jews were imbruing their hands in the blood of his Son, it was his fixed purpose to pour down his Spirit upon them, and to bring them into a state of reconciliation with himself. And have we not also reason to confess, that whatever we either possess or hope for is the result of his purpose and grace which he purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began [2 Timothy 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Tim 1.9). Yes, who can tell, but that, at this moment, some careless sinner is the object of his special attention, and that this is the very hour, wherein his merciful designs shall be matured and executed?

These thoughts of his shall all in due season be accomplished—

It may be a long time before his eternal counsels are manifested by visible and correspondent acts. But not one of his purposes shall ever be frustrated. Paul was "a chosen vessel unto him," and "separated, in the Divine intentions, from his mother's womb [Acts 9:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 9.15). [Galatians 1:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 1.15); but how long was he suffered to go on in the most inveterate enmity against Christ and his Gospel! Yet when his hour was come, God stopped him in his mad career, and transformed a bitter persecutor into a zealous Apostle. Thus it was that Zaccheus also was made a partaker of Christ's salvation, when he thought of nothing but gratifying a foolish curiosity [Luke 19:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 19.4-5); [Luke 19:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 19.9). And thus many of us also received our first serious impressions, when we were far enough from desiring to fear God. And it is a comfortable reflection, that many, who are yet dead in trespasses and sins, are in the Divine purpose "predestined to the adoption of children [Ephesians 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 1.5)," and will one day be "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

Nor shall any expectations founded upon his word be ever disappointed—

Improbable as the deliverance of the Jews from Babylon was, God brought them out at the appointed time. And as he gave "them an expected end," so will he to all of us. If an ungodly man begin to look unto the Lord Jesus Christ for repentance and remission of sins, he shall not look to him in vain. If an afflicted or tempted soul flee to him for consolation and support, the desired aid shall not be withheld. Provided only we rely on his word, and not on any presumptuous imaginations of our own, we may rest assured that he will interpose effectually on our behalf.

But however fixed his purposes may be,

II. They must nevertheless be called forth by the exercise of fervent prayer—

God has appointed prayer as the means of obtaining his blessings—

This is the universal voice of Scripture, "Ask, and you shall have." Even where God most freely promises his blessings, he still says, "Nevertheless I will be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them [Ezekiel 36:37](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 36.37)." We do not say that he never deviates from this method of conveying his mercies; for sometimes "he is found of them that sought him not, and known to them that inquired not after him [Isaiah 65:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 65.1);" But the earnestness with which this duty of prayer is inculcated in the text, is of itself a sufficient proof that we are to expect no blessing without it. God would have us know, and feel our wants; and by opening them before him, get our own hearts affected with them. If at any time he grant his blessings to those who have not sought him, he instantly stirs them up to prayer, which is as necessary to the welfare of a regenerate soul, as breathing is to the existence of a new-born infant.

Nor should a discovery of his purposes relax, but rather quicken, our diligence in prayer—

This was the effect which was produced on Daniel as soon as ever he learned that the time fixed for Israel's captivity was near its termination [Daniel 9:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan 9.2-4). Nor should it produce any other effect on us. As well might Hezekiah have declined the use of food because God had prolonged his life fifteen years, as we neglect the means of spiritual advancement, if we knew that God had predestined us unto life. On the contrary, the certain prospect of success is our greatest encouragement to pray, and to comply with any terms which God has prescribed.

If we use these means aright, we may be sure we shall attain whatever his unerring wisdom sees to be good for us—

God has "never said to the seed of Jacob, seek you me in vain [Isaiah 45:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 45.19)." On the contrary he will "hearken" to our cry with parental tenderness, he will discover to the inquiring soul the riches of his grace, and "enable us to comprehend with all saints the height and depth of his love which passes knowledge." But then we must pray in earnest and, "search for him with our whole heart [Leviticus 26:40-41](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lev 26.40-41), [Deuteronomy 4:29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 4.29)." It is not a mere listless petition that will prevail with him; we may ask and not have, if we thus ask amiss:" but importunate and believing prayer shall bring down every blessing which God himself is able to bestow.

This subject will be found of peculiar use,

1. To humble the proud—

Every natural man conceives that his salvation must arise solely from his own exertions. But here we are taught to trace all our inclination and ability for what is good to God, who, in the prosecution of his eternal purposes, imparts both the one and the other to our souls See also [Ephesians 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 1.11) and [Philippians 2:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 2.13). Let us learn, then, to acknowledge him in all that we have received, and to look to him for all that we want. And let the hope, that there may yet be in his heart many undiscovered thoughts of peace towards us, stimulate us to fervent prayer, and diligent exertions.

2. To awaken the secure—

Some will pervert the truths of God, and say that their exertions are useless, if God have not thoughts of peace towards them; and superfluous, if he have. But God's decrees are no rule of action for us, seeing that they are hidden from us: it is his precepts, which we are to regard; and if we will not seek him according to his command, we can have no hope that we shall ever find him. Will any man then consign himself deliberately to perdition, because he does not absolutely know that God has "ordained him unto life?" Should we not justly blame a man who made the uncertainty of life a reason for refusing bodily sustenance? yet he would act as rationally as the other. Let this then be known; the man that lives without God, will die without hope; and, when he perishes, he must accuse, not the hidden purposes of God, but his own folly, sloth, and negligence.

3. To comfort the feeble-minded—

Some, who are diligent in the use of means, are apt to perplex themselves with doubts respecting the Divine decrees. But they have within themselves the very best answer to all their doubts: let them only ask themselves, Whence arose my desires after God? Whence is it that I am enabled to seek him in any measure? The snare will then instantly be broken: for, the aid they have already received from God, is a far better ground for concluding that he has designs of peace towards them, than any remaining imperfections can be, of his purpose to reject them. Only then wait upon God in prayer, and rest assured that a praying soul can never perish. Continue to ask, and you shall have; for however secret his purposes may be, his promises are plain and sure: and he says, "You shall find me, when you shall search for me with your whole heart."

[Jeremiah 30:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 30.10-11)

DISCOURSE 1065

GOD'S GRACIOUS DESIGNS TOWARDS HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE

[Jeremiah 30:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 30.10-11). Fear you not, O my tenant Jacob, says the Lord; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for lo, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with you, says the Lord, to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, I yet will not make a full end of you; but I will correct you in measure, and will not leave you altogether unpunished.

THE peculiar importance of these words may be judged of from hence, that the prophet, without any apparent necessity, or indeed any visible connection, introduces them again, towards the close of his prophecies [Jeremiah 46:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 46.27-28). But the subject of them is so consolatory, and the view which they open to us of God's future dispensations is so glorious, that they may well be proposed to our most attentive consideration. Respecting their primary import we can have no doubt. They look forward to a period far beyond the return of the Jews from Babylon, even to that blessed period, when the whole nation shall be converted to the faith of Christ, and be restored to the possession of the land of Canaan verse 8, 9. That such a period shall arrive, we have the strongest and most unequivocal declarations of Holy Writ Compare [Hosea 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 3.5); and it becomes us all to look forward to it with confidence and joy.

But we must not so contemplate the future good of others, as to overlook our own personal and immediate welfare. The words before us convey most comfortable tidings to ourselves; which therefore we shall advert to in connection with the event to which they more especially refer: and in order to this we shall deduce from them some general observations. Observe then,

I. That God has glorious things in reserve for his chosen people—

1. For the Jewish people—

There is certainly mercy in reserve for them:"their yoke has never been so broken from their neck, but that strangers have served themselves of them verse 8," and do still oppress them. A season of happiness awaits them, such as they never experienced in their most prosperous days: "they shall be at rest, and be quiet, and none shall make them afraid:" and this outward peace shall be only a shadow of that inward joy which they snail experience under the protection of their reconciled God and Savior, who will be "a little sanctuary unto them [Ezekiel 11:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 11.16-17) with [Jeremiah 23:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 23.6)."

2. For his people among all nations—

However "far off" his people are, God sees and knows them [2 Timothy 2:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Tim 2.19), and will in due season bring them to himself [John 10:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 10.16). No enemy shall be able to detain them: their bonds shall be broken, and they shall be "brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God." O what sweet peace and composure of mind shall they enjoy, when they are truly brought to the fold of Christ [Psalm 23:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 23.1-2). what blessed assurance too shall they possess, not only of their present interest in the Savior, but of final victory and everlasting felicity [Psalm 23:4-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 23.4-6).

Yet is this but the beginning of blessings: the time shall come when the saints of all ages, even from the beginning to the end of time, shall be gathered together, every one of them freed from all remains of sin and sorrow, and raised to the fruition of their heavenly inheritance.

Shall we not then, while we contemplate the future destinies of God's ancient people, consider also our own; when, even in this life, such "things are prepared for us as no un-renewed eye has seen, or ear heard, or heart conceived [1 Corinthians 2:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 2.9);" and, in the world to come, such things as exceed the comprehension whether of men or angels?

Subservient to this great design, God orders everything for them in love, so,

II. That even his darkest dispensations towards them are intended for their good—

This was, and still is, the case with respect to the Jews.

The sending of that whole nation into captivity in Babylon was doubtless a heavy judgment: but yet we are expressly told that God designed it "for their good [Jeremiah 24:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 24.5)." And we doubt not but that the destruction of their whole estate and polity by the Romans, together with their present dispersion over the face of the whole earth, is intended for their good also. By the Babylonish captivity they were cured of idolatry; and by the total abolition of the temple worship, all hope of obtaining mercy by the ceremonial rites and ceremonies is cut off, and they are "shut up unto the faith that is now revealed." We trust also that they are preparing to be God's honored instruments of evangelizing the world; seeing that the receiving of them into the Church will be as life from the dead to the Gentile world [Romans 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 11.15). We see clearly that there is an immense difference put between them and all the nations which once led them captive. The Egyptians, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Romans, have ceased to exist as distinct kingdoms; and have been lost, as it were, among the people who subdued them: but the Jews are in every place a distinct people, and are so kept by God's overruling providence, that he may accomplish more manifestly his gracious purposes towards them. Many indeed, like Pharaoh, have sought their destruction; but they live as monuments of God's unceasing care and faithfulness.

And may not we also see the hand of God ordering and overruling everything for our good?

His chastening hand may have been upon us; but the consolations and supports with which he has favored us have almost changed the very nature of our afflictions. Besides, he has, like a skillful Refiner, apportioned our trials to our necessities; and always either increased our strength to sustain them, or provided for us a way to escape from them. Let any one of us look back, even the most afflicted among us, and say, Whether God has not corrected always "in measure [Isaiah 27:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 27.7-8)." yes, whether his corrections have not "wrought for our good;" and whether, if our hearts be indeed right with God, they have not been "working out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory [Romans 8:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 8.28). 2 Corinthians 4:17-18." Yes, "by these has our iniquity been purged; and the fruit of them has been to take away our sin [Isaiah 27:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 27.9);" and in all that God may have inflicted on us, he has acted the part, not of an angry Judge, but of a loving Father [Hebrews 12:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 12.6-8).

Well may God's people rejoice in such hopes as these, seeing,

III. That his presence with them is their never-failing security—

God did not so withdraw from the Jews in Babylon, but that he was with them to watch over them, and to overrule events for their deliverance at the time appointed. Thus at this day he hears the cries of his afflicted people, and only waits until the appointed time to show himself strong in their behalf. Thus is his presence with us our security also.

He has promised "never to leave us nor forsake us [Hebrews 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 13.5)." In our troubles more especially has he engaged to be with us [Isaiah 43:2-3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 43.2-3). Nor will he ever leave us, until he has accomplished all the good pleasure of his goodness towards us [Genesis 28:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen 28.15). Had it not been for his presence with his Church and people, their enemies would long since have triumphed over them: but because "he is with them to save them," they shall be "more than conquerors" over all their enemies, and "be saved by him with an everlasting salvation."

APPLICATION—

Thrice, in the parallel passage, does God repeat the exhortation, "Fear not [Jeremiah 46:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 46.27-28)." We therefore will address that exhortation,

1. To those who are afar off—

Look at the Jews in Babylon, or in their present state; What can be conceived more hopeless?: Yet they were, and shall be delivered. Let none then despair, as if they were beyond the reach of mercy: for "God's hand is not shortened that it cannot save;" and they shall "be brought near by the blood of Jesus," which is able to "cleanse from all sin."

2. To those who are visited with any great affliction—

You are apt to conclude, that, because you are afflicted, you are monuments of God's wrath. But God makes these very afflictions a subject of promise: "I will correct you in measure, and will not leave you altogether unpunished." He knows that without these afflictions you would never return to him, nor ever be purified from your dross: it is because you are a child, and not a bastard, that he thus visits you with his chastising rod. It was in this view of his dispensations that David said, "In very faithfulness you have afflicted me." Faithfulness has respect to a promise: and it is your privilege to see every one of your afflictions as the fruit of his faithfulness and love.

3. To those who are under discouragement of any kind—

"Fear not, feat not, fear not." It is God's delight to "bind up the broken-hearted, and to comfort all that mourn;" and thrice does he renew to you the exhortation, "Fear not." Only seek to have his presence with you, and you need fear nothing. Remember the disciples in the storm. Could they sink while Jesus was in the vessel with them [Mark 4:37-40](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark 4.37-40). Neither can you, under your circumstances, If God be for you, none can be effectually against you. Take him with you then, wherever you go; and "the gates of Hell shall not prevail against you [Isaiah 41:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 41.10); [Isaiah 41:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 41.14)."

[Jeremiah 30:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 30.17)

DISCOURSE 1066

THE CONVERSION OF THE JEWS—OUR DUTY TO PROMOTE IT

[Jeremiah 30:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 30.17). This is Zion, whom no man seeks after.

CONSIDERING how much is spoken in the Holy Scriptures concerning the present and future state of the Jewish nation, it is surprising how little they occupy the attention of the Christian world. As living witnesses of the truth of our holy religion, they are indeed often mentioned; but, as having any interest in the promises of the Gospel, and as ordained to fill an exalted station in the Church of God, they are scarcely ever noticed, so that, to bring the subject before a Christian audience seems almost to require an apology; the very mention of them in that view being more calculated to excite a smile, than to call forth the more holy emotions of compassion and love. Whence this should proceed, I know not; unless from that prejudice against them, which from our earliest infancy we have imbibed, and from an idea that all efforts for their welfare are visionary and vain. But this indifference towards them is highly criminal. We are not to imagine, that, because they are under God's displeasure, we are discharged from all those duties which we owe them as men; or that, while God is making use of men as instruments to inflict punishment on his offending people, they are not responsible to him for the dispositions which they exercise, and the acts which they perform. Respecting the Jews in former times, it is said, "All that have found them, have devoured them: and their adversaries said, We offend not; because they have sinned against the Lord [Jeremiah 50:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 50.7)." But was his anger any reason for theirs? Was man justified in despising them, because they were under the chastisement of their offended God? Assuredly not: for God himself complains of this very conduct; "I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion, with a great jealousy: and I am sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased; and they helped forward the affliction:" (and then, as in the words before my text, he adds,) "Therefore I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies [Zechariah 1:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zech 1.14-15)." In all that he inflicts, he himself is just: but in executing his secret purposes, we are not just, any more than the Jews were in crucifying their Messiah: for though they did only what "God's hand and God's counsel had determined before to be done," it was "with wicked hands that they crucified and slew him [Acts 2:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 2.23); [Acts 4:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 4.28)." This distinction is very strongly marked in the passage before us. In the foregoing verses God vindicates his own honor, by showing, that the Jews were themselves the authors of their own misery, in that they had brought it upon themselves by their great wickedness; yet he declares, at the same time, that the contempt poured upon them by their enemies was most offensive to him; and that when he should have fulfilled his will upon his own people, he would avenge their cause on those who, not from any zeal for his honor, but for the gratification of their own malignant passions, had been the willing, though unconscious, instruments of his vengeance See [Isaiah 10:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 10.12).

That we may enter fully into this view of our text, it will be proper for me to read to you the two verses immediately preceding it: "Why cry you for your affliction? Your sorrow is incurable for the multitude of your iniquity: because your sins were increased, I have done these things unto you. Therefore the word 'therefore' should here, as in many other parts of the prophetic writings, have been translated 'nevertheless' The particle laken, translated therefore, sometimes signifies nevertheless, or yet surely. See the note on [Isaiah 30:26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 30.26); and so it is translated, chapter 5:2. of this prophecy; which sense agrees best with this place, and connects this verso with the words foregoing: "So it should be rendered likewise, chapter 30:16 and 32:36." See Dr. Lowth on [Jeremiah 16:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 16.14). Dr. Blaney thinks it should rather be translated "after this." It is obvious, that it cannot be used as an illative particle in this place. Between the other two senses the author does not undertake to determine; any further than to say, that Dr. Lowth's translation is the more agreeable to the context; Nevertheless, all that devour you shall be devoured; and all your adversaries, every one of them, shall go into captivity; and they that spoil you shall be a spoil: and all that prey upon you will I give for a prey: for I will restore health unto you, and I will heal you of your wounds, says the Lord; because they called you an outcast, saying, This is Zion, whom no man seeks after;" that is, 'I will take occasion, from the contempt that is poured upon you, to manifest the regard which, even in your lowest state, I bear towards you, and to restore you to my favor: yes, the very delight which your enemies express in the view of your degradation, shall call forth my indignation against them, and my compassion for you.'

The words thus explained, will lead us to consider the treatment shown to the Jewish people, and the light in which their conduct is viewed by Almighty God.

I. We shall notice the treatment that is almost universally shown to the Jewish people.

We might enter here into an historical view of the conduct of different nations towards them, and especially since their dispersion by the Romans. We might state the cruelties inflicted on them by the different potentates of Europe, not excepting those of our own country. But this would be unnecessary; since it is well known to all, that they have been, and still are, a proverb of reproach among ourselves, as well as in foreign lands: and that, if we wished to stigmatize any one with a name comprising everything that was odious and contemptible, the term "Jew" would afford us ample scope for the exercise of our malignity. Let it suffice to say, that even in this land, which, in respect of civil and religious liberty, stands unrivaled among the nations of the world, and where toleration is carried to its utmost extent, there has been, within the memory of many now living, as universal and disgraceful an opposition to the Jews, as could well be expected from any civilized community. When the government of this country had passed an act in their favor, such was the clamor excited throughout the whole land, not by the irreligious only, but, I am ashamed to say, the religious also, that the Parliament was constrained to repeal, in the following year, the law which had been enacted; when that law did nothing more than concede to them the common rights of humanity, the rights possessed by the meanest beggar in the land.

Nor is it in respect of civil rights only that they are so disregarded: their religious interests also are altogether overlooked. In behalf of the heathen there have been two venerable societies established in this land for above a hundred years: but who among us have united together for the benefit of the Jews? Within a few short months, also, has there been sent forth, from the highest authorities in the state, a circular letter In 1815, to call forth the exertions of every member of the community in behalf of the heathen; but on behalf of the unhappy Jews, no such effort, yes, no effort at all, has ever been made: no: they may be left to perish! "They are the Zion, whom no man seeks after," or needs to seek after. What a striking illustration of our text is this! and how exactly corresponding with the judgment which God, by his prophet, foretold, as assuredly to come upon them in their dispersion: "I will cause them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth: and who shall have pity on you, O Jerusalem? or who shall bemoan you? or who shall go aside to ask how you do [Jeremiah 15:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 15.4-5)."

But there is a point noticed in our text, to which I wish to draw your more particular attention. The evil which called forth the animadversion of Jehovah was, that, while the enemies of Zion poured contempt upon her, they vindicated their conduct in that respect, and spoke of it as being precisely such as became them on the occasion: "I will heal you of your wounds, says the Lord of Hosts, because they called you an outcast; saying. This is Zion, whom no man seeks after;" this is Zion, respecting whom no one needs to give himself any concern at all.

And is not this the very way in which we have conducted ourselves towards the Jewish people? We not only despise them, and disregard their welfare; but we justify this habit, and see no reason for altering it: we even feel a delight in the thought of their degradation; and, instead of rejoicing, that now, at last, a society has arisen to seek their welfare, we regard their attempts as visionary; and are disposed rather to deride their efforts, than to afford them our active and zealous aid. Instead of praying fervently to God for this people in secret, and then going forth to exert ourselves for the conversion of their souls, we give them not so much as a place in our thoughts: and so far from being ashamed of, or even thinking it necessary to palliate, our neglect of them, I say again, we justify it; and account any frivolous excuse an ample vindication of our conduct.

On this part of our subject we shall enter more fully, in another discourse See on [Zechariah 14:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zech 14.7); but we beg that it may be particularly kept in mind throughout this present discourse, because it is the main point on which the whole turns. Let it be remembered, that we speak not of persecuting the Jews; no, nor even of neglecting them; but we speak of that self-vindication which we cherish in the midst of this neglect; and of the willingness which we manifest to catch at anything, which may, with the smallest semblance of propriety, appear to justify that neglect. Perhaps, in our whole lives, we have never once imagined that we were sinning against God by this conduct, or that he beheld it with any marked disapprobation; much less have we made it a ground for humiliation before God, and implored grace from Him to change and amend our ways.

Such, then, having been our conduct, let me proceed to set before you, as I proposed, under the second head of my discourse, the light in which it is viewed by Almighty God.

We can scarcely conceive a stronger expression of God's indignation against such conduct, than that which is contained in the passage before us since it not only called forth his displeasure against those who were guilty of it, but induced him, in a way of recompense, to declare, that he would restore to his favor the people who were so contemned.

If, as is probable, we do not see any great evil in this conduct, let us proceed to investigate it in some different particulars.

First, murk the inhumanity of it. The Jews, no less than ourselves, have immortal souls, which must be partakers of happiness or misery forever. I know, that to speak of that whole people as in a state of guilt and condemnation, is by many deemed uncharitable and severe; and I am far from censuring those whose feelings revolt from so terrible a thought. But, if we believe the Scriptures to be true, we shall find it impossible to maintain the sentiment which our charity would dictate. I presume not to say, that there may not be many individuals, both among Jews and Gentiles, to whom mercy may be accorded for Christ's sake, notwithstanding they have not a distinct view of his salvation: but I would ask, What did Paul mean, when he appealed so solemnly to the heart-searching God respecting his own feelings on account of his nation: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not; my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart for my brethren's sake [Romans 9:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 9.1-2)." Would he have felt all this, if he had believed that they were in a state of salvation? Whence could his "great heaviness and continual sorrow of heart" arise, but from the conviction of his mind, that, while they continued to reject the Savior, they were under the wrath of God? And whence arose his unabated efforts in their behalf, "that by any means he might save some," if he did not consider them all as in danger of perishing in their sins? Permit me, then, to ask, if they be indeed, nationally considered, in such a state, are we guilty of no inhumanity, while we use no efforts for their welfare? Were we to see a multitude of them shipwrecked, and to refuse to make exertions for their preservation, when the means of preserving them were in our hands, there would be but one sentiment in the whole world respecting our conduct; and we ourselves should be among the foremost to condemn those who should so violate all the feelings of humanity. Yet is not this the very conduct of which we have been guilty? We have seen that unhappy nation sinking into perdition, and have had at our command that which is sufficient to save the whole world; yet have we never offered to them our assistance, nor used any means for their salvation. And in what light Almighty God views this conduct, we may judge from what he spoke respecting the Ammonites of old: "An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the Lord forever; because they met you not with bread and with water in the way when you came forth out of Egypt [Deuteronomy 23:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 23.3-4)." Now, if God expressed such indignation against them for not administering to his people temporal relief, what must he not feel against us, who, with the bread of life and the water of life in rich profusion in our hands, have never stirred one step to supply their wants, or to make them partakers of our benefits? The parable of the good Samaritan is familiar to us all: and there is but one sentiment among us respecting the conduct of the priest and the Levite towards the wounded Jew, when compared with that of the Samaritan. And are the Jews of this day less neighbors to us, than those in our Lord's day were to the Samaritans? Yet have we seen the perishing condition of that whole nation, without any suitable emotions, or any efforts made by us in their behalf. We may extenuate our fault as we will; but, in the sight both of God and man, we have been guilty of most grievous inhumanity.

Consider, next, the injustice of our conduct. God has given to us the Scriptures, not for ourselves only, but for the whole world also: his command to all who possess them is, (for we must not limit it to his immediate disciples,) "Go you into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature:" and so far was he from excepting the Jews, that he required a preference to be shown to them, and particularly enjoined, that the first offer of salvation should be made to them [Luke 24:47](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 24.47). This preference his Apostles continued to show, until the obstinacy of the Jews constrained them to manifest towards the Gentiles an indiscriminate regard. But, if we suppose the preference to the Jews to be no longer enjoined, can we imagine that they are to be altogether neglected? Very different will our judgment be, if we consult what Paul has written on this subject: "As you in times past have not believed God, yet have now obtained mercy through their unbelief, even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy [Romans 11:30-31](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 11.30-31)." The meaning of which passage, I conceive, is this: God withdrew his mercy from his ancient people, that he might impart it to you Gentiles; but, in imparting it to you, he never designed that it should be finally withheld from them: on the contrary, he now makes you the depositories of his word for their good, that, through the mercy given to you, they may be led to a renewed enjoyment of the blessings which they in former ages exclusively possessed. Thus have they a claim upon us: we are actually "debtors to them [Romans 15:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 15.26-27);" and, while we withhold from them the blessings which are entrusted to us for their use, we are guilty of the grossest injustice. Suppose, in a time of dearth, a person of opulence should commit to his steward a sum of money for the relief of persons who were specifically described; and that, on inquiry, he should find that his steward had altogether withheld relief from those for whose benefit the trust had been committed to him, and had spent the money on himself: would any one hesitate to call him an unjust steward? What then, if, instead of improving the Gospel for the ends for which it has been committed to us, namely, that "through our mercy the Jews might obtain mercy," we have been altogether regardless of our trust, and suffered them all to "perish for lack of knowledge:" will God account us faithful? Will he not rather complain of us as unjust stewards? Will he not accuse us as having intercepted the flow of his benevolence towards the objects of his compassion, and as having robbed them of the benefits which he had ordained them to enjoy? Let us not then console ourselves with the thought, that we have never inflicted on them any positive injury; but let us rather tremble at that sentence which God has denounced against those who have hid their "talent in a napkin;" "Cast you the unprofitable servant into outer darkness, where shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."

There is yet another view in which I would place this conduct. Consider the ingratitude of it. We were once in as deplorable a condition as the Jews, or rather in a state far worse: for they do worship the one true God; whereas we were bowing down to stocks and stones. And how did they act towards us? The Jewish nation at large, I grant, opposed, with all their might, the calling of the Gentiles: and some who were truly pious could not see the Divine purposes in relation to this matter. But they acted under a mistaken sense of duty to their God; (an excuse which none of us can offer:) and, as soon as they were fully instructed in their duty, they accounted nothing too much to do or suffer, if they might but be employed as instruments to "turn us from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God." Most remarkable is that declaration of Paul, to this effect, to his Gentile converts at Philippi: "If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all: for the same cause do you also joy and rejoice with me [Philippians 2:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 2.17-18)." To understand this aright, we should bear in mind, that, when burnt-offerings were presented to God under the Law, meat-offerings of flour and oil were consumed with them, and drink offerings of wine were poured out upon them [Numbers 15:3-11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Num 15.3-11). "Now," says the Apostle, "I regard your faith as a sacrifice and service to the Lord: and if my blood be poured out upon it as a libation," (that is the meaning of the word which we translate 'offered,') "so far shall I be from complaining of my persecutors, or accounting it hard that I am called to suffer, that I shall congratulate myself, and expect to be congratulated by you, on the honor and happiness conferred upon me." Such was his love towards the Gentiles. And should there not he some measure of the same spirit in us, towards the Jews? But what self-denial have we exercised for them? or what labor have we endured for their benefit? Instead of willingly pouring out our blood for them, (as all the Apostles, except John, did for us,) have we even shed a tear for them before God, or poured out a prayer for their deliverance? To us they have been the greatest benefactors: all that we know of God and his Christ, we have learned from them: and all on which our hopes of eternal happiness are founded, we derive from them. Do these things call for no return at our hands? If we have received so abundantly of their spiritual things, is it not our "duty" to impart to them of ours [Romans 15:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 15.27); When they have manifested such enlargement of heart towards us, what can we think of ourselves, if we are so straitened towards them [2 Corinthians 6:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 6.11-13).

If any one object, that "the benefits conferred on us by pious Jews of former ages lay us under no obligation to those who are ungodly in the present day,"I would reply, that no one of us would argue thus in matters of mere temporal concern; but that, on the contrary, we should rather feel the claims of such persons augmented by their very necessities. Suppose, for instance, that a rich man had disinherited his own son for some offence, and conferred all his estates on us, who had no relation to him, and no claim upon him whatever; and that, in process of time, the descendants of his son were reduced to extreme want and misery; should we regard them with the same indifference as we might, perhaps, if no such circumstance had ever occurred? Should we not think they had some kind of claim upon our charity; and that, out of the wealth so undeservedly conferred on us, and in the full enjoyment of which we were living, we should do well to bestow on them at least the crumbs which fell from our table? and, if we refused them this blessing, should we think, or would any person think, that gratitude "had its perfect work within us? Let us judge righteous judgment;" and let the verdict which conscience would give in that case be given in the other; only with this additional aggravation, that, while the charity which we refused them would in the one case have diminished our wealth, in the other it would have enlarged it, and have enriched us while it aided them.

There is yet one more point of view in which I will place the conduct of which I am speaking. Consider the impiety of it. What has not our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ done for us? He has left the bosom of his Father, and disrobed himself of all his glory, and assumed our nature (being "made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted"), and "borne our sins in his own body on the tree," and "become a curse for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law,"and reconcile us to our offended God. And, in return for all this, what does lie require at our hands? What, but that we should henceforth "live not unto ourselves, but unto him who died for us, and rose again [2 Corinthians 5:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 5.15)."This, methinks, is the least that we can do. To love him, to serve him, to glorify him in every possible way, is surely no more than "our reasonable service." Now, when he would instruct the Apostle Peter, how to evince his love, and how to render him the most acceptable service, what direction did he give him? "Simon, love you me? Feed my sheep: feed my lambs." If it be said, that this was done for the purpose of restoring Peter to his apostolic office, which he had disgraced and forfeited, I grant it was; but still it shows, that, to administer to the spiritual and eternal welfare of the Lord's people, as far as our respective circumstances will admit of it, is a suitable expression of our love to him, and a service most acceptable in his sight. What then shall we say, if, when we have seen all his kindred according to the flesh scattered over the face of the whole earth, we have never endeavored to bring one to his fold, or to feed them in the pastures prepared for them? May he not justly take up against us the complaint which he uttered against his shepherds of old, "My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them [Ezekiel 34:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 34.6)." May not the reproach cast on the Christians at Rome be justly applied to us, "All men seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's [Philippians 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 2.21)." And may not the Jews themselves adopt, in reference to us, the lamentation of David, "I looked on my right hand, and beheld; but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; and no man cared for my soul [Psalm 142:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 142.4)." I readily grant, that we are not all called to the pastoral office: but are we therefore freed from all obligation to use our efforts for the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom, according to our ability? Do we not read of even females who "labored in the Lord, yes, and labored much in the Lord [Romans 16:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 16.12)." There are many things which we all might have done towards the recovery of the lost sheep of the house of Israel. We might, at least, have felt towards them as the Apostle did, when he said, "My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they may be saved [Romans 10:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 10.1);" yes, like our blessed Savior, we might have "wept" over their desolate condition [Luke 19:41](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 19.41); and with the angel, of whom the Prophet Zechariah speaks, have pleaded for them: "O Lord God of Hosts, how long will you not have mercy on Jerusalem [Zechariah 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zech 1.12)." But if no measure of this love to Christ have burned in our hearts, we may well doubt whether we have ever loved him at all, or have ever experienced his power and grace upon our own souls. If John's appeal respecting a backwardness to relieve the temporal necessities of our fellow-creatures be unanswerable, how much more will it be so, when applied to the subject before us: "Whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother have need, and shuts up his affections of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him [1 John 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 John 3.17)." How indeed! We may make what profession of piety we will; but we shall prove to demonstration, that we have no love either to God or man in our hearts, if, after this warning, we neglect to seek the welfare of the Children of Israel.

Thus have I faithfully declared unto you what I truly believe to be the truth of God: and I appeal to yourselves, whether I have given an exaggerated statement, or whether I have declared more than you will find to be true, if you will only seriously reflect upon it as before God. Only let it be remembered, that I have not spoken these things respecting the mere neglect of their welfare, but of the justification of that neglect, and of the reluctance which is shown to make any effort for their salvation. The retrospective application of it bears upon persons only in proportion to the information they have possessed; but the prospective application comes with full weight upon the consciences of us all; so that I may say, as our Lord did to the Jews, "If we had never been addressed upon the subject, we might have had no sin: but now we shall have no cloak for our sin."

If I should attempt to trace this neglect of our Jewish Brethren to what I conceive to be its true cause, I must impute it, in a very considerable degree, to that ignorance of the prophetic writings which so generally prevails among us. They are not studied among us as they ought to be. Because they are in some parts difficult to be understood, we altogether wave the consideration of them: or, if we consider them at all, we involve them in tenfold obscurity, by interpreting, as relating to the Gentiles, what God has spoken primarily, if not exclusively, of the Jews. The truth is, that if, in reading the prophecies, we kept the Jews steadily before our eyes, such a light would shine upon the Scriptures as we have never before seen; and all the purposes and perfections of God would be unfolded to us, in a new and most interesting view. But we keep that people out of sight, and never make the prophecies relating to them a subject of our ministrations. Forgive me, if I say, that to us ministers this guilt attaches in a very high degree. Our duty has been, to "declare to our people the whole counsel of God:" and yet we have passed over this subject, as unworthy of our own attention, or of theirs: and those mysteries which caused the holy Apostle to exclaim, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out [Romans 11:33](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 11.33)!" have been treated by us with contemptuous silence; our whole conduct being, in this respect, one continued comment on our text; "This is Zion, an outcast, whom no man seeks after." I pray God, that the blood of that unhappy people may not be laid to our charge, or "be required at our hands [Ezekiel 33:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 33.7-8),,"

I cannot, however, exempt from grievous criminality the Church at large, among whom exists a sad indifference even about their own souls. Too many among us have never truly sought salvation for themselves: how then could they seek the welfare of others? If they have never "looked on Him whom by their sins they have pierced," and never mourned for their own iniquities, how should they weep over the Jewish people, or labor to restore them to the favor of their God? Here, it is to be feared, is the root of the evil with the great mass of nominal Christians: they have not laid to heart their own wickedness: they have not wept and prayed over their own perishing condition, nor fled to Christ for refuge from the curses of the broken law, It is no wonder, then, that they have left, without any remorse, their Jewish brethren to perish in their sins, But shall we continue thus to augment our guilt; and to "treasure up for ourselves, no less than for them, wrath against the day of wrath?" In vain shall we attempt to justify this conduct: for, beyond a doubt, our God would have us like-minded with himself, when he speaks of them as still "beloved of him for their fathers' sake [Romans 11:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 11.28);" and with heart-felt joy contemplates their restoration to his favor. Hear how he speaks in the words following my text: "Behold, I will bring again the captivity of Jacob's tents, and have mercy on his dwelling-places: and the city shall be built on her own heap; and the palace shall remain after the manner thereof: and out of them shall proceed thanksgiving, and the voice of them that make merry: and I will multiply them, that they shall not be few; and I will glorify them, that they shall not be small.…and they shall be my people, and I will be their God verse 18, 19, 22 with [Jeremiah 24:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 24.7)." Such is the delight with which God contemplates these great events: and shall we be indifferent to them? Shall we not endeavor to help forward this glorious day? Shall not their ignorance move us, and their obduracy call forth our compassion? Behold how the prophet bemoaned their situation in his day: "My eye runs down with rivers of water for the destruction of the daughter of my people: my eye trickles down, and ceases not, without any intermission, until the Lord look down upon them, and behold from Heaven [Lamentations 3:48-50](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lam 3.48-50)." This is the frame of mind which becomes US: and sure I am, that, if any measure of it be found in us, we shall neglect them no longer. We shall consider what can be done in their behalf; and shall not suffer every foolish excuse that can be offered to warp our judgment, or to paralyze our exertions. We shall bear in mind, what arrears of love we owe to them, and what a fearful responsibility hangs over us before God: and we shall lend ourselves to every good work, whereby their minds may be enlightened, and their souls "subdued to the obedience of faith." We shall not account it superfluous to exert ourselves, because we do not expect "the nation to be born in a day;" but shall gladly labor, in every possible way, for the promotion of their good, "if by any means we may save some." If we may but gain "one of a city, and two of a tribe or family [Jeremiah 3:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 3.14);" yes, if after all our efforts, we may but glean a small remnant, four or five from the top of the outermost branches of the olive-tree [Isaiah 17:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 17.6), we shall account our exertions richly recompensed, and shall bless our God that we "have not labored in vain, or run in vain."

[Jeremiah 30:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 30.21)

DISCOURSE 1067

GOD'S REGARD FOR THOSE WHO APPROACH UNTO HIM

[Jeremiah 30:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 30.21). Who is this that engaged his heart to approach unto me? says the Lord.

THE history of the Jews is deserving of attention, not merely as unfolding to our view the gradual introduction of Christianity, but as shadowing forth all the most important parts of the Christian system. The passage before us primarily relates to the return of the Jews from Babylon. It foretells, that a terrible destruction should come upon their oppressors: that they, in consequence of it, should be restored to their own country, and live under governors of their own nation, and have the same access to God, in his worship, as they had enjoyed before the destruction of their city and temple. But, under these events, many others of a more sublime nature were typified. Their governors represented Christ, who should in due time arise to reign over them; and their enjoyment of Divine ordinances depicted the privileges which we were to possess under the Christian dispensation. To evince this, we will show,

I. To whom this passage refers—

Besides referring to Zerubbabel and the Jewish people, it refers,

1. To Christ—

Beyond all doubt he was the Governor who was to arise from among that people Compare verse 9, with [Psalm 22:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 22.28) and [Matthew 2:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 2.6), and to reign over the house of David forever [Luke 1:32-33](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 1.32-33); [Luke 1:68-75](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 1.68-75). where the whole subject of the chapter before us is represented as verified in Christ. He "approached unto God" as our Surety and High Priest on earth, and as our Advocate and Intercessor in Heaven: In this glorious work he "engaged his heart." When first he entered into covenant with the Father respecting it, he showed that his whole heart was engaged in it [Psalm 40:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 40.7-8); and, from the moment that he entered upon his work, he persisted in it, notwithstanding all which he had to endure in the prosecution of it See while yet a child, [Luke 2:46-49](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 2.46-49). And during his ministry, he went into the wilderness that he might be tempted, [Matthew 4:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 4.1).—he rebuked Peter for dissuading him from suffering, [Matthew 16:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 16.22-23).—he longed for his bloody baptism, [Luke 12:50](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 12.50).—he resigned himself to suffer all that was necessary, [John 12:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 12.27-28).—nor would he rescue himself ([John 18:6-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 18.6-9).), or be rescued ([Matthew 26:51-54](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 26.51-54).), or come down from the cross, until he could say, "It is finished," [Matthew 27:42](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 27.42).

2. To his people—

His followers are characterized as "a people near unto God [Psalm 148:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 148.14);" and to them, as the words following the text evince, the words before us may be applied. They endeavor to "approach God" in the way that he has appointed: they "draw near to him with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." They approach him in the public ordinances and in their private chambers. They "have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus:" they come even to the throne of God: they "stir up themselves to lay hold on him," and "will not let him go, until he bless them." In this work they "engage their hearts:" they know that "the drawing near to God with their lips only is a vain service:" they therefore labor to "worship him in spirit," and to say with David, "My heart is fixed, my heart is fixed." Whatever discouragements arise, they know that to yield to them must be productive of the most fatal consequences: and therefore they determine, if they are tempted at any time to say "I am cast out of the sight of your eyes," they will not despair; but will "cry unto God from the very belly of Hell [Jon. 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jonah. 2.2); [Jon. 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jonah. 2.4)," assured that "none shall ever seek his face in vain."

But to understand the passage aright, we must notice,

II. The peculiar force of the interrogation—

It is not to be supposed that God asks for information: the inquiry is rather expressive of his most cordial approbation.

God delighted in the mediation of his dear Son—

In the prospect of this event, the Father delighted in him before man had fallen, or the world itself was formed [Proverbs 8:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 8.22-23); [Proverbs 8:30](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 8.30). And he commanded his prophet to announce, that he was "well pleased for his righteousness' sake [Isaiah 42:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 42.21), not only before he had wrought out that righteousness, but hundreds of years before he became incarnate. No sooner did the Lord Jesus enter on his work, than the Father, by an audible voice from Heaven, attested that he was "well pleased with him." The same testimony he bore, and in the same manner, on two other occasions: and in all his other dispensations towards him, he evinced that Jesus was "his elect, in whom his soul delighted [Isaiah 42:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 42.1)." If at any time that approbation could be supposed to be withheld, it would be while the Father hid his face from him on the cross, or smote him with the sword of justice: but in reference to that very period we are told, that "it pleased the Father to bruise him [Isaiah 53:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 53.10). This passage marks the pleasure which God took, not indeed in inflicting punishment on his Son, but in making him a substitute for sinful man." and that "the sacrifice then offered was of a sweet-smelling savor [Ephesians 5:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 5.2)."

He delights also in the approaches of a sinner to his footstool—

"The prayer of the upright is his delight." If in Heaven "there is joy among the angels in the presence of God over one sinner that repents," doubtless that God, in whose presence they are, approves and participates their joy, The representation given of him in the parable of the Prodigal Son, both countenances and confirms this sentiment; yes, to such a degree is he pleased with the supplications of a repenting sinner, that he would rather withdraw his eyes from every other object, whether in Heaven or on earth, than not direct them especially towards him [Isaiah 66:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 66.2). See this exemplified in Saul of Tarsus: no sooner had that blood-thirsty persecutor begun to humble himself before his Maker, than God sent a special messenger to his relief, assigning this as the reason, "Behold, he prays [Acts 9:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 9.10-11)." Thus at this time, if he see any of his rebellious creatures prostrating themselves before him, and earnestly imploring mercy, he will say, 'Who is this? Is this the creature that I beheld so recently in arms against me? Is this he who seemed to hurl defiance in my face? is it he, who now so humbly engages his heart to approach unto me? He is my dear son; he is a pleasant child: my affections are troubled fur him: I will surely have mercy upon him for evermore [Jeremiah 31:18-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.18-20).'

APPLICATION—

Are there any among you that can answer to the inquiry, 'Lord, it is I: I find my need of you: I have engaged my heart in your service; and am determined, through your grace, that I will never go back?' Let me congratulate you, my brethren: for "blessed is the man whom God chooses, and causes to approach unto him [Psalm 65:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 65.4)." Be thoroughly in earnest, and take care that you do not, after putting your hand to the plough, look back again.

Are there any who are constrained to say, 'I would gladly make such a reply; but my rebellious heart revolts, and will not obey the dictates of my judgment?' Then I would bid them to mark the works before the text; "I will cause him to draw near, and he shall approach unto me." If any go unto him, it is not owing to their own superior goodness or strength, but to the attractive influences of God's Spirit. Adopt then the petition of the Church of old, and then you may with confidence adopt her engagement also, "Draw me, and we will run after you Son. 1:4;" "I will run the way of your commandments, when you shall enlarge my heart [Psalm 119:32](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 119.32)."

[Jeremiah 31:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.3)

DISCOURSE 1068

GRACIOUS INFLUENCES THE FRUIT OF ELECTING LOVE

[Jeremiah 31:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.3). The Lord has appeared of old unto me, saying, Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you.

THERE is a most glorious connection subsisting between the Lord and his people: He is their God, even "the God of all the families of Israel;" and they are his people, devoted altogether to his service. He is the God of every individual, as much as if no other object of his love existed in the whole creation besides; and they are his exclusively, and without reserve. But here two questions arise: How are they brought into this connection with him? and, From whence does this exalted privilege arise? Our text enables us to answer these questions; and we will answer them in their order.

I. How are God's people brought into this glorious connection with him?

Our text informs us, that we are "drawn" to it by the Father himself. We shall therefore answer this first question by showing,

1. How he draws them—

The term "drawing" is supposed to import somewhat of a force that is inconsistent with the free agency of man: and, were that idea just, we should be found among the first that would oppose such a doctrine as unscriptural and absurd. But the drawings of God's Spirit do not in the least interfere with the liberty of human actions. The drawing of which our text speaks, is "with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love [Hosea 11:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 11.4);" it is through the medium of the understanding, the will, and the affections: the understanding, as enlightened with divine truth; the will, as determined by sound judgment; and the affections, as engaged by the excellence of those things which the will is bent to follow. True it is, that we cannot precisely declare the manner in which the operations of the Holy Spirit influence the soul; for we do not even know honor own spirit acts upon the body: but we know infallibly, that God does influence the minds of men; not however by making them to act contrary to their will, but by milking them "willing in the day of his power [Psalm 110:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 110.3)."

2. That their connection with him is altogether owing to his influence—

If the most express declarations of Scripture can determine anything, the point in hand is established beyond a doubt: for our blessed Lord says, that "no man," whatever his quality or talents, "can come to him," in the exercise of true faith, "unless the Father draw him [John 6:44](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 6.44)." This testimony is decisive. But the truth of the point established by it is no less clear, from the representation which the Scriptures give us of the work which is wrought on the minds of all who are truly brought to God. It is called "a creation [Ephesians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 2.10)," which we all know to be the work of God; and a resurrection from the dead, which is equally beyond any finite power to effect [Ephesians 2:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 2.1) with 1:19, 20. Whatever may be supposed to have effected the good work within us, it is expressly excluded, that God may have all the glory [John 1:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 1.13). [Romans 11:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 11.16). If it be said, that such difficulties exist only in more abandoned characters, we answer, that the Apostles themselves put themselves, in this respect, on a level with the vilest of mankind [Ephesians 2:3-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 2.3-5). [Titus 3:3-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Titus 3.3-6); and thereby fully confirm the testimony of our Lord above cited.

The next question that arises is,

II. To what must this exalted mercy be traced?

Is it any peculiar fitness in this or that man, which occasions God to single him out as an object to be drawn by him; or is the mercy given by God to whoever he will, according to his own sovereign will and pleasure? We cannot hesitate to declare, that the whole salvation, from first to last, is purely of grace.

St. Paul himself was constrained to say, "By the grace of God I am what I am:" and, of course, every one else must do the same. But we cannot but have observed, on many occasions, how indignantly the natural man revolts from this doctrine. We do not doubt the sovereignty of God in rescuing man from destruction rather than the fallen angels; or in making the Jews his peculiar people, in preference to all others upon earth; or in selecting Isaac and Jacob while he rejected Ishmael and Esau: nor can we doubt that we ourselves, as enjoying the light of revelation, are objects of his sovereign choice, when we see far the greater part of mankind involved in midnight darkness: and yet we cannot endure the doctrine, when applied to the more immediate communication of God's mercy to our souls. But to God's everlasting love is our salvation ascribed in our text; and to that alone can it with truth or propriety ever be ascribed: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn you."

Now this is the plain doctrine of Scripture—

God does not lore us because we first loved him; but "we love him because he first loved us [1 John 4:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 John 4.19)." It was thus also with the Apostles themselves: "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain [John 15:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 15.16)." To us the terms, Election and Predestination, almost sound like blasphemy: but the Apostles did not view them in this light: they considered every blessing we enjoy as the fruit of God's electing love, and of his sovereign will predestinating us from all eternity to the enjoyment of it See [Ephesians 1:3-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 1.3-6) and [2 Thessalonians. 2:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Thess. 2.13-14); They are particularly careful to exclude all works of ours from forming a ground of God's electing love, lest we should boast as having in some degree merited his favor [2 Timothy 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Tim 1.9). The whole tenor of the Scriptures shows, that "God has compassion on whom he will have compassion [Romans 9:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 9.15);" and that his people are "a remnant according to the election of grace [Romans 11:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 11.5)."

And in relation to this subject God is peculiarly jealous—

How strongly did he guard his people of old against imagining that his distinguishing favor to them was founded in any superior goodness of theirs [Deuteronomy 7:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 7.7-8). In like manner he puts it to us; "Who made you to differ? and What have you which you have not received? and, If you have received it, why do you glory as if you had not received it 1 Corinthians 4:7." The whole of his Gospel is purposely designed to cut off all ground of glorying from man, that God alone may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ [Romans 3:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 3.27). [Ephesians 2:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 2.8-9). [1 Corinthians 1:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 1.28-29).

ADDRESS—

1. To those who cannot receive this doctrine—

Would it not be well to search and examine what is the real foundation of your objections to it? Nothing can be more clear, than that the doctrine of Divine influences pervades the Holy Scriptures, and that these influences are constantly represented as imparted to men according to God's sovereign will and pleasure: yet the generality of men reject those doctrines merely because they cannot explain all the difficulties involved in them. But does the denial of these doctrines involve no difficulties? Yes indeed, and incomparably greater: nor is there a single doctrine, even of natural religion, and much more of that which is revealed, that has not some difficulty attached to it. But the truth is, that our proud hearts do not like to be so stripped of all goodness, or to be made so entirely dependent on God. Here is the root of the whole controversy: and, when once the soul is humbled in the dust before God, we shall readily receive God's declarations without gainsaying, and thankfully accept his mercy as a free unmerited gift.

But it is not wise for persons who are mere novices in religion to be disputing about abstract doctrines: it were better far to seek after God according to the light they have. All must acknowledge, that they ought to take God as their God, and to give themselves to him as his people. Let me then urge you to do this with your whole hearts: and we have no fear but that, if once you be enabled to do this, you will say, "Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto your name he the praise."

2. To those who profess to have the experience of it in their own souls—

Have you been "drawn" by divine grace? and have you a good hope that you are of the number of God's elect? Then remember for what end he has drawn you, and for what end he has chosen you: it has been to make you "a holy and a peculiar people to himself." Has he chosen you? it is "that you should be holy [Ephesians 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 1.4)." Has he predestined you? it is "to be conformed to the image of his Son [Romans 8:29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 8.29)." Has he created you anew? it is "unto good works, which God has before ordained that you should walk in them [Ephesians 2:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 2.10)." Hence God makes the consideration of his electing love a motive and a reason for following after holiness of heart and life: "The Lord had a delight in your fathers to love them; and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked [Deuteronomy 10:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 10.15-16)." O, beg of him that you may be enabled thus to improve the blessings he has conferred upon you. This will best "put to silence the ignorance of foolish men," who imagine that the doctrines of grace are subversive of morality, and that the honor which you give to God is only a cloak for idleness and sin. For this end alone are the drawings of God's Spirit desirable, namely, to make you more holy, more spiritual, more heavenly than any person without those influences can be. Say then, with the Church of old, "Draw me, and I will run after you Son. 1:4;" and prove, by the steadiness of your heavenly course, that you do not pray in vain, and that God does not bestow upon you his grace in vain.

3. To those who desire to embrace and feel it—

Many there are who wish to submit to the revealed will of God, and yet never can contemplate his sovereignty without a fear and dread arising in their souls: but this is occasioned by their looking only on the dark side of the question, and thinking what must become of them if they are not elect: they contemplate sovereignty in connection only with justice, and not in connection with love and mercy. If they turned their thoughts more to his everlasting love, they would soon feel its attractive and constraining influence. We do not say that terror is not often made use of by God to awaken men; but it is by "loving-kindness that he draws" them into sweet communion with himself. Think then generally of his love to man, in providing redemption for him when he had passed by the fallen angels without any such gracious provision for their restoration to his favor: from thence proceed to think more particularly of his love to you, in having sent you the tidings of his salvation, and in having given you a desire to possess an interest in it; and you will then soon find a sweet confidence springing up in your souls: you will look to him as a Father; you will regard him as a Friend; you will feel encouragement to cast yourselves upon him, and pleasure in giving up yourselves to his service. Seek only to know how much he has loved you, and you will soon be constrained to love him, and to delight yourselves in him.

[Jeremiah 31:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.7-9)

DISCOURSE 1069

THE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS

[Jeremiah 31:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.7-9). Thus says the Lord; Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations; publish you, praise you, and say, O Lord, save your people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her that travails with child together; a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way wherein they shall not stumble: for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born.

IT was expressly commanded by God, that all the males belonging to the twelve tribes of Israel should go up thrice every year to worship the Lord at Jerusalem. If we paint to ourselves the concourse which this would occasion at the appointed seasons, we may form some conception of what shall take place, in due season, from every quarter of the world. If it be said, that the land of Israel will be too small to hold the numbers that, in that case, would be assembled; I answer, that this very circumstance is adverted to in prophecy, where it is said, "The land shall be too narrow by reason of the inhabitants; so that they shall say, The place is too strait for me: give place to me that I may dwell [Isaiah 49:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 49.19-20)." That the Jews shall be restored to their own land, is, I think, as plainly declared in Scripture, as any truth in the Bible: though, if any be disposed to doubt it, I am not anxious to maintain a controversy respecting it; because, however important it may be to the Jews, it is to us a matter of small moment. To me it appears, that the preceding chapter, together with that before us, is fully upon this point. But, at all events, the future conversion of the Jews is absolutely certain, and indeed is universally admitted: and the multitudes of converts to the Christian Church in that day will be a visible accomplishment of the words preceding my text, which say, that "the watchmen on the Mount Ephraim will cry, Arise you, and let us go up to Zion, unto the Lord our God!"

In reference to the restoration of the Jews, we have in our text,

I. A command to us—

The Most High God is he who speaks to us in this place; and he enjoins us here,

1. To take an interest in the welfare of his people—

It is a great reproach to the Christian world, that, from the close of the apostolic age, they have shown very little attention to the Jews. Indeed, they have overlooked the prophecies relating to them; and thought little more, either of God s interest in them, or theirs in him, than if not a word had been spoken respecting them in Scripture. But God says to us, "Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout among the chief of the nations." Here it is evident that we ought so to keep in view God's gracious designs respecting them, as to have our hearts filled with joy in the contemplation of the blessings that await them. This is enjoined in other passages of Holy Writ [Isaiah 44:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 44.23); [Isaiah 66:10-12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 66.10-12); and I again say, that we have exceeding great reason to be humbled, when we look back on our past indifference towards them.

2. To express that interest in every suitable way—

We should give to them the benefit, and to God the honor, of what the Scripture has revealed concerning them; "publishing it" wherever we go, whether to Jews or Gentiles; and "praising God for it," as a stupendous display of his glorious perfections: And while we endeavor to engage their attention to these things, we must, by fervent intercession, endeavor to engage God also in their behalf. We should, together with our public efforts, exert ourselves in secret also, saying, "O Lord, save your people, the remnant of Israel." This is especially commanded: we are even enjoined so to abound in importunity, as "not to give any rest to God until he arises to make Jerusalem a praise in the earth [Isaiah 62:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 62.6-7)." Alas! how shamefully negligent have we all been in this duty! We know how fervently Moses interceded for them on many occasions; and even prayed to have "his own name blotted out of the book of God's remembrance," rather than that they should be subjected to God's heavy displeasure. Let us seek to attain somewhat of the same spirit; and "labor fervently for them night and clay in prayer," that they may be restored to the favor and the image of their God.

Truly our labor should not be in vain; since to this command, without the intervention of a single word, God adds,

II. A promise to them—

In the promise here given, you observe,

1. Their restoration to God—

God himself will, in duo season, interpose for their recovery. However distant they are from him, he can, and will, bring them home to himself: and, however discouraging their circumstances, will work effectually for them. View them when they came out of Egypt: nothing could exceed their weakness: yet he brought them out safely, with a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm. So now, though they be blind, and lame, and in a state either of pregnancy or actual travail, he will crown their efforts with success; yes, and as in that day, so at the time appointed, a great company shall return thither." Whatever "mountains be in the way, before Zerubbabel they shall become a plain See [Isaiah 49:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 49.9-11)."

2. The manner in which it shall be effected—

"With weeping and supplication shall they come;" as says the Prophet Zechariah also, "God will pour out upon them a spirit of grace and of supplication: and they shall look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn, and be in bitterness, as one is in bitterness for his first-born [Zechariah 12:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zech 12.10)." In the whole of their progress they shall be carried forward with an abundance of peace, and joy, and holiness: for God will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters, in a straight way, wherein they shall not stumble." The wonders transacted in the wilderness shall, in a spiritual way at least, be realized again: for God will guide them by his counsel, and strengthen them by his grace, and comfort them with the consolations of his Spirit, until he bring them in safety to his glory.

3. The pledge that it shall surely be accomplished—

When Moses urged Pharaoh to liberate that people, he particularly enforced his request with this consideration, that they were "God's first-born [Exodus 4:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 4.12)." And in that light he still regards them, though he has cast them off for a season. To them, therefore, will he again reveal himself as a father; and for them will he again interpose as "his first-born," whom nothing shall induce him finally to disinherit. As he has sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so has he sworn that he will not be wrath with them, nor rebuke them; and that, though the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, his kindness shall not depart from them, nor the covenant of his peace be removed from them verse 37 with [Isaiah 54:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 54.9-10)."

APPLICATION—

1. Look well to it that you are yourselves restored to God—

You have the same need of it as the Jews: and must return in the same way: Inquire, I pray you, whether you have come to the Lord Jesus with weeping and supplication": and are walking steadily and uniformly in his holy way: This is as necessary for your salvation, as for theirs.

2. Endeavor to help forward the restoration of your Jewish Brethren—

You have seen that God enjoins you to interest yourselves in their behalf, exerting yourselves with God for them, and with them for God. To intercede for them in secret, is your bounden duty, and to labor for them in public: What you cannot do by your own personal efforts, you may accomplish through the Society which solicits your aid.

[Jeremiah 31:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.8-9)

DISCOURSE 1070

THE CHRISTIAN PILGRIMS

[Jeremiah 31:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.8-9). Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the coasts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child, and her that travails with child together: a great company shall return thither. They shall come with weeping, and with supplications will I lead them: I will cause them to walk by the rivers of waters in a straight way wherein they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. In the foregoing Discourse this passage is treated more particularly in reference to the Jews: in this, as applicable to the Church at large. THE language in which the prophets speak of the return of the Jews from Babylon, necessitates us to look to some other event for the full accomplishment of their predictions. In a measure, they were fulfilled in the conversion of so many myriads to God in the apostolic age: but they will receive their final completion in the Millennial period, when all flesh shall see the salvation of God. In speaking of those whom God would bring back from their captivity, and by whom he would re-establish his worship upon Mount Zion, the prophet has respect to those who should come out from their earthly bondage to serve God in the Church of Christ. He here gives us a highly figurative description of,

I. Their character—

If we should select those who were of all others most incapable of undertaking a journey of many hundred miles through a trackless desert, we should certainly fix on those mentioned in the text: yet those are the persons specified by God as chosen by him for that very purpose. We cannot doubt but that something peculiarly important is intended to be conveyed under this striking representation. It implies then, we apprehend,

1. That there are no discouragements which God will not enable us to surmount—

Persons, when exhorted to begin their journey heavenward, are ready to urge the peculiarity of their situation and circumstances, either as an excuse for their not attempting the work, or as a reason for procrastination. But however specious their pleas may be (and certainly none can appear stronger than those which the persons referred to in the text might offer), God would have them to know, that, under his auspices, the feeblest person in the universe may undertake the hardest services, assured that "through Christ strengthening him he shall be able to do all things [Philippians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 4.13)." "The blind shall see out of obscurity and out of darkness [Isaiah 29:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 29.18);" "the lame man shall leap as an deer [Isaiah 35:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 35.5-6);" "the travailing woman shall be delivered without pain" or consequent weakness [Isaiah 66:7-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 66.7-9); the very dead shall arise out of their graves, to perform the functions of life [Ezekiel 37:1-12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 37.1-12); nor shall anything be impossible to them that believe [Mark 9:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark 9.23).

Let none then excuse themselves on account of ignorance or weakness, or wait for a more convenient season; but rather let all with one heart obey the call of God, and go forth "strong in the Lord and in the power of his might." As on the departure of Israel from Egypt "there was not one feeble person among their tribes [Psalm 105:37](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 105.37)," so neither shall there be one at this time whose "strength shall not be according to his day [Deuteronomy 33:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 33.25)."

2. That God has chosen those who are in the most discouraging circumstances, on purpose that his own power may De the more displayed and glorified—

If none but the strong and active were to enter on the Christian course, or none but the moral and the wise were to embrace the truth, we should be ready to ascribe the glory to man. But God has reserved all the glory to himself, by taking the poor and ignorant and vile in preference to others [1 Corinthians 1:26-29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 1.26-29), and by converting them to himself through the instrumentality of the weakest means [2 Corinthians 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 4.7). Apparent discouragements therefore may rather operate to increase our expectations of more effectual aid; since the weaker we are in ourselves, the more will Christ's strength be perfected in our weakness [2 Corinthians 12:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 12.9). Instead of pleading our unfitness and imbecility as reasons for declining the path of duty, we should rather glory in our unfitness, "that the power of Christ may rest upon us [2 Corinthians 12:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 12.10)."

Curious as the description of the persons is, it is not more so than the representation of,

II. Their journey—

Many there have been, and infinitely more shall there hereafter be, even "a multitude that no man can number," who shall be brought to Zion. But how shall they come? Their journey is here described,

1. In its commencement—

"Weeping and supplication" well become those who are "turning from the power of Satan unto God." How can they reflect on their former bondage without the deepest humiliation, or without crying mightily to God for pardon and deliverance? How can they stir one step towards Zion, and not be overwhelmed with admiring and adoring thoughts of God's goodness to them, and entreating that the good work which he has begun may be carried on and perfected in their souls? The more ardent their desire is after God, the more will weeping and prayer abound in their experience [Zechariah 12:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zech 12.10) with [Jeremiah 50:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 50.4-5).

2. In its progress—

As the journey from Babylon to Judea was both wearisome and dangerous, especially for persons circumstanced as the Jews were in their return to Zion, so the Christian's path lies through many difficulties and dangers. But God promises him the things he so much needs; refreshing consolation, and unerring direction.

There are times when the "souls of God's people are discouraged by reason of the way [Numbers 21:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Num 21.4). [Psalm 107:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 107.4-5)." Their trials and temptations overwhelm their spirit; and they would "utterly fail," if not succored by seasonable communications of grace and peace. But God has provided a Comforter for them, even the Holy Spirit, whom he will send into their drooping and desponding souls, and by whoever agency he will revive and strengthen them [Isaiah 43:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 43.19-20); [Isaiah 40:29-31](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 40.29-31). None can be in so distressed a state, but they shall have "rivers" of consolation at hand for their refreshment [Isaiah 41:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 41.17-18).

Is their path peculiarly intricate and slippery? God will "make their way plain before their face:" "the rough places shall be plain, and the crooked paths straight." In seasons of difficulty "they shall hear a voice behind them saying, This is the way, walk you in it [Isaiah 30:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 30.21); [Isaiah 35:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 35.8)." And if at any time their foot slide, he will put "his everlasting arms underneath them," and uphold them that they may not fall.

Of these seasonable communications the Christian may be assured, because of the near relation in which he stands to God himself. "God is his father, and considers him as his firstborn [Exodus 4:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 4.22-23)." Whatever therefore is suited to that high relation shall certainly be imparted to him, in such a measure, and such a manner, as shall most conduce to his eternal welfare.

ADDRESS—

1. Those who are yet in a state of bondage—

Whatever diversity there may be in the states and characters of those who return to Zion, there is not one who does not see abundant reason to class himself among those mentioned in the text: and if we have never felt ourselves in a state resembling theirs, we may be assured that we are yet in bondage to sin and Satan. Behold then, to such persons we have a message from God himself: as God's "watchmen, we would cry, Arise you, and let us go up to Zion, to the Lord our God verse 6." Make no excuses, no delays. The Lord Jesus Christ has "proclaimed liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." Be not then like those in Babylon, who, because of their comfortable settlements there, sat down regardless of the Holy Land; but put yourselves under the guidance of your Divine Leader; brave the dangers and difficulties of the way; and look to the honor and felicity of serving him, as an ample recompense for all that you can do or suffer in the ways of his appointment.

2. Those who are traveling towards Zion—

Adored be God, who "has brought you out with a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm!" But beware how you ever think of returning to your former bondage: for "then will your last end be worse than your beginning [2 Peter 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Pet 2.20)." You must expect difficulties: your faith and patience will be tried: it is "through faith and patience that you must inherit the promises [Hebrews 6:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 6.12)." But, when God is for you, you need not care who, or what, is against you. Only "encourage yourselves in the Lord your God:" "in the mount of difficulty the Lord will be seen [Genesis 22:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen 22.14);" though you are no better armed than Gideon's band with their lamps and pitchers, you shall put to flight all that oppose your progress [Judges. 7:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Judg. 7.20-21); and though you are as unfit for exertion as a travailing woman, you shall reach in safety the Zion that is above.

[Jeremiah 31:10-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.10-14)

DISCOURSE 1071

THE PREACHED GOSPEL A SOURCE OF BLESSINGS TO THE WORLD

[Jeremiah 31:10-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.10-14). Hear the word of the Lord, O nations, and declare it in the isles afar off, and say, He who scatters Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock. For the Lord has redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for nine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their souls shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. And I will satiate the soul of the priests with fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, says the Lord.

THERE is a beauty and richness in the inspired volume which is not to be found in any human composition: and we cannot but consider it as a very serious injury to the Church, that the habit of expounding Scripture, which was so prevalent among the Reformers, is now almost wholly laid aside. Though we may speak many good things from a detached portion of Scripture, yet we never can give so great weight to any passage by our own comments, as it receives from its own context: and the more entirely God himself is permitted to speak, provided there be unity in the subject, the better. Take the passage which we have just read: it is capable of being made the ground-work of many discourses; but the force and interest which it derives from being considered in one connected view, would be lost. It is an exceedingly beautiful portion of Holy Writ; in elucidating which I shall be led to set before you,

I. The event which we are here commanded to proclaim—

You perceive that all "the nations" of the earth, are called upon to "hear" from God, and to "proclaim," as from God, to the remotest islands of the sea, and say, "He who scatters Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd does his flock." This, beyond all doubt, refers, in the first instance, to the restoration of the Jews from Babylon. But it did not by any means receive its full accomplishment in that; since instead of their "not sorrowing any more at all," their sorrows have, by means of their dispersion by the Romans, been multiplied beyond measure, and at times almost beyond endurance. But there is a time coming, and it is now very near at hand, when God will redeem them from all their enemies, and restore them to the full possession of their own land. And a blessed event will that be! Consider,

1. The manner in which it shall be accomplished—

You well know how a river, with ten thousand tributary streams, flows into the ocean. But to see it flow up a mountain would fill you with utter astonishment. Yet thus it is that God's ancient people will "flow unto the height of Zion." "The mountain of the Lord's house shall be established on the top of the mountains; and God's Israel, contrary to the course of nature, shall flow unto it," coming, as it were, from every quarter of the globe [Isaiah 2:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 2.2), in one simultaneous movement, to worship the Lord in Jerusalem, just as all the males in Israel were accustomed to do at the three great and stated feasts.

2. The object which all will have in view—

"They will flow together for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd." Beyond all doubt they will be blessed at that time with great temporal prosperity, perhaps greater than was ever enjoyed even in the days of Solomon. But under the image of temporal benefits, no doubt spiritual blessings are principally designed. Indeed, it must be remembered, that the things here mentioned were in fact, the chief articles which were presented unto God in sacrifice; and consequently they designate those services winch conduced at the same time to the honor of God, and to the refreshment of man. Under these are comprehended the word and ordinances of Jehovah, and especially those great and precious promises of his which minister strength and comfort to all his waiting people. To have communion with God in his worship, and to derive from him all the blessings of salvation, will doubtless be the chief objects of desire among all the people who shall assemble at Jerusalem. And by this will they obtain a most abundant communication of spiritual blessings to their souls, insomuch that, from having hitherto resembled only a desolate wilderness, they will become, in all the fruits of righteousness, "like a well watered garden;" and will from that time "dismiss all the sorrows" with which for so many centuries they have been oppressed. This shows, that the prophecy before us has not ever yet been fulfilled but in a very slight and partial manner; and that its full accomplishment yet waits for the arrival of the Millennial age.

3. The effect which will be produced—

Unutterable will be the joy that will then pervade the whole nation: "Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, both young men and old together: for I will turn their mourning into joy, and make them rejoice from their sorrow." In that all ranks and orders of men will unite; the priests and the people vying with each other in the expressions of their joy.

But here also it is evident that this was to take place under the Christian dispensation. The sacrifices which were offered under the law, were for the support of the priests only, with their families: nor was the fat to be eaten even by them: That must on all occasions be consumed upon the altar: whereas at the time to which this prophecy refers, "the priests shall satiate their souls with fatness," and all the people indiscriminately, together with the priests, (being all of them a royal priesthood,) shall "be satisfied with the goodness of the Lord Compare 1 Samuel 2:15-17 with [Isaiah 55:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 55.2)," Other things, to whatever extent they may be enjoyed, are empty and unsatisfying: but those who attain these things shall be so satisfied," as never to thirst after anything else [John 6:35](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 6.35). Who can conceive the full import of expressions like these?.

II. The interest we have in it—

An especial command is issued to the whole Gentile world, both to consider, and to proclaim this glad event. It is our duty to contemplate it,

1. As it respects the Jews—

The Christian world has been strangely inattentive to their duty in this respect, from the apostolic age even to the times in which we live. In reference to the heathen world, some little interest has been felt: but the Jewish nation has been almost wholly overlooked; and the promises of God in his word which have referred to their restoration to his favor, have been applied almost wholly to the Gentiles. I cannot but mention in particular the 60th chapter of the prophecies of Isaiah, which, if read in connection with the two closing verses of the preceding chapter, one would have supposed must have filled the minds of all with an eager expectation of the benefits which await the Jews; but which has been interpreted as referring almost exclusively to the Gentiles: yes, and even the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans has interested us as little in behalf of the Jews, as if, instead of conveying truths as clear and full as language could express them, it had contained nothing but a mass of unintelligible jargon. Brethren, we are highly criminal in this matter. Why has God so strongly called our attention to this subject, and constituted us his heralds to proclaim it; but to call forth our desire after this blessed period, and our efforts to help it forward? Shall it be said that the accomplishment of these events must be left to God? I grant that none but God can accomplish them. But neither can any power less than his effect the conversion of the Gentiles, let was this any reason why men should not exert themselves to promote it? Did "Paul forbear to plant, or Apollos to water, because God alone could give the increase?" No: we are to be "workers together with God," even as the Apostles were. The souls of God's ancient people should be as dear to us, as the souls of the idolatrous Gentiles were to the Apostles: and the advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom, whether among Jews or Gentiles, should call forth our utmost efforts, in a dependence upon God for his promised blessing.

I call upon you then, in the very name and with the authority of God himself, to unite, every one of you in his sphere, according to your respective abilities, to help forward this great and glorious event.

2. As it respects ourselves—

Though in its primary meaning this passage refers to the Jews, the whole tenor of it shows that it belongs to us under the Christian dispensation. (The mourning of Rachel for her children, mentioned in the words following my text, was fulfilled in the slaughter of the babes of Bethlehem.) To us is promised, no less than to God's ancient people, a transition from bondage to liberty, from sin to holiness, from sorrow to joy. We are wandering from the fold of God, and need to be "gathered, and kept by the Good Shepherd," even by him who "ransomed us" with a price, and "laid down his life for the sheep": We too, in coming to Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, may expect a full enjoyment of all the same benefits; all of us, as "a royal priesthood," being partakers of God's altar, and living upon the sacrifice there offered: Absurd and impious beyond measure are the modes adopted among us for expressing our joy at the glad tidings of redemption: (carnal feastings and dances are very ill suited to express the feelings of a soul redeemed by the incarnation and death of the Son of God:) but to "delight our souls in fatness," and to "satiate ourselves with the goodness of the Lord," is the employment which I would commend to every one of you to the latest hour of your lives.

On a review of this subject we are naturally led to inquire,

1. Whence is it that the Gospel produces so little effect in the present day?

The glad tidings of redemption through the blood of Christ are professedly proclaimed by all who have entered into the ministerial office: yet in many places no change whatever is wrought in the manners and habits of the people. What can be the reason of this? Has the Gospel lost its power? No: but there is some essential defect in the ministration of it: in many places the doctrine of the cross is not made sufficiently prominent; yes, in some, it is kept almost out of sight; and no other use is made of the atonement and righteousness of Christ than to supply the defects of man's obedience. And where Christ is more fully preached, he is often represented as purchasing only a pardon for our past sins, and then as leaving us to "maintain our warfare at our own cost," and work out our salvation by our own arm: whereas the Scripture speaks of him as not only redeeming his people, but "gathering them" by his own care, and "keeping them" by his own power through faith unto everlasting salvation 1 Peter 1:5. Now a mutilated Gospel is in reality no Gospel: salvation must be preached as altogether of grace through faith: the whole glory of it belongs to God: nor will he ever honor any ministry that robs him of it.

But even where the Gospel is most faithfully preached, it produces, in comparison of the apostolic age, but little effect. The reason of this we apprehend to be, that our hearers, being Christians in name, and educated in a profession of Christian doctrines, are ready to imagine that they are Christians in deed, and that they have a saving acquaintance with the Gospel: they are, like the Laodiceans of old, "rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing" in their own estimation, and unconscious that "they are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked [Revelation 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev 3.17);" and while they continue so unconscious of their need of a Redeemer, it is not to be wondered at that they are so little affected with the tidings of redemption. O remember, that a "ransom" implies captivity, and "redemption" bondage: and beg of God to show you what slaves you nave been to sin and Satan, in order that you may appreciate as you ought the Gospel of Christ. "The whole need not a physician, but they that are sick:" and until you feel your disorder, you will despise the remedy.

2. What is to be done in order to render it more effectual?

In hearing the ministers of Christ, we do not sufficiently bear in mind whose word it is that they preach unto us, or the deep interest we have in it: we rather consider them as performing an official duty when they deliver a discourse, and ourselves as having performed our duty when we have heard it. But we must have far other views of the Gospel than, these: we must consider the word we hear, as God's word, and as God's word to ourselves in particular. We must consider God as looking down with pity upon us in our destitute condition, and saying, "Deliver him from going down into the pit; for I have found a ransom." We must regard him as longing for our happiness, and seeking to fill us with his richest consolations. In a word, we must view the Gospel as Jeremiah did the ropes and other materials which Ebed-melech let down to extricate him from the dungeon, where he must otherwise have perished. He needed no persuasion to fit the materials to his arms, in order to secure the offered deliverance [Jeremiah 38:9-12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 38.9-12); so we should thankfully embrace the salvation of Christ, regarding it as altogether the fruit of his love, and the effect of his power. Did we but attend the ordinances in such a frame as this, they would soon prove "the power of God to the salvation" of our souls.

[Jeremiah 31:18-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.18-20)

DISCOURSE 1072

THE REFLECTIONS OF A PENITENT

[Jeremiah 31:18-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.18-20). I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; You have chastised me, and I was chastised, as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke: turn you me, and I shall be turned; for you are the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh: I was ashamed, yes, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spoke against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my affections are troubled for him; I will surely have mercy upon him, says the Lord.

THERE is a wide difference between ostentatious sanctity and true piety. Hypocrites always endeavor to attract the attention of the world. The true penitent, on the contrary, affects privacy and retirement: though cheerful before men, his sorrows are deep before God: were his groanings overheard by the world, he would probably be made an object of pity or derision; but God beholds him with pleasure and delight [Isaiah 66:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 66.2). Ephraim, or the ten tribes, are represented in the text as penitent; the secret working of their minds is here opened to our view: and this accords with the experience of every repenting sinner. God then declares how acceptable such repentance is in his sight.

The passage naturally leads us to consider,

I. The reflections of a true penitent—

We first see the state of his mind in the beginning of his repentance—

He reflects on his incorrigibleness in the ways of sin—

Men seldom turn to God, until subdued by heavy afflictions: nor does the rod at first produce anything but impatience, The penitent calls to mind his perverseness under such a state. He compares his conduct with an untamed heifer The bullock, while unaccustomed to the yoke, rebels against the will of his master: though nourished and supported by him, it will not subserve his interests: when chastised, it rebels the more; yes, repeated strokes serve only to inflame its rage, and to call forth its more strenuous resistance: nor will it ever submit, until it be wearied out, and unable to maintain its opposition. Thus the sinner generally fights against God. He laments that there is such enmity in his heart against God.

He pleads with God to turn and convert his soul—

He feels the necessity of divine grace to change his heart [John 6:44](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 6.44). He therefore cries to God, "Turn you me." He ventures like the prodigal to address God as his God. He urges this relation as a plea to enforce his request.

We next see the state of his mind in the progress of his repentance—

He reflects upon the progress he has made—

He has felt very pungent grief on account of his iniquities This is the import of that significant action of "smiting upon the thigh:" see [Ezekiel 21:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 21.12). Through the remonstrances of his conscience he has been "ashamed." He has been "even confounded" by discoveries of his own corruptions. His constitutional propensities, which were the reproach of his youth, are still his burden, and his grief The expressions of his grief rise in a climax; he repents, he smites on his thigh; he is filled with shame; he is confounded before God. This, though an afflictive process, is a beneficial and blessed experience; as it argues deeper self-knowledge, and an increasing view of the purity of God's law.

But he gives the glory of his advancement to God alone—

He had cried to God for the gift of converting grace. He now acknowledges that grace to have come from God. He ascribes his deeper insight into the corruptions of his own heart to the illuminating operations of God's Spirit. Thus he adopts from his heart the confessions of Job; [Job 40:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 40.4), and of Paul [1 Corinthians 15:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 15.10).—

How acceptable to God such a penitent is, appears from,

II. The reflections of God over him—

The penitent can scarcely find terms whereby to express his own vileness; but God accounts no honors too great for such a person—

He owns the penitent as a "dear and pleasant child"—

The lower thoughts we have of ourselves, the higher God has of us, While we are confounded before him, he "rejoices over us with joy." While we are saying, "Surely such an one as I cannot be a child of God," He delights in testifying that we are his children The force of these positive interrogations is the same as if they had been expressed negatively: they import a strong affirmation: see [1 Samuel 2:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Sam 2.27-28). God appeals, as it were, to our contrition, in proof that we are his.

He further expresses his compassionate regard for him—

The chidings and rebukes of God are all in love [Hebrews 12:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 12.6). But the afflicted penitent is apt to complain with Zion of old [Isaiah 49:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 49.14).—God however never feels for us more than when he hides his face from us. Like a tender parent, he longs to renew to us the tokens of his love [Isaiah 49:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 49.15-16). The contrite soul may apply to itself those gracious declarations [Isaiah 54:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 54.7-8).—

He promises to manifest his mercy towards him—

God never will despise the broken in heart [Psalm 51:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 51.17). No past sins, however heinous, snail be remembered against them [Isaiah 1:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 1.18). For such God has prepared a glorious inheritance in Heaven [Matthew 25:34](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 25.34).

He grants to him all that he himself could possibly desire—

What more could the penitent ask of God than an assurance of his adoption into God's family, a declaration of God's love towards him, and a promise that he shall find mercy at the last day? Yet these are all expressed in God's reflections over Ephraim. What inexpressible comfort should this administer to drooping penitents!

APPLICATION—

Can God testify of us as of Ephraim in the text?: If he cannot, we must expect shame, confusion, and agony at the last day [Daniel 12:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan 12.2) and [Matthew 13:49-50](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 13.49-50). If he can, we are assured of happiness both in this world and the next [Psalm 126:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 126.5-6).

[Jeremiah 31:30](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.30)

DISCOURSE 1073

THE SURE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

[Jeremiah 31:30](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.30). Every man that eats the sour grape, his teeth shall be set on edge.

POPULAR sentiments, even when they become so general as to be reduced to a standing proverb, are not therefore to be received as true: they must be tried, exactly as if they were the suggestions of any solitary individual; since the direction given us by God himself is, "Prove all things, and hold fast that only which is good [1 Thessalonians. 5:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Thess. 5.21)." There was among the Jews an established proverb, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." The Prophet Ezekiel, as well as Jeremiah, mentions this verse 29 with [Ezekiel 18:2-4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 18.2-4); and both of the prophets declare, that, whatever ground for it had existed in past times, God would in future visit with his judgments offenders themselves, and not deal with men in a way that should involve the innocent with the guilty. True it is, that, in the very Decalogue itself, he had said, that he would "visit the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him [Exodus 20:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 20.5);" but his dispensations henceforth, and especially "in the latter days," should bear rather the stamp of individuality, in accordance with men's personal habits; responsibility attaching to those only whose conduct should merit his displeasure: "Every one should die for his own iniquity; and every man that should eat the sour grape, his teeth should be set on edge."

In considering this solemn declaration, I shall notice it,

I. As an answer to the prevailing sentiment of that day—

It must be confessed that there was ground for this sentiment—

God, in his conduct towards the whole human race, had given occasion for it. Our first parents sinned; and all their posterity became heirs of their guilt and misery. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, even over those who had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression [Romans 5:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 5.12-14);" yes, "by one man's disobedience many were made sinners; and by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation [Romans 5:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 5.18-19)." This alone, methinks, would justify the proverb, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

But besides this, God, in his dealings with his own peculiar people, had, on many occasions, caused the children to suffer for the iniquities of their parents. At the general deluge, and at the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the new-born infant suffered no less than the most abandoned parent; as was the case also when Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with all their respective families, went down alive into the depths of the earth. There were instances, also, wherein the offenders themselves had either been removed from this world, and their survivors were left to suffer for their iniquities; or where the offender himself escaped, while others were punished on his account. It was in David's days that a famine of three years was sent to punish Saul's violation of the engagements which, many hundreds of years before, had been made with the Gibeonites [2 Samuel 21:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Sam 21.1); [2 Samuel 21:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Sam 21.6); and, for David's numbering of the people, seventy thousand of his subjects were slain, while he himself was spared [2 Samuel 24:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Sam 24.10); [2 Samuel 24:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Sam 24.15). Manasseh, too, had been taken to his rest, when for "his iniquities, which the Lord would not pardon," the whole nation of Judah was carried into captivity in Babylon [2 Kings 23:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Kings 23.26-27); [2 Kings 24:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Kings 24.3-4). And even in the dispersion of the Jewish nation by the Romans, and in all the calamities they have suffered to this time, "on them has come all the blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel, unto the blood of Zachariah son of Barachias, whom they slew between the temple and the altar [Matthew 23:35](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 23.35)." The people, who murdered their Messiah, said, "His blood be on us and on our children;" and, truly, his blood has been on their children, even to the present hour.

In truth, constituted as the world is, there is a necessity that the happiness of children should, to a very great extent, depend on their parents. It is scarcely possible but that, both in our civil and social relations, evil should arise from this source; since the welfare of subjects must, of necessity, be affected by the conduct of their governors; and the welfare of children by the conduct of their parents.

But though in some respects this proverb was true, yet, as uttered by them, it was false and impious—

In this proverb the Jews intended to exculpate themselves, and to cast reflections upon their God. They wished it to be understood that they were not suffering for their own sins, but for the sins of others; and that God dealt hardly with them, in making them amenable for sins which they had not committed. But, not to mention that a man himself is in some respect punished in his children, where is there, on the face of the whole earth, a person who has not merited all that has ever come upon him? and who has not reason to acknowledge that "God has punished him far less than his iniquities have deserved [Ezra. 9:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezra. 9.13)." Whatever may have been the primary occasion of our troubles, there is abundant ground for them within our-selves: "A living man can have no just reason to complain [Lamentations 3:39](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lam 3.39);" for, if we had had our just desert, there is not one among us that would not have been in the very depths of Hell, long, long ago. Those who have been partners in iniquity may, and will, reproach each other in that place of torment; but none shall be able to reproach their God: every one of those un-happy spirits shall be constrained to say, "True and righteous are your judgments, Lord God Almighty [Revelation 16:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev 16.7);" and the day that is appointed for assigning to men their respective doom, is on this very account declared to be "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God [Romans 2:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 2.5)." This proverb, therefore, when uttered with a view to justify man as innocent, or to reproach God as unjust, must be regarded as profane and impious in the extreme.

The answer given to it in my text is singularly important,

II. As a declaration of God's established rule of procedure in all ages—

Sin, by whoever committed, shall not go unpunished. It shall be followed with evil,

1. In this world—

"A sour grape," whether eaten by one or many, "will set the teeth on edge:" and sin, whether of a more open or secret kind, will be followed with evil to the soul. Let the profligate and abandoned sinner, the drunkard, the whore-monger, the adulterer, say, whether what he has followed with such avidity, and regarded as such a source of exquisite delight, has not, in the issue, been productive of pain? Let the injury which he has sustained, in his name, his health, his property, be taken into the account, and he will be constrained to acknowledge that "the way of transgressors is hard [Proverbs 13:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 13.15)." We may appeal with confidence to every sinner in the universe; "What fruit had you, even at the time, of those things whereof you are now ashamed?" Truly, not an hour had elapsed after your sweetest gratifications, before they were embittered with shame, and fear, and self-reproach.

But, not to confine ourselves to the licentious profligate, let us ask of the man who, while externally moral, is yet under the influence of evil tempers, Who ever harbored envy in his bosom, and did not find it "as rottenness in his bones [Proverbs 14:30](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 14.30)."? Or, who ever gave way to anger, malice, revenge, and did not experience in his own soul a disquietude, that of itself was sufficient to show the hateful character of the dispositions he indulged?

Let us, however, pass by the positive violations of God's Law, and notice only those which, for distinction sake, I will call negative. Suppose a person to be "blameless" as Paul himself, in relation to outward sin, but only to be lukewarm in relation to the course of life prescribed by the Gospel: suppose him to be observant of all "the forms of godliness, but yet destitute of its power:" will that man be happy? No, in truth: he is wicked in God's estimation: and "there is no peace to the wicked [Isaiah 57:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 57.21)." "Throughout his whole life," he is, and must of necessity be, "in bondage to the fear of death [Hebrews 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 2.15);" and to speak to him of death and judgment, is to rob him of all the false peace that he enjoys.

Then I say, that even in this world "no man can eat the sour grape without having his teeth set on edge;" so indissoluble is the connection between sin and misery; and so irreversible is God's decree, that "it shall be ill with the wicked [Isaiah 3:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 3.11)."

2. In the world to come—

Here there may be mitigations of the pain which sin brings with it: but hereafter the misery of sinners will be unmixed and unabated to all eternity. God cautions us not to deceive ourselves with any false hopes respecting this: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap: he who sows to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he who sows to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting [Galatians 6:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 6.7-8)." It matters not who he be: he may be the first monarch upon earth; yet shall not his earthly dignity protect him: for God has said, that "though hand join in hand, he shall not go unpunished [Proverbs 11:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 11.21)." Whatever be the inequalities of God's dispensations now; some suffering in consequence of the sins of other men, while the perpetrators of those evils escape with impunity; in that world to which we are hastening, "every man shall bear his own burden [Galatians 6:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 6.5)," and shall "receive from God according to his works: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory and honor and immortality, God will give eternal life; but to those who are contentious, and obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that does evil [Romans 2:6-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 2.6-9)."

To all of you then I say—

1. Contemplate, not so much the immediate, as the more remote, consequences of sin—

Sinful indulgences no doubt bring with them a present gratification; but it is the part of wisdom to inquire what the ultimate effects of them will be, A man with a cup of poison in his hand would not consider whether its contents were pleasant to his taste, but whether it would not soon be productive of agonies and death. Now we are told respecting the sinner, that "though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue; though he spare it, and forsake it not, but keep it still within his mouth; yet his meat in his affections is turned; it is the gall of asps within him [Job 20:12-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 20.12-14)." To the truth of this every soul of man must tear witness: and most of all is the truth of it felt in that land from whence no traveler returns. Is it not madness, then, to purchase any momentary gratification at so vast an expense; knowing, as we do, that if we repent of it, our sorrows must be proportionably great; and that, if we repent not of it, they must be infinitely greater to all eternity? I pray you, Brethren, bear in mind the instruction in my text, and calculate well the evils that will ensue, before you venture any more to taste forbidden fruit.

2. Contemplate the provision which God has made for those who repent them of their sins—

You have heard that men may suffer for the sins of others. But know, that they may also be benefitted by the sufferings of another. Yes, my Brethren, if in Adam you died, in Christ you may be made alive; and through the sufferings of your adorable Lord you may be not only delivered from the sufferings which you yourselves have merited, but may be made partakers of a glory and felicity which you could never otherwise have obtained. If, then, you have been ready to apply to yourselves that proverb, "The parents have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge," now apply to yourselves the converse of it, which is contained in the Gospel; where you are told, that Christ died, the just for the unjust 1 Peter 3:18." and that "by his stripes you may be healed [1 Peter 2:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Pet 2.24)." Wonderful, indeed, is this truth, and well calculated to reconcile us to the loss which we sustained by the first Adam. Yes, know that the Son of the living God "has become a curse for us [Galatians 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 3.13);" and that "God has made him, who knew no sin, to become sin for us, that we, who had no righteousness, might be made the righteousness of God in him [2 Corinthians 5:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 5.21)." O, bear in mind this stupendous mystery, which must forever silence every murmur against those dispensations which appear to us so dark, and which have given rise to the proverb before us. Know, of a surety, that "if you die, it is for your own iniquity;" but if ever you be saved, it is for the righteousness of your incarnate God. Rely then on him. Look to him to remedy all that your own iniquities have brought upon you: and thus, where sin has abounded, grace shall much more abound; and as sin has reigned unto death, so shall grace reign, through righteousness, unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord [Romans 5:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 5.20-21).

[Jeremiah 31:31-34](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.31-34)

DISCOURSE 1074

THE NEW COVENANT

[Jeremiah 31:31-34](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.31-34). Behold the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the Home of Israel, and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; (which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, says the Lord:) but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

THOUGH there is among us a general idea that Christianity is founded on the Jewish religion, yet the specific difference between them is very little understood. It would be well for us to have clear views of this subject: for unless we know the comparative excellency of the new covenant above that which it superseded, we can never justly appreciate the great advantages we enjoy. In the passage before us, the Mosaic and Christian covenants are contrasted; and the abolition of the one, and the establishment of the other, are foretold. But before we enter on the comparison between the two, it will be necessary to observe, that there are, properly speaking, only two great covenants; under the one or other of which all the world are living: the one is the Adamic covenant, which was made with Adam in Paradise, and which is entirely a covenant of works; the other is the Christian covenant, which, though made with Christ, and ratified by his blood upon the cross, was more or less clearly revealed from the beginning of the world. It was first announced in that promise, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." It was afterwards more plainly opened to Abraham, and afterwards still more fully to Moses. The Mosaic covenant, properly speaking, was distinct from both of these: it was not altogether a covenant of works, or a covenant of grace; but it partook of the nature of both. As containing the moral law, it was a re-publication of the covenant of works: and as containing the ceremonial law, it was a dark and shadowy representation of the covenant of grace. It was a mixed covenant, designed for one particular nation; and given to them, in order to introduce the covenant under which we live. Of that the prophet says, that it should in due time be superseded by a new and better covenant; and the Apostle, quoting this whole passage, says, that "it had then waxed old, and was vanishing away [Hebrews 8:8-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 8.8-13)."

In order to give a clear view of this subject, we shall state,

I. The blessings of the new covenant—

These being specified by the prophet, and copied exactly by the Apostle, we shall adhere strictly to them, without attempting to reduce them to any other order than that which is here observed. In the new covenant then, God undertakes,

1. To write his law in our hearts—

This is a work which none but God can effect. The kings were commanded to write a copy of their law, each one for himself: but, though they might write it on parchment, they could not inscribe it on their own hearts. This however God engages to do for all who embrace the new covenant. He will make all the laws which he has revealed, agreeable to us: he will discover to us the excellency of them; and "cause us to delight in them after our inward man." He will make us to see, that the moral "law is holy and just and good," even while it condemns us for our disobedience to its commands; and that "the law of faith" also (that is, the Gospel) is a marvelous exhibition of God's mercy and grace, and exactly suited to the necessities of our souls. He will engage our wills to submit to his; and dispose our souls to put forth all their energies in obedience to his commands. This he has repeatedly promised [Ezekiel 36:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 36.26-27);" and this he will fulfill to all who trust in him.

2. To establish a relation between himself and us—

By nature we are enemies to him, and he to us. But on our embracing of this covenant, he will "give himself to us as our God, and take us for his people." In being our God, he will exercise all his perfections for our good; his wisdom to guide us, his power to protect us, his love and mercy to make us happy, his truth and faithfulness to preserve us to the end. In taking us for his people, he will incline us to employ all our faculties in his service. Our time, our wealth, our influence, yes, all the members of our bodies, and all the powers of our souls, will be used as his, for the accomplishment of his will, and the promotion of his glory. We may see this illustrated in the life of the Apostle Paul. God took as much care of him, as if there had been no other creature in the universe; and he devoted himself to God, as much as if his faculties had not been capable of any other use or application. The effects of this relation are not indeed equally visible in all the Lord's people: but the difference is in the degree only, and not in the substance and reality.

3. To give us the knowledge of himself—

There is a knowledge of God which cannot be attained by human teaching; a spiritual experimental knowledge, a knowledge accompanied with suitable dispositions and affections. But this God will give to those who lay hold on his covenant: "He will reveal himself to them, as he does not unto the world." He will "put them into the cleft of the rock, and make all his glory to pass before their eyes;" and proclaim to them his name, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious [Exodus 33:18-23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 33.18-23); [Exodus 34:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 34.5-7), etc. He has promised, that "all his people shall be taught of him [Isaiah 54:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 54.13). [John 6:45](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 6.45)," "the least as well as the greatest," yes, the least often in preference to the greatest [Matthew 11:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 11.25). [1 Corinthians 1:26-29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 1.26-29). And in proof that this promise is really fulfilled to all who receive the Gospel, John declares it to be a known acknowledged fact: "we know that the Son of God is come, and has given us an understanding to know him that is true 1 [John 5:20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 5.20)."

4. To pardon all our iniquities—

Under this new covenant, we have access to "the fountain opened for sin and for impurity;" and by washing in it "we are cleansed from all sin [1 John 1:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 John 1.7)." Whatever transgressions we may have committed in our unregenerate state, they are all put away; "though they may have been as scarlet, they have become white as snow; though they have been red like crimson, they are as wool".

Hitherto we have spoken only in a general way of the blessings of the new covenant: we proceed to notice them more particularly, while we state,

II. The difference between the old and new covenants—

We have already observed, that by "the old covenant" is meant the Mosaic covenant, made with the Jews on Mount Sinai. Between this and the Gospel covenant there is a wide difference. They differ,

1. In the freeness of their grants—

The Mosaic covenant imposed certain conditions to be fulfilled on the part of the Jews; and on their fidelity to their engagements all the blessings of that covenant were suspended [Exodus 24:6-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 24.6-8). But we find no condition specified in the new covenant. Must we attain the knowledge of God, and become his people; and have his law written in our hearts? true: but these are not acts of ours, which God requires in order to the bestowing of other blessings upon us; but blessings which he himself undertakes to give. if any say, that repentance and faith are conditions which we are to perform, we will not dispute about a term; you may call them conditions, if you please; but that which we affirm respecting them is, that they constitute a part of God's free grant in the Gospel covenant; so that they are not conditions, in the same sense that the obedience of the Jews was the condition upon which they held the promised land: they are, as we have just said, blessings freely given us by God; and not acts of ours, whereon to found our claim to other blessings.

It is worthy of observation, that the Apostle, mentioning this grant of the new covenant, particularly specifies, that God, "finding fault with" the Jews for their violations of the old covenant, says, "I will make a new covenant [Hebrews 8:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 8.8)." Had he said, "Commending them for their observation of the inferior covenant, God said, I will give you a better covenant," we might have supposed, that it was given as a reward for services performed: but when it was given in consequence of the hopeless state to which their violations of the former covenant had reduced them, the freeness of this covenant appears in the strongest light.

2. In the extent of their provisions—

We shall again notice the different blessings as they lie in our text. God wrote his law upon tables of stone, and put it into the hands of those with whom his old covenant was made: but, according to his new covenant, he undertakes to put it into our inward parts, and to write it on our hearts. What a glorious difference is this! and how beautifully and exultingly does the Apostle point it out to his Corinthian converts 2 Corinthians 3:3.

God established indeed a relation between himself and his people of old: but this relation, though nominally the same with ours, was by no means realized to the same extent. To true believers among them he was the same that he now is: but what was he to the people at large, with whom the covenant was made? He interposed for them doubtless, on many occasions, in an external way; and they externally acknowledged him: but his Communications to us are internal, and our devotion to him is real and spiritual.

Under the old covenant, God revealed himself to his people in types and shadows; and the ceremonies which he appointed were so dark and various, that they could not be known to the generality, unless the people carefully instructed each other. On this account it was commanded that the children should inquire into the reason of various institutions (as that of the Passover, and the feast of unleavened bread, and the redemption of the first-born); and their parents were to explain them [Exodus 12:26-27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 12.26-27); [Exodus 13:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 13.8); [Exodus 13:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 13.14-15). But with us, there are only two institutions, and those the plainest that can be imagined; and the great truths of our religion are so interwoven with our feelings, that a person whose desires are after God, needs no other teaching than that of God's word and Spirit; and though the instructions of ministers, of masters, and of parents, are still extremely useful, yet may a person obtain the knowledge of God and of salvation without being indebted to any one of them: and it is a fact, that many persons remote from ordinances, and from instruction of every kind, except the blessed book of God, are often so richly taught by the Spirit of God, as to put to shame those who enjoy the greatest external advantages See [1 John 2:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 John 2.27). where the Apostle manifestly refers to the expressions in our text.

The forgiveness of sins which was given under the old covenant, was not such as to bring peace into the conscience of the offender: ("the sacrifices which he offered, could not make him perfect as pertaining to the conscience [Hebrews 9:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 9.9);") nor indeed were any means appointed for the obtaining of pardon for some particular offences: but under the new covenant, "all who believe are justified from all things, from which they could not be justified by the law of Moses [Acts 13:39](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts 13.39)." and, "being justified by faith, they have peace with God [Romans 5:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 5.1)," "a peace that passes understanding," "a joy unspeakable and glorified."

How glorious does the new covenant appear in this contrasted view! and what reason have we to adore our God for the rich provisions contained in it!

3. In the duration of their benefits—

The annual repetition of the same sacrifices under the old covenant was intended to intimate to the people, that their pardon was not final: had their guilt been perfectly removed by them, the Apostle observes very justly, that "they would then have ceased to be offered; because the worshipers would have had no more conscience of sins:" but, inasmuch as the sacrifices were annually renewed, they were, in fact, no more than "a remembrance of sins made every year [Hebrews 10:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 10.1-3)." But under the new covenant God engages to "remember our sins and iniquities no more:" they are not only forgiven by him, but forgotten; not only cancelled, but "blotted out as a morning cloud [Isaiah 44:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 44.22)." not only removed from before his face, but "cast behind his back into the depths of the sea [Micah 7:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Micah 7.19)." His former people he put away, "though he was an husband unto them:" but to us his "gifts and callings are without repentance [Romans 11:29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 11.29)." This is particularly marked by the prophet, in the verses following our text verse 35–37; and by an inspired Apostle, in his comment on the very words we are considering. He is showing the superiority of Christ's priesthood to that appointed under the law: and he confirms his position from this circumstance; that the sacrifices offered by the Levitical priests could never take away sin, and therefore were continually repeated; whereas Christ's sacrifice, once offered, would forever take away sin, and "perfect forever all them that are sanctified." He then adduces the very words of our text; and says, that, in these words, "the Holy Spirit is a witness to us;" for that, in promising first, that "the law should be written in our hearts," and then, that "our sins and iniquities should be remembered no more," he had attested fully the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, and given ample assurance, that those who relied upon it should never have their sins imputed to them [Hebrews 10:11-18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 10.11-18).

It is needless to multiply words any further upon this subject; for the old covenant, with all its benefits, was to continue only for a limited period; whereas the new covenant is to continue to the end of the world; and its benefits to the remotest ages of eternity.

INFERENCES—

1. The folly of making self-righteous covenants of our own—

Why did God give us another covenant, but because the former was inadequate to our necessities? Shall we then be recurring to the old covenant, or forming new ones of our own upon the same principle? Take your own covenants, and examine them, and see what grounds of hope they afford you. We will give you have to dictate your own terms: say, if you please, "You are to repent and amend your lives: and on those conditions God shall give you eternal life:" Can you repent, can you amend your lives, by any power of your own? Have you agreed with God what shall be the precise measure of your repentance and amendment? Have you attained the measure which you yourselves think to be necessary, so that you can say, My conscience witnesses for me, that I am fully prepared to meet my God? If not, see to what a state you reduce yourselves: you need none other to condemn you: for God may say, "Out of your own mouth will I judge you." O be not thus infatuated: cast not away the Lord's covenant for such delusive projects of your own: but, instead of depending on your own weak endeavors, go and lay hold on that better covenant, which provides everything for you, as the free gift of God in Christ Jesus.

2. The blessedness of those who obey the Gospel—

You have "a covenant which is ordered in all things, and sure [2 Samuel 23:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Sam 23.5);" and you have a Mediator, who, having purchased for you all the blessings of this covenant, will infallibly secure them to you by his efficacious grace, and all-prevailing intercession. Place then your confidence in him. Employ him daily (if I may so speak) to maintain your interest in it; and give him the glory of every blessing you receive. Your enjoyment of its benefits must be progressive, as long as you continue in the word: Let your desires after them be more and more enlarged: and in due time you shall enjoy them in all their fullness. It is in Heaven alone that you will fully possess them: but there you shall perfectly comprehend the meaning of that promise, "You shall be my people, and I will be your God [Revelation 21:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev 21.3)."

[Jeremiah 31:35-37](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.35-37)

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THE CHURCH'S SECURITY

[Jeremiah 31:35-37](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.35-37). Thus says the Lord, which gives the sun for a light by day, and the ordinances of the moon and of the stars for a light by night, which derides the sea when the wares thereof roar; The Lord of Hosts is his name: If those ordinances depart from me, says the Lord, then the seed of Israel also; shall cease from being a nation before me forever. Thus says the Lord; If Heaven above can be measured, and the foundations of the earth searched out beneath, I will also east off all the seed of Israel for all that they have done, says the Lord.

THE study of the prophecies is most instructive. We are apt to read them as though they did not concern us: whereas in them we see the purposes of God unfolded to us; and, by a comparison of them with past and passing events, we see God so ordering everything in Heaven and earth, that all should be accomplished in their season. Into futurity, also, we gain an insight. And shall not that, which so interests Jehovah himself, as to be predicted by him in terms the most solemn that can possibly be imagined, interest us? Behold, how the Almighty here describes himself in all his majesty and glory; behold, too, the solemnity of his assertions, equivalent, in fact, to oaths; And to what has all this respect! It has respect to his Church and people, for whom he has the richest mercies in reserve, and to whom he pledges himself that these mercies shall be given in due season. Let us contemplate, then,

I. The promises here made to God's Church and people—

Certainly they refer,

1. To God's ancient people, the Jews—

To them he here promises, that, whatever they may suffer, they shall not be lost, as other nations have been, among their conquerors; but shall be preserved a distinct people, even to the end; and shall, notwithstanding all that they have done to provoke him utterly to cast them off, be restored once more to his favor, as in the days of old.

The manner in which these promises are made deserves particular attention, Who is it that pledges himself for the accomplishment of these things? It is no other than the Creator and Governor of Heaven and earth. And what assurance does he give that they shall be fulfilled? He declares that the heavenly bodies shall sooner be annihilated, than his word be forgotten; and that never, until we had measured the highest heavens, and penetrated to the inmost recesses of the earth, should one jot or tittle of it fail.

And if we look into their history, we find everything fulfilled hitherto. In their captivity in Babylon, their national character was still preserved; and after it, they were restored to their own land. So at this hour, though for above seventeen centuries they have been scattered over the face of the whole earth, they are still a peculiar people as much as ever: and if we knew for certainty where the ten tribes are, I think they also would be found to have retained so much of their original character, as clearly to distinguish them from all the people among whom they sojourn. Nor can we doubt for a moment but that God will again manifest himself to them, as in former days. He has not cast them off forever: "they are still beloved of him for their fathers' sakes:" and "his gifts and calling to them are without repentance [Romans 11:28-29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 11.28-29)." Forsaken as they are at present, it is but for a little moment: for as God, by the rainbow in the heavens, has given a pledge that his oath relative to any future deluge shall be fulfilled; so has he sworn that his kindness shall not ultimately depart from Israel, or his "covenant with them ever be dissolved [Isaiah 54:7-10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 54.7-10)."

2. To the Christian Church—

To apply the passage exclusively to the Church of Christ is shamefully to pervert it. Yet we must not withhold from her, her share of the blessings which God has promised to her. Throughout all the prophecies, the Church of God, previous to the coming of the Messiah, and subsequent to the establishment of his kingdom upon earth, is considered as one; that which first existed being the foundation, and that which was afterwards erected being the superstructure, of the same heavenly temple: and the promises made to it, so far as they respect it in its former state, will have a literal accomplishment; and, so far as they pertain to it in its latter state, a spiritual or mystical accomplishment. In this latter sense we may properly apply to the Christian Church the prophecy before us. For it has enemies, even as Israel of old; yet "shall not the gates of Hell ever prevail against it." Notwithstanding it has often been at a very low ebb in the world, yet is it preserved by the power of God: and though, for its degeneracy, God's wrath might well break forth against it to destroy it, yet is it preserved for good, and shall at a future period be greatly honored of the Lord; being extended far and wide, and being established over the face of the whole earth. For the accomplishment of this, we have the same security as the Jewish Church has for the fulfillment of the promises made to her, namely, the promise and the oath of Almighty God: and we may be as sure that the honor reserved for her shall be accorded to her in due time, as if we saw it imparted before our eyes. As sure as God himself is true, "all the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdom of the Lord and of his Christ;" and "the whole earth, both of Jews and Gentiles, shall be one fold under one Shepherd," "there being only one Lord, and his name One."

But to enter fully into these promises, we should consider also,

II. The use which is to be made of them by individual Believers—

They certainly may be applied by believers to themselves, for the comfort of their own souls. The promise that was made, in the first instance, to Israel, relative to the possession of the promised land [Deuteronomy 31:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 31.6), is represented by Paul as applicable to every believer, throughout all ages: "The Lord has said, I will never leave you, nor forsake you. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me [Hebrews 13:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 13.5-6)." And the confirmation of these promises by an oath See Note b. was intended by God to administer consolation to us, no less than to those to whom they were immediately delivered; as Paul further assures us: "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that, by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us [Hebrews 6:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 6.17-18)." Yet I must confess that they are to be used with caution. We should be careful,

1. As to the persons to whom they belong—

It is the believer alone who is really interested in the promises of God. What part or lot in them has the unbeliever? None at all. It is "in Christ alone that they are made over to us:" and we must be "in Christ," before they can truly belong to us. Before we take hold, then, on any particular promise as belonging to us, we should ask ourselves, whether we have really come to Christ, and are living by faith upon him? There are many who speak with extreme boldness on this subject, as though every promise in the Bible must be fulfilled to them, while yet they have never truly repented of their sins, nor over experienced a thorough change of heart and life. There are in some a surprising hardness, and boldness, and confidence, which, in my estimation, mark them as lying under a very desperate delusion: and the more confident they are, the more I tremble for their state. The promises of God's blessed word are for the humble, the broken, the contrite: they are entitled to take to themselves every promise in the word of God: but, where these dispositions are wanting, faith is a mere phantom, and confidence a delusion. Let this, then, be well and clearly ascertained. "Examine carefully whether you be in the faith." "Prove and try your own selves," and, when that point is satisfactorily determined, then take to yourselves every promise of the Lord: and look upon all that he has promised, as your inalienable, everlasting inheritance.

2. As to the extent to which they are to be applied—

A distinction must be made between that which, in the first instance, was personal or temporal, and that which was intended for the Church at Large. The promises are not to be applied to ourselves, any further than as our circumstances accord with those of the persons to whom they were made: and the accomplishment of them is to be expected chiefly, if not exclusively, in a spiritual view. Take, for instance, the promises made to Moses and to all Israel, under the peculiar difficulties to which they were reduced: it would be perfectly absurd to expect the fulfillment of them to ourselves at this day, any further than a correspondence of circumstances rendered them applicable to our own case, If this rule be not attended to, we shall both raise in ourselves the most unwarrantable expectations, and subject God himself to the imputation of violating his own word.

3. As to the use that is to be made of them when so applied—

Doubtless they are intended to comfort and encourage the Lord's people, under all their trials. But they are not intended to supersede the exertions of any, or to foster in them any undue security. God will not work, but by means: and he expects us to use the means, as if we were laboring to accomplish everything by our own unassisted efforts; while yet we renounce all confidence in ourselves, and rely only upon him. Take, for instance, the promises in our text. Are we to hope that God will keep us as a peculiar people, unless we "come out from the world [2 Corinthians 6:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 6.17)," and endeavor to "keep ourselves unspotted from it [James 1:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James 1.27)." Or are we to assure ourselves that "God will not cast us off for all that we have done," if we never humble ourselves for our past sins, or endeavor to avoid sin in future? The great use of the promises is, to convey to us those blessings which in ourselves we are unable to attain: and, if we improve them not for these ends, we do but deceive ourselves, and betray to ruin our own souls.

Lay down, therefore, for yourselves the following rules:

1. Seek to gain Christ himself, as your portion—

"The promise of life," and of everything pertaining to it, "is in Christ Jesus [2 Timothy 1:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Tim 1.1)." And if we apprehend him, we become possessed of everything that is good, in title at least, if not in actual possession; for "all things are ours, if we are Christ's [1 Corinthians 3:22-23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 3.22-23)." In him all the promises of God are Yes, and in him Amen 2 Corinthians 1:20," sure, irreversible, eternal. Our first object, therefore, must be to obtain an interest in Christ. And I can never too strongly inculcate this: for if, "instead of entering into the fold by the door, you climb up some other way," you will only deceive yourselves to your ruin [John 10:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 10.1), [9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 10.9).

2. Embrace his promises with humility—

By humility, I do not mean a hesitation whether you shall rely upon them, or a doubting whether you are worthy to embrace them. Those are the actings, not of humility, but of pride and unbelief. For who in the whole universe is worthy? Or what humility is there in questioning the truth of God? It is, as unworthy, that you are to lay hold of them, and to plead them before God in faith and prayer: and, provided only you embrace them as unworthy, and regard them as made to you only in Christ, and for Christ's sake, you can never place too strong an affiance in them: "the stronger you are in faith, the more will you give glory to God [Romans 4:20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 4.20)." "But that against which I wish to guard you, is, the hardness of which I before spoke. Truly, there is, among some professors of religion, a mode of speaking about their own interest in the promises which is disgusting in the highest degree, and, I really think, impious. Their want of reverence for God shows, that they are deluded by the devil, who has appeared to them under the semblance of "an angel of light [2 Corinthians 11:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 11.14)." I wish not to rob you of one atom of joy: but I would have you always to "rejoice with trembling [Psalm 2:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 2.11)." and, however strong your faith may be, I would say, "Let him that thinks he stands, take heed lest he fall [1 Corinthians 10:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 10.12);" "Be not high-minded, but fear [Romans 11:20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 11.20)."

3. Improve them all with care—

What will be the effect of the promises on the Jews, in the day that they shall be restored to the Divine favor? "They will come with weeping; and with supplication will God lead them verse 8, 9." Nor shall this frame be incompatible with joy: on the contrary, it. shall be a prelude to joy verse 12, 13," even as the seed-time is to the harvest [Psalm 126:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 126.5-6); and it will be followed with holiness as its never-failing attendant [Ezekiel 36:25-28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 36.25-28). Hear what Peter says: "God has given to us exceeding great and precious promises, that by them we may be partakers of a divine nature, and escape the corruptions that are in the world through lust [2 Peter 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Pet 1.4)." Only improve them to this end, and you can never rely on them too strongly, or plead them too confidently before God. To all of you, then, I would say, having so many and grant promises, Dearly beloved, let us use them to their proper end, even to "cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, and to perfect holiness in the fear of God 2 Corinthians 7:1."

[Jeremiah 32:37-42](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 32.37-42)

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THE FUTURE CONVERSION OF THE JEWS

[Jeremiah 32:37-42](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 32.37-42). Behold, I will gather them out of all countries, where I have driven them in mine anger, and in my fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell in safety: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God: and I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them; and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. Yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them in this land assuredly with my whole heart and with my whole soul. For thus says the Lord; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them There is a Discourse on this text: but this is inserted, in order to illustrate its bearing on the Conversion of the Jews.

AMONG the numberless manifestations of God's mercy in the Scriptures, we cannot but be particularly struck with this, that scarcely ever do we find any awful denunciation of God's wrath against his offending people, but there is some gracious promise annexed to it, as an encouragement to them to repent. In the whole preceding part of the chapter before us, God declared his determination to give up Jerusalem into the hands of the Chaldeans. Yet behold, at that very time does God open to his people the most consolatory prospects of an ultimate restoration to their own land, and of numberless attendant blessings to be poured out upon them.

In considering the passage which we have just read, I shall have occasion to show you,

I. What blessings God has in reserve for his chosen people—

These correspond exactly with the state in which they were at the time when the promise was made. They had grievously departed from God; and, on account of their iniquities, they were doomed to be cast off, and to be sent into captivity in Babylon. But, as God had graciously determined to temper judgment with mercy, he here promises to them,

1. A restoration to their own land—

A restoration from Babylon is doubtless the point here primarily intended: and that was given to them at the expiration of seventy years, according to the predictions of the prophet respecting it. But the terms in which this is declared almost necessarily lead our minds to a restoration yet future; because it was from Babylon alone that the first deliverance was given, whereas the promise relates to a deliverance "out of all countries, where they have been driven:" and it speaks of their being caused to "dwell safely;" whereas they experienced but little of peace and safety after their first restoration: they were grievously harassed, from time to time, by the kings of Syria and Egypt, and their other neighbors, until at last they were subdued, and utterly destroyed, by the Romans: but at their restoration from their present dispersion, they will enjoy a state of peace and prosperity far beyond all that they ever experienced in the most favored periods of their history: Jerusalem, instead of being defended, as formerly, against enemies, by ramparts of man's construction, "will be inhabited as a town without walls; because the Lord will be a wall of fire round about her, and the glory in the midst of her [Zechariah 2:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zech 2.4-5)." This is repeatedly and distinctly promised: "Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: your eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall nut be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken: but there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby [Isaiah 33:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 33.20-21);" that is, she shall be alike inaccessible to enemies of every description, by reason of the effectual protection afforded her by Jehovah. And in this happy state shall they continue, "planting vineyards, and drinking of the wine thereof; and making gardens, and eating of the fruit of them; and being so securely planted in their land, as never again to be pulled up, and rooted out of it [Amos. 9:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Amos. 9.14-15)."

2. A renewed acknowledgment of their relation to him—

During their captivity in Babylon, and still more in their present dispersion, they are like a repudiated wife, whom her husband will no more acknowledge. To apprise them of God's determination to put them away, the Prophet Hosea was instructed to "call his son Lo-ammi;" for, says God, "you are not my people, and I will not be your God [Hosea 1:8-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 1.8-9); [Hosea 2:1-2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 2.1-2)." Their connection with Jehovah being thus dissolved, their enemies have been able to oppress them, and indeed have grievously oppressed them in every nation where they have been scattered. But the time is coming, when God will again show himself in their behalf, and renew to them all the wonderful interpositions which he given to them in former days. At least ten times is this promise in our text repeated to them by the prophets, that "they shall again be God's people, and he their God;" or, as it is very emphatically said, "a God unto them [Hebrews 8:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 8.10)." Nor can any language more fully depict the blessings contained in this promise, than that of the Prophet Isaiah: "Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, so that no man went through you, I will make you an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. You shall also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shall suck the breast of kings: and you shall know that I the Lord am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. The sun shall be no more your light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto you: but the Lord shall be unto you an everlasting light, and your God your glory, Your sun shall no more go down; neither shall your moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended [Isaiah 60:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 60.15-16); [Isaiah 60:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 60.19-20)."

3. A spirit of piety poured out upon them—

"One heart and one way" have distinguished the Lord's people in all ages of the world: nor can either the heart or the way be more justly described, than in those comprehensive words, "The fear of God." This disposition belongs not to us by nature, nor is this conduct found in any natural man: it is the gift of God, who "by his Spirit convinces us of sin," and reveals a Savior to us, and inclines us to devote ourselves unreservedly to his service. There are many points, of subordinate moment, in which the children of God may differ: but in these things they all agree: "as face answers to face in a glass, so in these respects does the heart of man to man." All, without exception, feel themselves to be guilty and undone sinners; all cleave unto the Lord Jesus Christ as their only hope; and all walk before God, in a way of holy, tender, and affectionate obedience. And this marks their character to the latest hour of their lives. They would no more divest themselves of the fear of God, than of love, or joy, or confidence, or any other gracious affection whatever. And this holy state of mind will eminently distinguish the Jews in the latter day. It will be given to them "for their own good, and for the good of their children after them:" for, in truth, this kind of piety; while it invariably exalts the person in whom it is found, will always display itself in a diligent attention to the rising generation. At present, the children of the Jews are neglected in a very extraordinary degree: but it will not be so in that day: for, like Abraham of old, the parents will "command their children, and their households after them, to fear the Lord;" and the whole nation, for many successive generations, will be "a holy people unto the Lord."

Here it will be proper to observe, that this diffusion of piety will not precede, but follow, their restoration to their own land: at least, so, I think, the Prophet Ezekiel has plainly intimated; saying, "When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; then shall they know that I am the Lord: neither will I hide my face any more from them; for I have poured out my Spirit upon the house of Israel, says the Lord God [Ezekiel 39:25-29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 39.25-29)." But in that day, I hesitate not to say, they, even the whole nation, will be eminently holy; since "then God will sprinkle clean water upon them, and they shall be clean: from all their filthiness, and from all their idols, will he cleanse them: a new heart also will he give unto them, and a new spirit will he put within them: he will even put his Holy Spirit within them, and will cause them to walk in his statutes, and to keep his judgments, and do them: and they shall dwell in the land which ho gave to their fathers; and they shall be his people, and he will be their God [Ezekiel 36:24-28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 36.24-28) and [Jeremiah 24:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 24.6-7)."

As we speak with confidence respecting their final possession of these blessings, it will be proper to show,

II. What security they have for the enjoyment of them—

In the behalf of this desolate and outcast people are pledged,

1. The veracity of God—

God will make a covenant with them; not like the covenant which he made with them in former days, wherein the possession of his blessings was suspended upon their fidelity to God, and which, being violated by them, was utterly dissolved; but he will make one, which, in consequence of God's undertaking everything for them, as well as for himself, shall never be broken, but shall endure forever. This may well be called a Covenant of Grace; for in it God gives all, and man receives all: God engages, not only that ho will not depart from his people to do them good, but that he will put his "fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from him." And here I would particularly call your attention to the way in which he undertakes to keep them: it is not through the medium of a bold, presumptuous unhallowed confidence, such as you see in many professors of religion, and such as betrays itself in rash, unscriptural assertions: it is by "putting his fear into their hearts," and causing them to "walk humbly before him," and to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling." I would that this matter were better understood in the Christian world; and that they who profess to believe with Abraham, would, with Abraham, "fall upon their face before God," and walk before him with a perfect heart [Genesis 17:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen 17.1-3).

That such a covenant shall be made with them in that day, is fully declared in the chapter preceding our text: "Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, says the Lord: but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people [Jeremiah 31:31-33](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.31-33) with [Hebrews 8:8-10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 8.8-10)." The interest also which "their children" shall have in this covenant is further declared: "They shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children, forever: and my servant David shall be their prince forever. Moreover, I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them; yes, I will be their God, and they shall be my people: and the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore [Ezekiel 37:25-28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 37.25-28)."

2. The power of God—

At their first espousal to God, "he rejoiced over them to do them good:" and since his rejection of them for their unfaithfulness, "he has rejoiced over them to bring them to nothing [Deuteronomy 28:63](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 28.63)." But at the period we are now speaking of, he will again "rejoice over them to do them good;" as says the Prophet Zephaniah, "The Lord your God in the midst of you is mighty: he will save; he will rejoice over you with joy; he will rest in his love; he will joy over you with singing [Zephaniah 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zeph 3.17)." It appears, at present, as if the obstacles to the accomplishment of all these promises were absolutely insurmountable: but "if God will work, who shall let it?" He says, "I will plant them in this land assuredly, with my whole heart, and with my whole soul." Shall it then fail of its accomplishment in due season? "Is there anything too hard for the Lord?" Has he scattered them according to his word, and preserved them a separate people, notwithstanding their dispersion; and shall he not gather them again, and "bring upon them all the good that he has promised them?" If all the obstacles that men or devils can ever raise against it were united in one common mass, I would say to them, "Who are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain [Zechariah 4:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zech 4.7)."

Learn, then, from hence,

1. What we, if we are the Lord's people, may expect for ourselves—

It is not to the Jews, as Jews, that the spiritual promises are made; but with them as believing in the Messiah, and as submitting to the government of David their prince. If this, then, be our character, they are made to us; and we, substituting the heavenly for the earthly Canaan, may take to ourselves all these great and precious promises, expecting assuredly that God will thus exert himself for us, until he has put us into the full possession of all the blessedness of Heaven. If we have been brought from our wanderings "to Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem [Hebrews 12:22](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 12.22)," then are we interested in this covenant, and God will confer upon us its choicest blessings; regarding us as "his peculiar treasure," and exerting for us his Almighty power, "to keep us from falling, that in due season we may be presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy [1 Peter 1:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Pet 1.5). Jude, verse 24." Learn, my beloved Brethren, to realize these glorious expectations, and to enjoy in your own persons what you anticipate in behalf of your Jewish brethren.

Fix your eyes steadily on that good land in which God has assuredly determined to plant you; and contemplate him as engaging, "with his whole heart, and with his whole soul," to effect his gracious purpose. I say, view this whole work of grace in its commencement, its progress, its consummation; and, if your conscience bears witness that he has "given you a heart and a way to fear him," then rely on him to preserve you from ever departing from him, and to complete for you in Heaven what he has begun on earth: for "faithful is He who has called you, who also will do it 1 Thessalonians. 5:24."

2. What encouragement we have to labor for our Jewish brethren—

The object which we have in view is, not their restoration to their own land (that, I conceive, we may well leave in the hands of Providence, without presuming to interfere with it), but their conversion to Christ, and the everlasting salvation of their souls. Compare their present state of degradation and ruin with those periods of their history when God given to them the manifestations of his love and favor; and say whether we should not wish to restore them to their former happiness and honor? Yet I conceive that the blessedness that awaits them will as far exceed all that their forefathers ever enjoyed, as that of their forefathers surpassed anything that was experienced by the heathens around them. Indeed we are told, that "the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun be sevenfold, as the light of seven days, in the lay that the Lord binds up the breach of his people, and heals the stroke of their wound [Isaiah 30:26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 30.26)." "Come, then, to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against all the enemies of our God" and of his Christ. Had you to attempt the work of their conversion without Divine assistance, I readily grant that you might well be discouraged: but when you see what God has promised them, and to what an extent his veracity and power are pledged to effect it, methinks you should all be animated with a holy ambition to become God's honored instruments for their welfare. The indifference which has been shown in relation to this work for seventeen hundred years may well fill us with astonishment: and even yet the Christian world is not alive to it as they ought to be. A very small measure of zeal in this great cause is regarded as extravagance, But shall Almighty God engage in it "with his whole heart and with his whole soul," and shall we be lukewarm?: Arise, I say, to your duty. Your God is already gone out before you: there is already "a stir among the dry tones;" and the time is fast approaching, when we may hope to see them "arise a great army." Let zeal for God and love for man have their perfect work among you. Be like-minded with God himself, and in every possible way "rejoice over them to do them good": so shall the time be hastened forward, and "the kingdoms of the whole world, both of Jews and Gentiles, become the kingdom of our God and of his Christ."

[Jeremiah 32:39-41](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 32.39-41)

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SALVATION IS OF GOD, FROM FIRST TO LAST

[Jeremiah 32:39-41](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 32.39-41). I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me forever, for the good of them, and of their children after them: and I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me. yes, I will rejoice over them to do them good, and I will plant them, in this land assuredly, with my whole heart, and with my whole soul The preceding Discourse on this text shows its bearing upon the Conversion of the Jews: this its reference to the Christian Church.

THERE is not anything more common than for persons, who treated with contempt God's threatened judgments, to sink under them in the most abject manner, as soon as they begin to feel them. The Jews would not be persuaded for a long season that God would ever deliver them into the hand of the Chaldeans: but when they found that his word was ready to take effect, they were overwhelmed with grief and despondency. To preserve them from running to this extreme, and to show them that the Divine judgments would be tempered with mercy, the prophet was inspired to foretell their future restoration to that very land from whence they were about to be carried captive. But it is evident that this prophecy has respect to a far greater deliverance, even to the redemption of the world from sin and Satan, and the restoration of sinners to their forfeited inheritance. A near prospect of the punishment which their sins have merited, often brings them, with a very quick transition, from presumption to despair: but, for their encouragement, God teaches them to look to him as an all-sufficient helper, and to rely on him for the carrying on of the good work wherever he has begun it. In this view of the passage we may notice,

I. The means of our conversion—

In our natural state we are afar off from God, going astray like sheep that are lost. In order to recover us,

God puts his fear into our hearts—

While unconverted, we "have no fear of God before our eyes:" we all walk after the imagination of our own hearts, seeking happiness in various ways, according as we are led by our different inclinations or situations in life. But in conversion, God "gives us one heart and one way." By these words we do not so much understand, an unity of affection and pursuit, in opposition to the multiplicity of desires with which every carnal mind is distracted (though doubtless that idea is included in them) as, that oneness of sentiment and action that pervades all who are the subjects of divine grace. As on the day of Pentecost, so, in every age and place, Christians, as far as they are taught of God, are of one heart and mind. The prejudices of education do indeed make a difference between them with respect to some matters of less importance; and an undue stress laid upon these things too often prevents that close union and communion that should exist between all the members of Christ's mystical body: but, with respect to the grand point of fearing God, there is no difference among them: all, without exception, have "one heart and one way," in that they desire above all things, and earnestly endeavor, to walk in the fear of God all the day long.

This is to the unspeakable benefit of ourselves, and of all connected with us—

Too often are men dissuaded from entertaining this fear, lest it should prove injurious to them; but none ever received it into their hearts without looking back upon all their former life with shame and sorrow: yes, they have ever considered the season of their first submission to it as the most blessed era of their lives; and, instead of regretting that they ever yielded to its influence, they invariably wish to have their whole souls subjected to its dominion. And as they find it thus for their own good, inasmuch as it enlivens their hopes, and purifies their hearts, so is it for the good of their children, yes, and of all connected with them. It makes them better in every station and relation of life, whether as parents or children, masters or servants, rulers or subjects: it leads them to fill up their various duties to the honor of God; and to communicate, to the utmost of their power, the same blessed disposition to all around them.

The same divine agency, that first converted us, proves afterwards,

II. The source of our perseverance—

"It is not in man to direct his own steps:" our progress in the way of duty depends on,

1. The engagements of God's covenant—

God has entered into covenant with his Church and people, and undertaken to preserve them from apostasy. Nor is this covenant liable to be broken, like that which he made with the Israelites in the wilderness [Jeremiah 31:31-32](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.31-32); it is and will be "everlasting," because God himself engages to do all which is requisite for our support. "He will not depart from us to do us good;" he may, like a wise parent, sometimes frown, and sometimes chastise; but, while he acts in this manner, he does it for our good, no less than when ho lifts up the light of his countenance upon us. He has said that, "if we break his statutes, and keep not his commandments, he will visit our transgression with the rod, and our iniquity with stripes; nevertheless his loving-kindness will he not utterly take from us, nor suffer his faithfulness to fail; his covenant will he not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of his lips [Psalm 89:31-34](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 89.31-34)." "He engages further that we shall not depart from him." Here, doubtless, is the greater danger, seeing we have a heart "bent to backslide from him;" and, if left by him for one moment, we should relapse into all our former sins. But he knows how to establish the wavering, or restore the fallen; and thus to "perfect his own strength in our weakness." He may leave us for a season, as he did Hezekiah, that we may know what is in our hearts: but he assures us, that our "steps shall be ordered by him," and that our "light shall shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day:" he will so "draw us, that we shall run after him;" and so "keep us from falling, that an entrance may be ministered unto us abundantly into the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

2. The exertions of his power—

God speaks of himself in language accommodated to our low apprehensions of his nature, and declares that he will exert all his power, and find all his delight, in doing us good. His people, after their dismissal from Babylon, labored under many difficulties in rebuilding their city and temple; yet, through the good providence of God, they surmounted all. Thus shall we meet with many obstructions before we arrive at the Paradise above: but God will regard us as trees of righteousness, and "will plant us in that land assuredly with his whole heart and with his whole soul." Who then shall defeat his efforts, or disappoint his aim? "If God be for us, who can be against us?" In vain shall earth and Hell be confederate against us; for "has he said, and will he not do it? has he spoken, and will he not make it good?" He will never cease to work, until he has fulfilled in us all his good pleasure, and "perfected that which concerns us:" "he will keep us by his own power through faith unto salvation."

We may observe from hence,

1. How suitable is the way of salvation!

Foolish and ignorant men would be better pleased with a gospel that left them to earn, either wholly or in part, their own salvation. But, alas! how ill adapted would such a Gospel be to us, who are "insufficient of ourselves even to think a good thought!" How much more suitable is the promise in the text, wherein God undertakes to do everything in us, and for us! Let us then receive thankfully what God offers freely. Let us embrace "a covenant that is ordered in all things and sure;" and rejoice in serving God, who so rejoices in saving us.

2. What effectual care is taken that we should not turn the grace of God into licentiousness!

There are, it must be acknowledged, some who abuse this doctrine, (for what is there, however excellent, which men will not abuse?) and take occasion from it to rest in n state of worldliness and sloth. But the very promise gives us a sufficient antidote against the poison it is supposed to convey: it tells us indeed, that God will keep us from departing from him; but it tells us also, that he will do this by "putting his fear into our hearts." This destroys at once all delusive hopes; inasmuch as it shows us, that, if we be not living habitually in the fear of God, we are actually departed from him, and consequently can have no ground whatever to expect salvation at his hands. Let the carnal and slothful professor of religion well consider this. His abuse of this promise cannot invalidate its truth; but it may deceive his soul to his eternal ruin. Be it ever remembered, that the very same fear which God puts into our hearts in our first conversion, must continue to operate, and that too with increasing activity, to the end of our lives and, that we have no longer any reason to think our past experience to be scriptural, than while we cultivate that fear, and endeavor to "walk in it all the day long." We do not mean that every occasional backsliding should subvert our hopes; but, if ever the fear of God cease to be the leading principle in our hearts, or to stimulate us to further attainments in holiness, we may be sure that we have deceived our own souls, and that our religion is vain. May God keep us all from such a fatal delusion for his mercy's sake!

[Jeremiah 33:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 33.3)

DISCOURSE 1078

THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

[Jeremiah 33:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 33.3). Call unto me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you know not.

IT is curious to observe in what different estimation the same persons are held by their fellow-creatures and by God. We may certainly be allowed to say, that there was not, at the time referred to in our text, a more holy person upon earth than Jeremiah; yet by his countrymen was he held in such abhorrence, as to be deemed worthy only of imprisonment and death. God, on the contrary, honored him with the highest tokens of his regard. As a friend (so to speak), he repeatedly visited him in prison; he encouraged him to inquire into his most secret counsels, and confided to him the most stupendous mysteries both of his providence and grace.

We need not however confine our attention to Jeremiah: for the words, though primarily addressed to him, may well be applied to all who suffer for righteousness' sake, and to all who are truly devoted to their God. In this view, they accord with many other passages of Scripture; and contain a most important truth, namely, that prayer is the necessary and effectual moans of obtaining divine knowledge.

I. It is necessary—

God is always represented as the fountain of light and truth—

He is "the Father of lights:" and whatever light there is in the whole creation, it is all derived from him. There are indeed among us stars of greater and smaller magnitude; but all in themselves are opaque, and destitute of any native luster: they shine only by a borrowed light, and are glorious only in proportion as they reflect a greater or less portion of Jehovah's beams. Even whore their knowledge is only in arts and sciences, it must be traced to God as its author; much more must it be so, when it pertains to things which the natural man is not able to receive. "In the hearts of all that are wise-hearted, I have put wisdom [Exodus 31:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 31.3); [Exodus 31:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 31.6)."

Those who would obtain knowledge from him must seek it by prayer—

This is God's command. He needs not indeed to be prevailed upon by our solicitations, as though he were of himself averse to grant us his blessings; but still it is our duty to pray unto him; and he teaches us to expect his blessings only in the discharge of this duty: "Ask, and you shall have; seek, and you shall find:" "If any man luck wisdom, let him ask of God; and it shall be given him." We are far from saying that prayer is the only mean of obtaining knowledge; for we must read, and meditate, and search after truth, as much as if all depended on our own unaided exertions: but we say, that our exertions without prayer will be of no avail: we must "search for knowledge, as for hid treasures;" but we must also "cry after it, and lift up our voice for understanding:" when we combine the two, "then shall we find the knowledge of God: for the Lord gives wisdom; out of his mouth comes knowledge and understanding [Proverbs 2:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 2.1-6)."

Nor is this an arbitrary, but a wise and gracious appointment—

By this means our hearts are prepared for the reception of divine knowledge. If we could obtain it purely by our own study, we should pride ourselves in it, as having made ourselves to differ from those around us: but when we have been made sensible that it is God alone who "opens the eyes of the understanding," we learn to acknowledge him in our gifts, and to humble ourselves in proportion to the benefits we have received at his hands. We are stirred up also to improve our knowledge as a talent committed to us, and to diffuse, for the benefit of others, the light with which God has irradiated us.

As all are invited to ask, so every prayer shall be heard and answered.

II. It shall be effectual—

The things which God showed to Jeremiah, related, not merely to the return of the Jews from Babylon, but to Christ and his spiritual kingdom verse 14–16; and, respecting Christ, "he will show great and mighty things unto all that ask him."

1. To the ignorant—

Little do the world imagine what great and glorious things are known to those whom they despise; things "which prophets and kings in vain desired to see" and "which angles themselves desire to look into." It is possible enough that the truths themselves, as a system, may be known to the ungodly: but, in their use, their excellence, their importance, they are known to those only who are taught of God. To these God has revealed the source and depth of their own depravity; the suitableness and sufficiency of Christ's atonement; the fullness of grace that is treasured up in him; and the blessedness of all those who experience his salvation. These things, "great and mighty" as they are, are brought to their minds "with power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance:" and, by the revelation of them to their souls, they are "made wise unto salvation."

2. To the enlightened—

It is not at first only that "God brings us into marvelous light:" there is, in the spiritual, as well as the natural world, a progress from the glimmering of the early dawn to the splendor of the noon-day sun. Job had known much of God by the hearing of the ear; but far more when he could say, "Now my eye sees you." And Moses had bright discoveries of Jehovah on various occasions; but brighter far, when God was pleased to "proclaim to him his name," and "make all his glory pass before his eyes." Thus, however advanced the believer may be in knowledge and in grace, there are in God, and in the wonders of his redeeming love, heights and depths and lengths and breadths, of which he has yet no adequate conception. Not that any fresh truths shall be revealed to him, much less any which are not contained in the Holy Scriptures: but the same truths shall be applied to his soul with a clearness and energy vastly surpassing anything he has before experienced, provided he give himself unto prayer, and wait upon God for the teachings of his Spirit: "The light of the moon shall be to him as the light of the sun; and the light of the sun seven-fold, as the light of seven days [Isaiah 30:26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 30.26)."

We shall conclude this subject with a word,

1. Of reproof—

Scarcely any subject is so reprobated by ungodly men, as this. They consider the influences of the Holy Spirit as chimerical; and all expectation of answers to prayer, as enthusiastic and absurd. They have never experienced these things themselves; and therefore they suppose that no one else can. But they have never used the means; how then should they attain the end? Suppose a person to affirm, that, with the help of glasses, he could see things invisible to the naked eye: would not any one, refusing to make the experiment, be justly deemed unreasonable, if he denied the possibility of such a thing, and imputed the affirmations of the other to vanity and folly? Every one knows, that objects dimly seen, may be made clearly visible by the use of glasses: and why may not the acquisition of a humble contrite frame be equally useful to the eye of our minds? There is not any one so ignorant, as not to know, how passion and interest distort the objects that are seen through them; and that they who are under their influence, view things very differently from what they appear to an impartial judge. Thus then it is in spiritual things: "while the eye is evil, the whole mind is dark; but when it is single, the whole is full of light:" and when God, by removing our earthly and carnal dispositions, presents heavenly objects to the soul in their true character, they shine with a luster inconceivable to the blind ungodly world. Would any then ascertain whether God will teach his people? let him pray: but let him pray with sincerity, with fervor, and with faith I these are the requisites of effectual prayer See [Psalm 145:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 145.18-19). [Jeremiah 29:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 29.12). [James 1:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/James 1.5-7); and prayer thus offered, shall never go forth in vain.

2. Of encouragement—

Many are discouraged because they have not those manifestations of God to their souls, which they have heard, and read of, in the experience of others. But have they mortified their in-dwelling lusts as much as others; and been as constant and importunate in prayer? But be it so: "God gives to every one severally as he will:" yet none shall ever say, that they have sought his face in vain. Our talent may be small; our capacity narrow and contracted: yet have we no cause to despond: for God has said, that "he will reveal to babes and sucklings the things which he has hid from the wise and prudent: and if only we were more conscientious in looking to God for his blessing on the ordinances; if, before we come to them, while we are under them, and after we have returned from them, we were earnest in prayer for the influences of his Spirit; we should not so often return from them empty and unedified. God would hear us, and "would answer us, and would show us great and mighty things, which we know not." Our private meditations also on his blessed word would be attended with "an unction which should teach us all things [1 John 2:20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 John 2.20); [1 John 2:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 John 2.27)." He would "open our understandings to understand the Scriptures." "At the very beginning of our supplication" would he send his Holy Spirit to instruct us [Daniel 9:20-23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan 9.20-23); yes, "before we called, God would answer: and while we were yet speaking, he would, hear [Isaiah 65:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 65.24)."

[Jeremiah 33:6-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 33.6-9)

DISCOURSE 1079

CONVERSION OF THE JEWS—A MATTER OF IMPORTANCE TO GOD AND MAN

[Jeremiah 33:6-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 33.6-9). Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth. And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me. And it shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them: and they shall fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that I procure unto it.

THE more fully the subject of the restoration and conversion of the Jews is considered, the more important it will appear. The prophetic writings are full of it; and the obscurity of those writings arises in a great measure from the gross perversion of them, of which even pious ministers have been guilty, through a long succession of ages. Those whose office has been to interpret them, have almost universally applied them spiritually to the Gentiles; overlooking the plain literal meaning of them, as addressed to the Jewish people: and by this means, not only has the attention of the Christian world been drawn from the Jews, but it has been drawn also even from the prophecies themselves, because of the impenetrable veil that has been cast over them.

That the passage before us relates to that subject, no one can entertain a doubt. And that it has never yet been fulfilled, is equally clear; not only because the ten tribes of Israel are combined with Judah, but because the effects which are here announced as to be produced by the event, were never, in any degree, produced by the return of the Jews to Babylon. The different nations of the earth were never led to fear and tremble by reason of the goodness and prosperity which were then procured unto the Jewish nation. We must therefore, of necessity, look forward to a future period for the full accomplishment of this prophecy.

In discoursing on this prophecy, I shall consider,

I. The event predicted—

Respecting the restoration of the Jews to their own land, I say little; because, though it seems as clearly revealed as any event in all the book of God, there are some who doubt whether the prophecies relating to it are to be understood literally; and because, in laboring for the welfare of that people, we have no respect whatever to anything but the conversion of their souls to God.

In the passage before us God promises to them,

1. A discovery of his will—

In the whole of their civil and ecclesiastical polity, they are in the state described by the Prophet Isaiah; "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint: from the sole of the foot even to the head there is so soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores [Isaiah 1:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 1.5-6)." But God promises here, that he will "restore health unto them, and cure them, by revealing unto them the abundance of peace and truth."

To enter fully into the meaning of these words, we must bear in mind, that, in the writings of Moses, the way of salvation is revealed only under types and shadows; and that, even by the strictest observance of them, "the Jews could not be made perfect as pertaining to the conscience [Hebrews 9:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 9.9);" consequently, under existing circumstances, when they are precluded from a possibility of observing the law, they cannot by any means obtain rest unto their souls. They cannot by repentance; because rivers of tears could never wash away one sin. They cannot by good works; for their best works are imperfect, and can never atone for sin, and purchase an eternity of bliss. And, as for any rites prescribed by their Rabbis, in addition to the Mosaic Ritual, they are held, as the superstitious ordinances of the Pharisees were, in utter abhorrence by Almighty God. All the Rabbis in the universe, therefore, cannot tell an afflicted and tempest-tossed Jew how he may obtain peace with God and in his own conscience. But when God shall take away the veil that is on the hearts of that people, "he will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth." He will show them, that every shadow in their law is derived from Christ, who is the substance. Had they a temple, an altar, a high-priest, a sacrifice, a sanctuary? These are all contained in Christ, who is the one great sacrifice for sin, the priest that offers it, the altar on which it is presented, the sanctuary "in which dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," and in which it comes up with acceptance before God. There is not any single ordinance, or even a vessel in the sanctuary, which was not intended to shadow him forth, and with which he does not, in some respect or other, correspond: so perfectly did Moses execute the divine command, "in making everything according to the pattern shown to him in the mount." This being discovered to the Jews by the clear light of the Gospel, they will see "an abundance of truth;" such as we, who are little conversant with the law, have scarcely any conception of. And from the fullness of Christ, so richly displayed before them, they will have "a peace which passes all understanding," yes, such "an abundance of peace," that it will "flow down like a river." All that can disturb their minds shall be put far from them by the discovery of Christ. Are they oppressed with guilt, and apprehensive of punishment? They shall see that he has by the one offering of himself upon the cross, made a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice for sin, and completely reconciled them to their offended God. Do they feel their need, of a perfect righteousness wherein to stand before God? They shall see that he has wrought out a righteousness for them by his own obedience unto death; and that "that righteousness shall be unto all, and upon all, who believe in him." In a word, they shall see in him an accomplishment of what the prophet Daniel has foretold:"He shall finish transgression, and make an end of sin, and make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in for his believing people everlasting righteousness [Daniel 9:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Dan 9.24)." And, in the view of these things, they shall "rejoice in him with joy unspeakable, and full of glory."

2. A manifestation of his favor—

God promises in my text, and again in verse 11, "to build them as at the first." This necessarily carries us back to the time when he redeemed them out of Egypt, and "brought them forth with a mighty hand and a stretched-out arm." Let us call to mind all the wonders that were then wrought in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the Wilderness; let us remember how God went before them in the pillar and the cloud; how ho fed them with manna from Heaven, and with water from the flinty rock; how he appeared to them on Mount Sinai, and gave to them his law; how he protected them from every enemy, and brought them in safety to the promised land; how he subdued before them seven nations, greater and mightier than they; and, above all, how he dwelt in his sanctuary, and manifested to them his favor, so as he never had done to any people upon earth: let us call all this to mind, and then we snail have some faint conception of the blessings which he has in reserve for his outcast people. I doubt not, but that, in a temporal view, as far as similar interpositions shall be found necessary for them, they shall experience them at the hands of God [Isaiah 11:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 11.16); but in a spiritual view, I am perfectly sure that none of these things shall be wanting unto them: they shall be delivered from their spiritual bondage; they shall "eat of Christ, who is the spiritual meat, and drink of that spiritual drink, even of that rock which will follow them, which is Christ Jesus 1 Corinthians 10:3-4;" and at last have an abundant entrance ministered unto them into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ 2 Peter 1:11." We may stretch out our imaginations to the uttermost, and grasp all that was ever done for that people in the days of old; and we may be sure that it shall all be renewed to them in the latter clay with ten-fold advantage [Jeremiah 30:18-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 30.18-20); "that nation shall then sing as in the days of her youth, when she came up out of the land of Egypt [Hosea 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 2.15)."

3. A communication of his grace—

What is there that any sinner in the universe can need? That shall, in the richest abundance, be imparted unto them. Do they need "the pardon of their iniquities?" So fully shall it be given, that "all their sins shall be cast into the depths of the sea;" not into the shallows, from whence they might be brought again; but into the depths, where they shall never again be found Compare [Micah 7:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Micah 7.19) with [Jeremiah 50:20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 50.20). Do they need the renovation of their natures after the Divine image? This also shall be given unto them; for, not in my text only, but in numberless passages of the prophetic writings, does God promise to them tins inestimable blessing [Jeremiah 32:36-42](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 32.36-42). Thus fully to this purpose speaks the Prophet Ezekiel: "I will take you from among the Heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then (N. B. then) will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh; and I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes; and you shall keep my judgments, and do them [Ezekiel 36:24-27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 36.24-27). In a word, nothing shall be wanting to the completion of their happiness; "their cup shall be full, and overflow" with joy.

From the event itself, let us proceed to consider,

II. The vast importance of It—

If we were to contemplate only the happiness of that people, the temporal, spiritual, eternal happiness of millions living, and of millions arising in every successive age, methinks we should need no more to mark the importance of the event that is here predicted. But we are content to wave the contemplation of this part of our subject altogether, and to limit our views to the points more especially referred to in our text. Mark,

1. The interest which God himself has in it—

God says of it, "It shall be to me a name of joy, a praise, and an honor before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear all the good that I do unto them." Of course, when we speak of God rejoicing in it, we merely accommodate ourselves to the language of Scripture, in which God condescends to speak after the manner of men; in order that by conveying to our minds such ideas as we are able to comprehend, he may produce on us such impressions as the subject calls for. Behold, then, to God it will be a source of joy; and in him will be realized the description of the Father in the Parable, receiving, and rejoicing over, his repentant son. Hear how the prophet represents this matter: "Be you glad, and rejoice forever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy, And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in my people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying [Isaiah 65:18-19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 65.18-19). See also [Zephaniah 3:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zeph 3.17). So also, in another place, in yet stronger terms: "You shall no more be termed Forsaken; neither shall your land any more be termed Desolate: but you shall be called Hephzi-bah, and your land Beulah: for the Lord delights in you, and your land shall be married. For, as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons (your restorers) marry you: and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you [Isaiah 62:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 62.4-5)." Moreover, this event will greatly tend to the honor of God. His power and goodness are seen by all people, in the works of creation: but in the restoration of his outcast people, his glory will shine forth as in its meridian splendor, before all the nations of the earth. It will be seen of all; because, the Jews being dispersed over all the world, and the motion among them being simultaneous throughout the earth, the attention of all will be fixed upon them, and the glory of God appear upon them. In that event shall all his perfections shine forth; and especially his mercy and love, his truth and faithfulness. Greatly as he was magnified in their deliverance from Egypt, he will be far more exalted in that day; because the work will be infinitely more extensive, and the effects produced upon them be incomparably more glorious. For in that day, "the people shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land forever; the branch of his planting, the work of his hands, that he may be glorified [Isaiah 60:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 60.20-21); [Isaiah 61:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 61.1-3)." In a fore-cited chapter, this is very strongly and beautifully marked. Of all that a king possesses, there is nothing so dear to him, nothing with which his honor is so intimately connected, as his crown; yet such shall the Jewish people be, in the estimation of their God: "You shall be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God [Isaiah 62:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 62.3)." Yes, he will hold them forth before the whole world, as the dearest objects of his love, and the brightest monuments of his glory.

2. The interest of the whole world involved in it—

At this wonderful sight will all the nations of the earth "fear and tremble." At their coming out of Egypt, was somewhat of this effect produced on the surrounding nations [Exodus 15:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod 15.15-16); and among those who shall desire to retain them in bondage, will the same terror prevail, at the period that we are now contemplating. "According to the clays of your coming out of the land of Egypt," says God, "will I show unto him marvelous things. The nations shall see, and be confounded at all their might: they shall lay their hand upon their mouth; their ears shall be deaf: they shall lick the dust like a serpent, they shall move out of their holes like worms of the earth: they shall be afraid of the Lord our God, and shall fear because of you [Micah 7:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Micah 7.15-17)." But on immense multitudes will a far different effect be produced: they, indeed, shall "fear and tremble for all the goodness and for all the prosperity that God has procured unto his people;" but it will be with a holy, reverential fear, such as that which is invariably signified by those words in the epistles of the New Testament, even such as is imported in that injunction, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Yes, in every place will this effect be produced. It will not merely attract the attention of the whole world, but will create within them a desire to know and serve that God who has done such things for them. In every place will the beholders be filled with wonder; and with the deepest conviction will cry out, as the worshipers of Baal did before them, "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God!" Then will be fulfilled what the Prophet Zechariah has spoken: "Ten men shall take hold, out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you; for we have heard that God is with you [Zechariah 8:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zech 8.23)." To this event Paul evidently refers, when he says, "If the fall of the Jews be the riches of the world, and the diminishing of them the riches of the Gentiles, how much more their fullness? If the casting away of them be the reconciling of the world, what shall the receiving of them be, but life from the dead [Romans 11:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 11.12); [Romans 11:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 11.15)."

Now, let the restoration of the Jews be considered in this light; and what shall we think of it, or what terms shall we ever find whereby to express its inconceivable importance? Surely we are highly culpable in this matter, we do not study the Holy Scriptures in reference to this event; and, when we meet with it, we pass it over without any serious reflection, or accommodate it to ourselves as the only persons interested in it. But is this right? Should we be so indifferent to the welfare of God's ancient people? or, if we account that of so little consequence, should we be regardless of the honor, and, if I may so express myself, the very happiness of God? And should the conversion and salvation of the whole world be of so little value in our eyes? I call you, Brethren, to blush and be confounded, because of your past insensibility; and now to rise, as fellow-workers with God, to the performance of your duty,

But, that I may improve the subject for the good of all, I would entreat you to take occasion from it to consider—

1. What blessings you yourselves enjoy—

It is said, "The Law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ [John 1:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 1.17)." Hence it appears, that if you are believers in Christ, these blessings are already yours: you are "brought near to God," having been rescued from the sorest bondage: and through a discovery of Christ, as revealed in the Gospel, you enjoy in your souls "an abundance of peace," and joy, and holiness, and, by anticipation at least, of glory also. You are shining as lights in a dark world; and are a source both of joy and honor to your God, and of conviction and consolation to those around you. In you, the millennial period is, as it were, begun. O, rejoice you, and shout for joy; and endeavor, in every possible way, to glorify the God of your salvation.

2. What reason you have to seek the welfare of your Jewish brethren—

Behold with what glorious consequences it will be followed! Though, for argument sake, I have waved all consideration of the Jews themselves, methinks you will not agree to dismiss them from your minds. The recollection of what their ancestors, and the Lord Jesus Christ himself, have done for you, will never suffer you to be indifferent about the salvation of their souls. But, if we could suppose such a malignant disposition in you towards that unhappy people, shall the glory of God and the salvation of the whole world have no effect upon you? I call you then, every one of you, to exert yourselves, in whatever way the Lord may enable you, for the restoration of his outcast people. Make known to them the Gospel, whereby all other blessings shall How down into their souls; and, as they are the appointed reapers of the Gentile world, go forth to hire them for the work; that, as their ancestors reaped the first-fruits, these may be the happy means of gathering in the whole harvest.

[Jeremiah 35:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 35.13-14)

DISCOURSE 1080

DISOBEDIENCE TO GOD CONDEMNED

[Jeremiah 35:13-14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 35.13-14). Thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the Inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will you not receive instruction to hearken to my words? says the Lord. The word of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment; notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but you hearkened not unto me.

THE service of God is called, by Paul, "a reasonable service:" and that it is most reasonable, appears, as from numberless other arguments, so especially from this, that we ourselves exact of our fellow-creatures that very kind of service which God requires from us. A father expects to be honored by his children; and a master to be feared and obeyed by his servants: and God, acknowledging the equity of those expectations, says, "A son honors his father, and a servant his master: if I then be a father, where is my honor? and if I be a master, where is my fear [Malachi 1:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mal 1.6)." It is true, that, in respect of the degree in which these dispositions are required, there must be an infinite distance between what is due to God and to man: but if the smallest measure is due to man, much more is the greatest measure due to God: and if we are to obey man in anything, much more ought we to obey God in everything.

This is put in a very striking point of view in the chapter before us, where God brings forth the Rechabites, and their obedience to the commands of Jonadab their progenitor, to shame the Jews who were disobedient to his commands.

The Rechabites were originally Kenites, descended from Hobab the father-in-law of Moses [1 Chronicles 2:55](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Chron 2.55); and, because they had no inheritance in Israel, it is generally thought that they still continued aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. But we apprehend, that, at some period subsequent to the division of Canaan, they had embraced the Jewish faith; because Jehonadab, the very person spoken of in our text, was the person whom Jehu took up into his carriage, saying, "Come, see my zeal for the Lord:" and, had he not been reckoned among the true Israelites at that time, we conceive that Jehu, at the very moment that he was usurping the throne of Israel, would not have courted so publicly his alliance and support [2 Kings 10:15-16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Kings 10.15-16); nor do we think that Jeremiah would have taken the Rechabites "into the house of the Lord," and "into the chamber of a man of God," if they had not been possessed of the full privileges of Israelites. The circumstance of their having no inheritance in Israel will sufficiently account for their being called "strangers" there, and for their wishing to avoid the jealousies and contentions which the acquisition of wealth might occasion. But however this might be, the complaint which was founded on their obedience, is the same, and is deserving of very peculiar attention.

Let us consider this complaint,

I. Simply—

Jonadab had enjoined on his posterity not to build, or plant, or sow, or even to possess houses or vineyards; but to dwell in tents, and to drink no wine: and they had been observant of his injunctions now for the space of three hundred years. But on occasion of the Chaldean invasion, they had fled to Jerusalem for safety verse 6–11; and the Prophet Jeremiah set wine before them, and invited them to refresh themselves with it. This was done by God's command, not with a view to tempt and ensnare them, but for the purpose of displaying their adherence to the commands of their father, and of putting to shame the whole Jewish nation for their disobedience to the commands of God. At first sight, this appears to be an insulated fact, in which we have little concern; but there is in reality, at this day,

1. The same regard for the commands of men—

It should seem as if a reverence for tradition were inherent, as it were, in our very nature; since we find it equally prevailing in every quarter of the world.

It is universally found in relation to civil and political institutions. However different the forms of government may be which obtain among the various nations of the world, there exists among the natives a partiality in favor of it, insomuch that they are ready to fight, and even to die, in its defense. Republics, and monarchies, whether limited or absolute, are on a par in this respect: whichever has been established, has on that account a great pre-eminence in the estimation of the people.

This zeal for what has been handed down from our forefathers obtains, if possible, yet more strongly in reference to religious ordinances. There are many of the same traditions, and the same fixed adherence to them too, among the different religious orders of the Papists at this day, as obtained formerly among the Rechabites. Rites, which God never enjoined, are venerated even beyond the plainest commandments of our God. In like manner, among us Protestants, every sect has its peculiar dogmas, which are adhered to from generation to generation, with a scrupulous and superstitious exactness. Notwithstanding it is manifest that there are pious men of every denomination, and that God may be served and honored by one as well as by another, yet all are disposed to look with pity or contempt on each other, and to claim to themselves an exclusive conformity to the Divine will. Some, even in their dress and in their language, affect a singularity which they transmit to succeeding generations, and impose as distinctive badges of their community. And all these points of difference form, in the minds of each community, as great a barrier between them and others, as the self-denying habits of the Rechabites did between them and the house of Israel.

2. The same disregard for the commands of God—

To all of every denomination God says, as to his people of old, "Return you now every man from his evil way." But who regards him? Do drunkards, whoremongers, adulterers, and profane swearers, attend to his voice, or set themselves in earnest to amend their ways? Do the votaries of pleasure, or the people who are absorbed in the cares of this world, relax their pursuit of earthly things, and begin to set their affections on things above? Do those who rest in a mere formal round of duties without feeling any of the power of godliness, renounce their proud self-righteous conceits, and humble themselves before God as guilty and undone sinners? Do they receive with gratitude the glad tidings of salvation, and flee with becoming earnestness to the Lord Jesus Christ as their only hope? Do not sinners of every class retain their habits as much as if they had never been called upon to renounce them? We ask of every individual, Have you turned from that particular way, in which, from inclination or habit, you have formerly been led; and have you truly, and penitently, and unreservedly, given up yourselves to God? We put this question to the decent and the moral, as well as to those who have given a freer scope to their corrupt appetites; 'Have the commands of God had any considerable influence on your minds?' 'Have you truly studied them, with a view to find out your departures from them, and with a determination of mind to conform yourselves to them to the very utmost of your power?' As for any partial change adopted with a view to advance your character or interest in the world, we inquire not about it: your change must be founded on the authority of God, and be commensurate with his commands, or it is of no value in his sight: the conversion must be from sin to holiness, from the world to God: nothing less than that is required by God: and in this view of our duty, we ask again, 'Has not God the same ground of complaint against us, as he had against his people of old, that however observant we may have been of the commands of men, we have not hearkened unto him?'

But let us consider the complaint more minutely,

II. With its attendant aggravations—

In our text, there is an evident contrast formed between the obedience of the Rechabites and the disobedience of the Jews. We notice more particularly,

1. The authority from which the different commands proceeded—

That which the Rechabites obeyed was human; that which the Jews disobeyed was divine. Yes: it is the God of Heaven and earth, whom we also have set at nothing. He created us for himself; yet have we considered ourselves as independent of him. He has preserved us every moment, yet have we lived in continued rebellion against him. He has redeemed us with the blood of his only dear Son; yet have we poured contempt on all the wonders of his love, as well as on the terrors of his offended Majesty. Let us only reflect on what we must all have observed, times without number: We tell a person, that such or such a line of conduct is contrary to God's revealed will; and we produce little, if any effect upon him: but if we tell him that such a conduct will destroy his prospects in the world, or expose him to shame and contempt among his fellow-creatures, we at least excite very strong emotions in his mind, even if we do not prevail to change his deportment. The truth is, we are all very sensibly alive to the displeasure of men, but lamentably indifferent to the displeasure of God; and man's authority weighs abundantly more with us than the authority of the Most High.

2. The commands themselves—

Whatever propriety there might be in the commands of Jonadab, they were certainly not necessary for the salvation of his descendants. But the commands of God are absolutely necessary, both to our present and eternal welfare. Which of them is there that can be dispensed with? Which of them is there that can be lowered or relaxed, without dishonor to God, and injury to man? Consider more particularly the commands relating to the Gospel: they are like commands to the blind, to see; to the deaf, to hear; to the lame, to walk; to the leprous, to be clean; to the dead, to arise and live forever. Which of these commands would the person afflicted desire to dispense with? O! the horrible ingratitude of despising the Gospel of Christ! See, Brethren, what sad reason there is for God's complaint against us!

3. The manner in which they were enforced—

The one injunction of Jonadab, that had been given three hundred years before, was all that had operated on the minds of his descendants; even though it had been merely suggested as a matter of expediency, without being enforced by any sanctions whatever. But God's commands nave been, and still are, renewed from day to day, by ambassadors sent for that express purpose, and authorized to assure us, that eternal happiness and eternal misery depend on the regard which we pay to them. What an amazing aggravation of our guilt is this! Truly, whatever excuses we may make for our conduct now, our mouths will be shut in the day of judgments yes, and the whole house of the Rechabites will rise up in judgment against us and condemn us.

ADDRESS—

1. To those who regard man, and not God—

God himself rewarded the Rechabites for their adherence to the customs of their forefathers; and thereby expressed his approbation of an attention to rules, which have been derived from authority, and established by time. Whether the rules pertain to civil or religious duties, provided they do not militate against the law of God, or prove burdensome to the conscience, we conceive it is right to conform to them. But no punctuality in the observance of them can stand in the place of obedience to God. We may be zealous patriots, active partisans, strict religionists, and yet never render unto God any spiritual service, or take one step in our way to Heaven. God must have the heart; Christ must be the one ground of our hope and confidence; the Holy Spirit must guide and sanctify our souls; or else we shall remain in the gall of bitterness, and in the bonds of iniquity. Let those, then, who are disposed to value themselves on their regularity and zeal in the observance of human ordinances, remember, that they are building on a foundation of sand; and that they only build upon a rock, who hear and do the commandments of their God [Matthew 7:24-27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 7.24-27).

2. To those who regard God, and not man—

Though none would go so far as to say that religion supersedes all human obligations, and justifies a contempt of all established usages, there are many who act as if this were the real sentiment of their hearts. At the commencement of the French Revolution, this observation was verified to no small extent in our own land: many who should have been "the quiet in the land" were as eager as any to subvert that constitution, which has since approved itself the admiration and envy of the world. And it is still too often found, that persons professing a love for religion, neglect the duties of their place and station, and violate the most established usages of the society to which they belong. But such persons little think what spirit they are of, or what injury they do to the souls of men. The people who know not God will of course lay the greatest stress upon the observance of their own peculiar laws and maxims; and will blame, not the conduct only that violates them, but religion itself, as countenancing that conduct. On this account, Paid was careful to "give no offence in anything." He consulted the prejudices of men, and conformed to their views and habits as far as he conscientiously could, "becoming all things to all men, that he might by all means save some." This is the conduct which we all should imitate; this is the life by which we should adorn our holy profession: this is the way to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and to "win by our conversation" those who would never have been won by the written or preached word. Let the Apostle's exhortation then be the rule of our conduct; "Whatever things are honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things."

3. To those who feel an united regard for both—

It is well indeed if you have learned to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the things that are God's." And we would wish every religious person to attain such a measure of consistency, as to be able to say both to the godly and ungodly, What have you, which I have not? and, What do you, which I do not? "Are you Hebrews? so am I: are you Israelites? so am I." This kind of consistency will in due time create an influence over the minds of many; and may recommend religion to generations yet unborn. We would not indeed wish any one to be burdening himself or others with superstitious observances: but to adopt the spirit of Jonadab's injunctions will be of incalculable advantage to us all. Self-denial and deadness to the world are among the most important duties of Christianity; and to live in the habitual exercise of these will be an effectual preservative from temptation. That we shall be tempted to violate our principles and our engagements, must be expected: both the world and the flesh will, as it were, "set pots of wine before us, and say, Drink you wine." But, if we have learned to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts, we shall have our answer ready at hand, 'My Father, and my God, has forbidden it: and I will do only the things that please him.' Thus bear in mind your vows and obligations to your God, and you shall "never be led away by the error of the wicked, nor full from your own steadfastness."

[Jeremiah 36:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 36.27-28)

DISCOURSE 1081

JEHOIAKIM BURNS THE SACKED ROLL

[Jeremiah 36:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 36.27-28). Then the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, (after that the king had burned the roll, and the words which Baruch wrote at the mouth of Jeremiah,) saying, Take you again another roll, and write in it all the former words that were in the first roll, which Jehoiakim the king of Judah has burned.

TRUTH has peculiar force, when it is embodied, and exhibited in action. A speculative view of it may perhaps be derived as well from abstract statements; but its practical efficacy is exceedingly enhanced by a sight of it in actual operation. For instance: the enmity of the carnal mind against God is acknowledged by us in general terms; but we are more forcibly impressed with a conviction of it, when we behold such a display of it as is contained in the chapter before us. We should scarcely conceive that any man could deliberately commit such flagrant impiety, as that of which king Jehoiakim was guilty, in destroying those prophecies which he believed to have proceeded from Almighty God. It does not appear that Jehoiakim doubted of the inspiration of Jeremiah: yet, because he did not like the subject of his prophecies, he cut them in pieces, and burned them in the fire. His folly in this act was as great as his impiety: and we shall find it by no means an uninstructive event, while we take occasion from it to notice,

I. The enmity of man's heart against the word of God—

It is not the act which we propose to dwell upon, but the disposition: the act was insulated, and peculiar to this wicked king; but the disposition is common to all mankind. The very same disposition may be, and frequently is, evinced in a variety of ways:

1. By denying the Divine authority of the Scriptures—

Infidels pretend a want of evidence, as the ground of their rejecting the Holy Scriptures: but they wish the Scriptures not to be true, because they wish to hold fast those opinions and practices which the Scriptures condemn. Their own pride and conceit are gratified in finding objections to the Divine authority of the Bible: and they require such demonstrations of it as the subject itself does not admit of. They lay a very undue stress upon some difficulties which they cannot explain; and reject evidences, which would satisfy them on every other subject under Heaven. The true ground therefore of their unbelief is, not that there is not evidence enough to satisfy a candid inquirer, but that "they love darkness rather than light; yes, they hate the light, and will not come to the light, lest their deeds should be reproved [John 3:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 3.19-21)."

2. By explaining away all its fundamental truths—

To reject the Bible altogether would, in the eyes of some, be a shocking impiety; but they will without hesitation discard every mystery contained in it. The doctrine of original sin, and of the total corruption of human nature, they will not admit; but will assert, that man is neither so depraved nor so weak as the Scripture represents him. They are equally adverse to the doctrine of salvation by grace through faith: they will have it, that, in bestowing salvation, God has respect to some goodness, either seen or foreseen, in the children of men; and that, in some degree at least, our good works must form the meritorious ground of our salvation. The influences of the Holy Spirit also are derided by them, as visionary and enthusiastic; and instead of looking to the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth, and to sanctify them throughout, they persist in placing some confidence in their own wisdom and their own strength to accomplish the good work in their souls. And their whole study of the Holy Scriptures is directed to this end, to explain away what God has asserted, and to maintain their own errors in opposition to him. But in all this, there is the same disposition exercised as in the avowed infidel: and he must be ignorant indeed, who does not know, that in these pretended believers of the Scriptures there is generally found the most acrimonious hostility against the truth itself, and against all who maintain it.

3. By entertaining doubts of its utility to the poor—

Would to God that Papists alone had broached this impious sentiment! But, alas! it is found among Protestants also: nor are there wanting those who have given it as their decided opinion, that it would have been better for the world if Paul had never written one of his Epistles. To put the Scriptures into the hands of the poor, they think highly inexpedient; because they apprehend that the poor are more likely to be led into error by them, than into truth. But what a reflection is this upon God himself, who gave them by inspiration, and declared them to be "profitable for men's instruction in righteousness [2 Timothy 3:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Tim 3.16-17)." and commanded every man to "search" them, in order to the finding of eternal life [John 5:39](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 5.39). To soften down this impious notion, some would select a few parts to circulate among the poor, and would keep back the rest: in other words, they would do exactly what Jehoiakim did; they would cut out page after page, and suffer none to be read which was distasteful to their minds. Jehoiakim was afraid that his people would make a bud use of Jeremiah's roll, and therefore he burned it: and these have the same fears about the greater part of the sacred volume; and therefore they would keep it out of the hands of the poor. The acts of the two are different; but their dispositions are the same.

4. By setting its precepts at defiance—

Strange as it may appear, there are many, who, while they believe the Scriptures to be from God, and assent to the doctrines contained in them, are yet determined to go on in sin: they know they are wrong, and perhaps intend at some future period to amend their doings; but proceed they will in their own ways, whatever may be the consequence. The world, the flesh, and the devil have such a hold upon them, that nothing can prevail upon them to seek after God. They despise alike the mercies and the judgments of their God; and say in their hearts, "As for the word that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we will not regard it." In short, they live in the very spirit of Jehoiakim; believing the word to be inspired, and yet "casting it behind them," with a determination to fulfill their own desires in opposition to it.

5. By reviling and persecuting those who embrace it—

There is nothing that shows a more rooted aversion to the word of God than this. The next step to the destroying of Jeremiah's roll was, to send for Jeremiah who dictated, and Baruch who wrote it, to destroy them also: for we cannot doubt but that if the Lord had not hidden thorn, the enraged monarch would have put them to death. And are not multitudes at this clay of the very same spirit? Are there not many who hate the faithful ministers of God's word, and account them "the troublers of Israel," and the greatest pests of society? Yes; at this day, as much as in the apostolic age, would Paul and his colleagues be regarded as "the filth of the world, and the offscouring of all things [1 Corinthians 4:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 4.13)."

Nor are ministers alone thus treated: the same hatred extends to all who embrace the Gospel in sincerity, and walk according to its holy precepts: they, no less than their teachers, are called by all manner of opprobrious names, and that too solely on account of their fidelity to Christ. Precisely as Abel was hated by Cain for his piety, and Isaac was derided by Ishmael for his faith in God, "so now all who are born after the Spirit are persecuted by those who are born after the flesh [Galatians 4:29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 4.29)." And what does this prove, but that faith itself, and piety too, yes and God himself also, are objects of hatred to the ungodly world; and that the language of their hearts is, "Prophesy not unto us right things; prophesy unto us smooth things; prophesy deceits: and make the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us [Isaiah 30:9-11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 30.9-11)."

That the same enmity which raged in the king of Judah against the word of God, exists in us, appears most clearly m the foregoing particulars. We now proceed to point out,

II. The folly of indulging it—

Justly is the indulgence of this spirit compared to the setting of thorns and briers in battle array against the devouring element of fire [Isaiah 27:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 27.4). For,

1. We cannot change one declaration in all the Scriptures—

We may dispute against every truth in the Bible; but we cannot alter one. We may deny all the scriptural representations of our guilt and helplessness, and of the necessity of being washed in the Redeemer's blood, and renewed by his Spirit; and we may designate them by what terms we will; but they will still continue true: our sophistry may deceive both ourselves and others; but it cannot invalidate the truth of God, or induce him to deviate from one word that he has spoken. He will say to us, "What I have written, I have written;" and "sooner shall Heaven and earth pass away, than one jot or tittle of my word shall fail." If by disputing against the word of God, or even by casting it into the fire, we could put ourselves into a better situation with respect to it, there would be some excuse for us: but we may as well immure ourselves in a dungeon, and deny the existence of the sun: the sun would still shine, though we should not choose to see it; and would still cheer the hearts of those who felt its refreshing beams, though we excluded ourselves from any participation of its genial influence. So will all the great doctrines of the Gospel continue, though we should shut our eyes against them: "the Scripture cannot be broken;" nor "can our unbelief make the faith of God of no effect [Romans 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 3.3)." Everything else is "as grass, which withers and falls away; but the word of the Lord endures forever: and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you [1 Peter 1:24-25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Pet 1.24-25)."

2. We cannot prevent the execution of one threatening—

We are very apt to deceive ourselves in relation to this; and to think, that our unbelief will be an excuse for our disobedience. But error is not innocent, especially when it is willful: much less can it induce God to reverse all the judgments which he has denounced against sin and sinners. Let us look to fact. The antediluvians scoffed at Noah, and at all his warnings respecting the approaching deluge: but did the deluge not come? or did they escape when the time for executing the threatened judgment was arrived? "Ahab hated and imprisoned Micaiah for not speaking good concerning him, but evil;" and ordered him to be fed "with the bread of affliction and the water of affliction, until he should return from the war in peace." But did he return in peace? Did he survive the battle, in which Micaiah had told him he should die? Did his determined opposition to the word of God screen him from the predicted vengeance? Thus will it be with all who disbelieve the sacred records; they will learn too late by their own experience, what they would not believe upon the testimony of God: dying in unregeneracy and unbelief, they will be excluded from the kingdom of Heaven, and "the wrath of God will abide upon them [John 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 3.3); [John 3:36](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 3.36)." O the folly and madness of plunging ourselves into everlasting misery, when, if we would but turn unto the Lord, we might secure the everlasting enjoyment of his kingdom and glory!

3. We accumulate on our own heads the judgments which we despise—

The contempt with which men treat the word of God is itself a great and grievous sin, and adds exceedingly to that load of guilt which we have contracted by all our other offences. How indignant was God with Saul on this account! "Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, the Lord has rejected you from being king [1 Samuel 15:23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Sam 15.23)." In like manner, it was no slight expression of his displeasure which he used towards those who, in opposition to his commands, went down into Egypt; "They shall know," says he, "whose word shall stand, mine or theirs [Jeremiah 44:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 44.28)." But more particularly mark God's message to king Jehoiakim: to what an ignominious death he was doomed for his impiety; besides that, on the contents of this roll being again written, "there were added unto them many like words." Let it be considered, that, while we are setting at nothing the word of God, we are not only insuring, but increasing those very "judgments which we puff at," and actually "treasure up wrath against the day of wrath." Well does God say of all such persons, "Lo, they have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them [Jeremiah 8:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 8.9)." Let these words then sink down into the ears of all that hear them: if you persist in saying, "I shall have peace, though I walk after the imagination of my heart; the Lord's anger will smoke against you, and he will blot out your name from under Heaven [Deuteronomy 29:19-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 29.19-20)."

If now we would know how to conduct ourselves in reference to the word of God, let us learn,

1. To tremble at the word ourselves—

This is the disposition which God approves. He approved of it in king Josiah, under circumstances similar to those m the history before us [2 Kings 22:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Kings 22.8); [2 Kings 22:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Kings 22.10-11); [2 Kings 22:18-20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Kings 22.18-20); and he will look with delight and delight on all who manifest it in their conduct [Isaiah 66:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 66.2). O that there might be in all of us such a heart! for if we "receive the word with meekness, we shall find it able and effectual to save our souls,"

2. To use all diligence in making it known to others—

When Baruch had written the words from Jeremiah's mouth, he went and read them in the ears of all the people. Then he read them also in the presence of the princes: and the princes went and read them to the king. All this was right: and we should do well to imitate this conduct. To those who possess not the word of God, we should carry it: and as now there are plans for diffusing that word throughout all the world, we should labor, each according to his ability, to advance that blessed work. Moreover we should read it to those who are not able to read; or, at least, should procure them instruction, that they may rend it for themselves. Nor should we be afraid to show our veneration for it in the presence of kings and princes, or to suggest to them the necessity of attending to it themselves.

3. To deal faithfully with those who pour contempt upon it—

It is spoken to the reproach of these princes, that though they made intercession to the king not to burn the roll, they did not rend their clothes, either through a fear of God's judgments, or through an abhorrence of his impiety. And truly, when we can see the contempt with which the Holy Scriptures are treated by all around us, and not weep for the dishonor done to God, or for the injury which men do to their own souls, we show that we ourselves are far from valuing the Scriptures as we ought. "Rivers of tears ran down David's cheeks," when he observed how men transgressed the laws of God: and is there not the same occasion for us to weep? Do we believe indeed that every word of God is true, and feel no pity for those who are exposed to all the curses that are contained therein? O seek a compassionate regard for man, and a holy zeal for God! and let none ever be ashamed to attest this truth, that "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, is understanding [Job 28:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 28.28)."

[Jeremiah 42:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 42.20-21)

DISCOURSE 1082

DISSIMULATION REPROVED

[Jeremiah 42:20-21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 42.20-21). You dissembled in your hearts, when you sent me unto the Lord your God, saying, Pray for us unto the Lord our God; and according unto all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and we will do it. And now I have this day declared it to you; but you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God, nor anything for the which he has sent me unto you.

THE office of a minister, if it abound with consolations, abounds with trials and afflictions also. When he is instrumental to the turning of men to righteousness, and "sees his children walk in truth, he has the sublimest joy" of which, in his present state of existence, he is capable: but to find that he only "labors in vain," and to behold those of whom he had begun to entertain some pleasing hopes, making shipwreck of their faith and of a good conscience, is inexpressibly painful: such scenes as these renewed, as it were, in the Apostle's mind, all the pangs of childbirth, so that "he travailed in birth again with his converts, until Christ should be completely formed in them." The Prophet Jeremiah was very unfortunate in this respect: he had at all times to deal with an untoward people; and actually experienced more kindness from the enemies of his nation, than he did from the people unto whom he ministered.

The particular circumstances under which he was at the time referred to in our text, deserve to be considered. Johanan and the captains of the Jewish forces having rescued their countrymen from Ishmael, who was carrying them captive into the land of the Ammonites, were doubting whether to continue in Canaan, where they feared the vengeance of the Chaldeans, or to go into the land of Egypt, where they hoped to find both safety and abundance. In this strait they applied for instruction to Jeremiah, with apparent sincerity, but (as our text informs us, and the event proved,) with real dissimulation. We propose to consider their conduct,

I. As exemplified in them—

Their dissimulation was indeed most vile and flagrant—

In their application to the prophet, there was the greatest expression of piety: they entreated his prayers to God for them, and promised to follow implicitly whatever direction he should give them from the Lord. They declared most solemnly, that no consideration of ease or interest should induce them to deviate from his injunctions; and they even called God himself to be a witness between the prophet and them, and to visit upon them their iniquity, if they should neglect to perform their promise Read verse 1–6.

By the prophet, God returned to them a most gracious answer. He directed them what to do; and encouraged them by the strongest assurances of his own protection; promising to return in mercy to them himself, as well as to dispose the heart of the king of Babylon to show mercy to them: at the same time he warned them plainly, that if they would follow their own ways in opposition to his counsel, he would bring upon them all the calamities which they were so anxious to escape Read verse 7–19.

They however, by their determined rejection of God's counsel, betrayed in the most open manner their own hypocrisy. Instead of hearkening to God's voice, they, "the proud among them" especially, denied that the message which was delivered to them proceeded from God: they imputed it to the ill-will of Baruch towards them [Jeremiah 43:1-3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 43.1-3); and told the prophet plainly, that they would not follow his injunctions [Jeremiah 44:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 44.16). Accordingly they, in express violation of their own engagements, went down into Egypt, and there found, as God had declared unto them, "whose word should stand, his or theirs [Jeremiah 44:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 44.28)."

From this view of the history, we are led to make the following remarks:

First, How little do men know of their own hearts!

In all the professions which they made of their readiness and determination to obey their God, they thought themselves sincere; and doubtless would have been exceedingly indignant, if the prophet had in the first instance charged them with hypocrisy. Thus Peter, when he so vehemently declared, that, though all others should forsake their Lord, he never would, conceived that nothing could ever induce him to recede from his purpose: and thus we also persuade ourselves that we shall prove superior to all temptations, until the time of trial comes, and we show by our unfaithfulness, how little we knew of our own hearts.

Next, What an enemy to man's happiness is pride!

It was "the proud men" in particular who denied the inspiration of the prophet, and who ascribed his message to a conspiracy which ho and Baruch had entered into to deceive them. To the same malignant principle of pride does the holy Psalmist ascribe the contempt with which ungodly men treat everything that relates to God: "The wicked through the pride of his countenance! will not seek after God [Psalm 10:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 10.4)." Yes, this is at the root of infidelity: men pretend that there is a want of evidence of the Divine authority of the Scriptures, and exclaim against the Gospel as the invention of priestcraft or enthusiasm: but the truth is, they are too proud to submit to the yoke of Christ, and to receive salvation as the unmerited gift of God.

Once more; How awful is the issue of unbelief!

Plain were the warnings which they received; and bitter was the experience which the unbelieving Jews had of God's fidelity to his threatenings. Thus also it was with the Jews who came out of Egypt, all of whom perished in the wilderness, with the exception of two only. And thus it shall be with unbelievers, whoever they may be: they shall find to their cost, "whose word shall stand, whether God's or theirs." "Their unbelief shall never make the word of God of none effect:" of his word, not one jot or tittle shall ever fall to the ground.

From this general view of their conduct, let us turn to the consideration of it,

II. As imitated by us—

It may properly be said of all who attend upon the preaching of the Gospel, that they virtually acknowledge the relation that exists between them and their minister: they look to him as God's ambassador, to declare to them the Divine will respecting them; and they profess their readiness to obey the Divine mandates, whatever they may be; and in every instance wherein they are willfully disobedient, they are, in truth, like the Jews in our text, dissemblers with God. But there are some particular occasions on which our hearers place themselves precisely, as it were, in the same situation with them whose conduct we are considering:

1. Under conviction of sin—

Those who hear the Gospel faithfully administered, rarely escape without having the word at one time or other brought home to their conscience, and being constrained to make some resolutions of amendment. When such emotions are excited, the heart, which was before stout, is softened; and the ear, which was deaf to all the precepts of the Gospel, becomes opened to receive instruction. On such occasions men will even condescend to request a remembrance in the prayers of their ministers, and to desire instruction relative to the commands of God. Like those on the day of Pentecost, they will cry, "Sir, what must I do to be saved?"

For persons in such a state the faithful minister feels deeply interested: and, while he implores the blessing of God upon them, he points out to them the only way of life and salvation. He shows them, that, "if they will be Christ's disciples, they must deny themselves" in reference to all their former lusts and evil habits; that they must "take up their cross daily," and not only bear with patience the contempt and hatred of an ungodly world, but rejoice that they are counted worthy to suffer for their Redeemer's sake; and that they must "follow Christ" in the whole of his spirit and conduct, "walking in all things as he walked."

But this, to the generality, appears too strait a path: they reply, as our Savior's hearers did, "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" and like them also, "they go back, and walk no more with us:" thus proving, by their inconstancy, that all their former professions were no better than dissimulation before God. O let those who have "tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," examine their own hearts, and see in what light they are viewed by God, if they have not followed up their convictions, and devoted themselves truly to their Lord and Savior!

2. Under some heavy trial or affliction—

Affliction has a tendency to plough up, as it were, the fallow-ground of man's heart, and to prepare it for the reception of the good seed. The loss of a wife, or husband, or child, or of some friend that was as one's own soul, is often the means of embittering to us all that this world can afford, and of directing our attention to a better world, where alone true happiness can be found. A succession of any other painful events will also produce a similar effect.

Religious company and conversation will, under such circumstances, be not only tolerated, but often desired and delighted in; and the most hopeful appearances of sound conversion will ensue. "They will pour out a prayer, when God's chastening is upon them;" yes, says God, "in their affliction they will seek me early."

But in most cases the impression is but of short duration; and the vows which they made in trouble are soon forgotten. They are like metal taken out of the furnace, which soon returns to its former hardness. Thus it was with the Jews: "When God slew them, then they sought him, and returned and inquired early after God, etc; nevertheless they did but flatter him with their mouth, etc; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant [Psalm 78:34-37](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 78.34-37)." And thus it is with too many also among ourselves; "their goodness is only as the morning dew, and as the early cloud that passes away."

3. At the approach of death—

The most hardened of men are, for the most part, softened at the prospect of death; so that even the most abandoned criminals, under a sentence of condemnation, are thankful for the services of a pious minister, listening eagerly to his instructions, and uniting fervently with him in his prayers. Indeed the common practice of mankind has sanctioned the idea of sending for a minister, to counsel and to pray for the sick and dying.

On those occasions we hear much regret expressed by the generality, on account of the sad neglect of which they have been guilty; and many purposes formed of turning unto the Lord, in case their lives should be prolonged.

But, when such persons are unexpectedly restored to health, how rarely do we find that they fulfill their promises, and devote themselves to God according to their vows! Truly, we need not look to the Jews for examples of dissimulation; for there is not a family, or scarcely an individual, that does not furnish an instance of it among ourselves. Human nature is the same in all ages: and wherever pride and unbelief reign, there will be disobedience, obduracy, and ruin.

Let me now address,

1. The disobedient among you—

Consider the relation that exists between us, As your minister, it is my duty to pray for you, and to declare to you with fidelity the whole counsel of God. Suffer me to ask, how you have improved the opportunities you have enjoyed? If some few have answered the gracious designs of God respecting them, have not the great mass continued in their sinful habits even to this hour, instead of turning truly and unreservedly to the Lord their God? What then have their whole lives been, but one continued course of dissimulation with God? And what must the issue be of such conduct? O, before it is too late, remember how often you have been admonished "not to lean to your own understandings," nor to "trust in an arm of flesh;" but to obey implicitly God's revealed will, and to cleave unto the Savior with full purpose of heart! The Lord grant that now at last you may become obedient to the faith; and that, instead of being a swift witness against you, I may have you as my joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of judgment!

2. Those who are hesitating what course to pursue—

Do not "consult with flesh and blood," but go to the Lord your God, who, if you are upright in your requests, will surely make known his will unto you. The counsel of God's ministers may indeed be asked; but they must no further be followed than they speak agreeably to the written word. That word you are to consult, every one of you for himself; and, if you pray unto God for his Spirit, "he will guide you into all truth." But beware of dissimulation: beware also of delay. Defer not unto the morrow what God requires to be done today: but "today, while it is called today, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness." If you listen to pride and unbelief, you see in the history before us, where they will lead you. The ungodly world may promise you safety in following their ways; but safety is to be found only in an unreserved obedience to the commands of God, and especially that command of living by faith in his dear Son, and devoting yourselves to him as his redeemed people. "Believe then in the Lord, so shall you prosper; believe his prophets, so shall you be established."

[Jeremiah 44:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 44.16-17)

DISCOURSE 1083

THE IMPIETY OF UNGODLY MEN

[Jeremiah 44:16-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 44.16-17). As for the word that you have spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto you: but we will certainly do whatever thing goes forth out of our own mouth.

ONE would scarcely conceive it possible that human beings should be so depraved as to utter the words which we have just read. Yet, if this be not the language of men's lips at this day, it is, to a very great extent, the language both of their hearts and lives: and one advantage which we derive from the history before us is, that, while we see how far the impiety of men will carry them, we learn to form a correct estimate of their conduct. Perhaps in the whole world we should not find one who would justify them; though thousands will justify themselves in following their example. Permit me, then, to hold up this picture before your eyes, in hopes that, as in a glass you may recognize your own countenances, and fall under the conviction which your judgment calls for at the hands of others. With this view, I will endeavor to set before you,

I. The impiety of that people—

To behold this in its just light, we must look back to the preceding chapters, and mark distinctly,

1. Their voluntary engagements—

After the King of Babylon had carried the Jews into captivity, he permitted a small remnant to return; and placed over them a governor of their own nation, Gedaliah by name; and to him flocked a considerable number, who had fled to Moab, and Ammon, and Edam, for refuge from the Chaldeans, that they might once more enjoy peace in their own land, under his protection [Jeremiah 40:7-12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 40.7-12). But Ishmael, who was of the seed royal, envying Gedaliah this honor, conspired against him, and slew him; and then forced the people to follow him, with an intention to deliver them into the hands of the Ammonites [Jeremiah 41:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 41.2); [Jeremiah 41:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 41.10). Johanan, a friend of Gedaliah, had suspected Ishmael's intentions; and had offered to defeat them, by secret assassination. And as soon as Ishmael had accomplished his murderous designs, Johanan followed him, and prevailed on the people to return with him. But when he had brought them back as far as Bethlehem, he was afraid of settling there, lest the Babylonish monarch, whose viceroy had been destroyed, should come and wreak his vengeance on him and the people, who had been altogether innocent in the matter: he contemplated, therefore, the seeking a refuge in Egypt, where he thought ho should be altogether out of the reach of the King of Babylon [Jeremiah 41:17-18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 41.17-18). But, being doubtful what the Lord's will respecting it might be (for God had forbidden them ever to return to Egypt [Deuteronomy 17:16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Deut 17.16).), he, at the head of all the people, from the least to the greatest, came to Jeremiah, and entreated him to seek direction from the Lord; and pledged themselves, in the most solemn manner, to obey his voice, whatever it might be, or whatever might be its aspect on their present comfort [Jeremiah 42:1-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 42.1-6).

Now, in all this, especially I mean in referring the matter to God, Johanan acted in a manner that was truly becoming; for his fears were certainly well grounded; and, in a matter of such difficulty, it became him to request the intercession of God's highly-favored servant, the Prophet Jeremiah, and to seek, by all possible means, direction from God. But, behold, what a sudden change took place in all the people! Instead of fulfilling their engagements, they manifested,

2. Their deliberate violation of them—

After ten days, God was pleased to declare, by the prophet, that Johanan and the people must remain in their own land: at the same time assuring them, that he would overrule the heart of the king of Babylon to favor them [Jeremiah 42:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 42.12). but that, if they would go into Egypt, the very evils which they apprehended, should follow them thither, to their utter destructions [Jeremiah 42:13-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 42.13-17).

Now, viewing their previous and solemn engagements, one would naturally suppose that they would instantly comply with the direction given them. But, instead of that, they deny that God had given any such direction to Jeremiah; and assert, that Baruch had stirred him up to feign this message from the Lord, on purpose to deliver him and all the people into the hands of the Chaldeans [Jeremiah 43:1-4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 43.1-4); and therefore they would proceed to Egypt, at all events, This purpose they immediately carried into execution; and not only took all the people with them, but forced Jeremiah also, and Baruch, to accompany them thither [Jeremiah 43:5-7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 43.5-7).

A more flagrant act of rebellion than this can scarcely be conceived. Yet behold,

3. Their self-vindicating effrontery—

The people, both men and women, but the women more especially, betook themselves to idolatry, and offered incense to the Queen of Heaven. Being reproved for this by the prophet, they boldly asserted, that the service of Jehovah had been altogether unprofitable to them; that their former prosperity had arisen from their worship of the Queen of Heaven; and their later adversity had resulted from their neglect of her. The truth was, as the prophet told them, the very reverse of this: while they had served the Lord, he had prospered them; but when they departed from him to their idols, they had constrained him to follow them with his judgments, even to that very hour. But they were bent upon vindicating themselves and their own ways; and plainly declared to the prophet, that "as for the word which he had spoken to them in the name of the Lord, they would not do it; but would certainly do whatever they themselves chose," however offensive it might be to God, or however injurious to their own interests. They had engaged to worship the Queen of Heaven; and her they would worship, whatever God or his prophet might say in opposition to it: for they had found it their interest to serve her; and serve her they would verse 17–19.

Not doubting what your judgment must be respecting them, I now proceed to point out,

II. The resemblance that exists between them and us—

Is it asked, Where shall we find any among us like them? I answer, Look at,

1. The profane sinner—

See his engagements at the baptismal font: see them voluntarily renewed at the time of his confirmation: all here is well: and if these engagements are adhered to, all will be well, both in time and eternity. But behold, when we call upon them to fulfill their duties, our word, though spoken in the name of the Most High God, has no effect: the generality, if they listen to it for a moment, "take no earnest heed to it:" they hear it "as the word of man only, and not as the word of God," Some will speak out plainly in the very language of our text: and though all arrive not at such a height of impiety as to utter this with their lips, millions all around us declare it by their lives. We call upon them to "renounce the world, the flesh, and the devil;" to "believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith;" and to "keep God's holy will and commandments, and to walk in the same all the days of their life." But who will regard us? Who will carry into effect any one of their own promises? Who, when called upon to act up to his engagements, does not deny that God has required it at his hands? And who does not even vindicate his own ways, us necessary to his welfare in the world, and as alone conducive to his present happiness? Truly, we may behold in the Jews a just picture of the Christian world; professing all that is good, and determinately following their own evil ways.

2. The self-righteous formalist—

Hear him joining in our Liturgy, and you will say, There is a repentant sinner, clearing to the Lord with full purpose of heart. But tell him in private what a sinner he is; tell him what contrition becomes him; tell him how entirely he must renounce all self-confidence, and rely solely on the Lord Jesus Christ; and you quite offend him—'He deserves not such heavy judgments: he needs not seek for mercy in this humiliating way. It may be well enough for publicans and harlots to abase themselves in this manner; but he needs it not; nor will he consent to accept of mercy on such terms as these.' In vindication of themselves, persons of this description will cast reflections on religion, as depriving men of all happiness, and as a source of all the sorrow and melancholy that are found in the religious world. In vain we tell them, that it is sin alone which is the cause of sorrow, and ignorance alone that is the source of melancholy to persons seeking after God. In vain we tell them, that religion, properly understood and practiced, is a spring of the purest and most lasting joy. The very comparison which the Jews made between Jehovah and the Queen of Heaven, these persons will make between true piety and their own formal services: God's ways being condemned as productive only of evil; and their own commended, as replete with good.

3. The hypocritical professor—

He, if you will believe his words, is all that you could wish: but if you examine his actions, he is like fruit, fair to look upon, but rotten at the core. Press him on the side of his besetting sins, and you shall find him, in deeds, if not in words, as determined a transgressor as either of the foregoing characters. I know not whether he be not the least hopeful of them all. His very "conscience is seared;" and "even the light that is in him is darkness." Whether his sin be pride, or worldliness, or intemperance, or impurity, he finds excuses for all; or, if self-condemned, "turns the grace of God into licentiousness." Ah! what shall I say to such persons? These, above all, resemble Johanan and the Jews. They make the greatest professions of piety, and sin against the greatest light and knowledge; and cast most dishonor upon God while vindicating themselves. Truly, such persons, above all, have need to go along with me in my last consideration; namely,

III. The certain issue of such conduct—

The Jews would venture upon the line prohibited, and prosecute their own ways, in defiance of the judgments with which they were threatened. But God told them that "they should see whose word should stand, his or theirs verse 28."

I ask then, How did it fare with them?

Did not Divine vengeance follow them? Could Pharaoh afford them the protection which they sought? yes, did not both he and they fall under the Chaldean yoke, and speedily experience all the calamities that had been predicted verse 12, 13, 14, 29, 30.

And how shall it fare with you?

Is not the time coming when the Lord will say, "Bring hither those that were my enemies, who would not that I should reign over them, and slay them before me [Luke 19:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 19.27)." Yes; you may vindicate yourselves as you will, and be as confident as you please; but "God's word shall stand, and not yours;" and the day shall surely come, when your pride, and unbelief, and rebellion, shall meet with their deserved recompense at the hands of God: It was the boast of the Jews that they had antiquity and authority on their side verse 17. But what did it avail them that "they had kings and princes on their side," and that they did nothing but what was done daily "in the streets of Jerusalem?" Did this lessen their guilt, or screen them from punishment? So, then, know you also, that however broad the way be wherein you walk, it will lead you to destruction; and that "though hand join in hand, the wicked, how great or numerous soever they be, shall not go unpunished."

Let me now address,

1. Those who disregard our testimony—

Whether it be in deeds only, or in words also, that you reject our word, know you of a truth, that it shall come to pass, and "a difference shall be put between him who serves God, and him who serves him not." What this prophet said to those who "refused to be ashamed of their abominations," and to every one of his instructions replied, "We will not hearken," that I say to you: "In the day that God shall visit for sin, you shall be cast down, and perish [Jeremiah 6:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 6.15-17)." You may say, as boldly as you will, "Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from us:" but God laughs at your pride [Psalm 2:3-4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 2.3-4); for "he sees that your day is coming." May God Almighty awaken you from your security, before it be too late!

2. Those who tremble at the word of God—

This is a state of mind which becomes every sinner in the universe [Isaiah 66:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 66.2). Cultivate it, I pray you, more and more: and, in any engagements which you may enter into with God, undertake nothing in your own strength. Be assured, that of yourselves you can do nothing; and that all your ability, even for the most acknowledged duties, must be from the Lord alone. Yet, whatever you have vowed unto the Lord, remember to pay it: "It were better never to vow, than to vow and not pay." At the same time, take the word of God as your guide: whatever He commands you, do it, without considering what its effect may be on your present interests. In an obedient attention to God's will you need fear no evil: for "who is he who shall really harm you, if you be followers f that which is good [Jeremiah 42:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 42.11-12) with [1 Peter 3:13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Pet 3.13)." But, if you will dissemble with God, "be sure that your sin will find you out." "Fear not man, therefore, who can only kill the body; but fear Him who can destroy both body and soul in Hell: yes, I say unto you, Fear Him."

[Jeremiah 45:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 45.5)

DISCOURSE 1084

WE MUST NOT SEEK GREAT THINGS

[Jeremiah 45:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 45.5). Seek you great things for yourself? Seek them not.

WORLDLINESS is a great and common evil: and it is often manifested in those from whom we should least expect it. The sons of Zebedee solicited the highest posts of honor in their Master's kingdom, immediately after he had been foretelling his crucifixion: and all the disciples disputed about preeminence even at the last supper, just after they had been warned, that one of them would betray his Lord. Thus Baruch, when he had been writing in a book all the prophecies of Jeremiah, wherein God's determination to destroy the Jewish nation had been repeatedly declared, was promising himself years of case and affluence; and was afraid to write another copy of the prophecies, lest the king, who had destroyed the former copy, should put him to death. Jeremiah therefore was ordered by God to reprove him; to tell him what had been the secret thoughts of his heart verse 3, and to warn him against indulging such an unfitting spirit To see this connection, read the thirty-sixth chapter, and then the forty-fifth, which, in the series of Jeremiah's prophecies, ought to follow it.

The prohibition in the text being applicable to all in every age, we shall show,

I. When we may be said to seek great things for ourselves—

In direct reference to the text itself we observe, that this may be said of us,

1. When the objects of our pursuit are great—

Things are great or small by comparison only; since that which would be great for a peasant, would be altogether worthless in the eyes of a king. But they may universally be called "great," when they far exceed our present condition: and, in that case, an aspiring after them subjects us to the censure in the text. The world indeed universally commend ambition: but worldly ambition is very opposite to the self-denying doctrines of Christianity. It was always discountenanced by our Lord [Matthew 8:20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 8.20). [John 6:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 6.15). [Matthew 6:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 6.19-21); and is universally reprobated by his Apostles [Philippians 3:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 3.19). [Colossians 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Col 3.2); and, wherever it rules in the heart, it indicates a carnal and worldly mind [Romans 8:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 8.5).

2. When we seek even moderate things with eagerness—

There is an important distinction to be made between industry, and eagerness: the one relates to the activity of the body; the other to an excessive desire of the mind: the one is not only proper, but necessary, in our respective spheres [Romans 12:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 12.11). [Ecclesiastes 9:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eccles 9.10); the other is universally sinful, when it relates to earthly things. What can our Lord mean by repeating, no less than four times, that solemn injunction, "Take no thought [Matthew 6:25](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 6.25); [Matthew 6:28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 6.28); [Matthew 6:31](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 6.31); [Matthew 6:34](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 6.34)." Doubtless it is not to be taken literally in the strictest sense: but, allowing for the utmost latitude of interpretation, he must mean, that we should take no anxious thought even for the most moderate, or most necessary, comforts. In perfect agreement with this are the directions of his Apostles [1 Corinthians 7:32](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 7.32). [Philippians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 4.6); consequently, the indulging of an eager desire after anything pertaining to this life, exposes us to the reproof contained in the text.

3. When we seek anything merely for ourselves—

We are not at liberty to make self in any instance the chief end of our actions. There is One above us, even God, whose honor we should seek, even in the most common offices of life [1 Corinthians 10:31](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 10.31). To be lovers of our own selves is a mark of a reprobate mind [2 Timothy 3:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Tim 3.2). and whatever we do under the influence of such a spirit, whether the action be of a civil [Hosea 10:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 10.1). or religious [Zechariah 7:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zech 7.5-6). nature, it is not acceptable to God. Though therefore we do not aspire after great things, yet, if we seek any tiling merely for ourselves, and without any higher end than our own ease, interest, or honor, we are altogether wrong, and deserving of the severest censure.

To vindicate the reasonableness of this prohibition, we shall proceed to show,

II. Why we should not seek them—

That the reasons may more distinctly appear, we shall show,

1. Why we should not make great things the objects of our pursuit—

An aspiring after riches or honors necessarily supposes that we expect to find happiness in the enjoyment of them. But it is certain that even the whole world (supposing we could possess it) could never make us happy [Luke 12:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 12.15). What folly then is it to be seeking to "fill our belly with the east wind [Job 15:2](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Job 15.2)." Besides, the more we possess of this world, the more we are exposed to temptations. Who does not see that the having the means of gratifying our evil inclinations operates as an inducement to indulge them? and that an elevation of rank or character has a tendency to strengthen the pride of our hearts? Are there not then temptations enough in our way without our seeking to increase them? Shall we "load ourselves with thick clay [Habakkuk 2:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hab 2.6)." when we are about to run a race; or make the way to Heaven tenfold more difficult than it is already [Matthew 19:23-24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 19.23-24). They to whom God has given great things, may doubtless enjoy them: but the man who seeks them, labors for that which will ultimately involve him in utter ruin [1 Timothy 6:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Tim 6.8); [1 Timothy 6:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Tim 6.10). The willing and desiring to be rich has this fatal tendency, without any determination to get rich at all events.

2. Why we should not seek even moderate things with eagerness—

No man is eager after anything but in consequence of the love he feels towards it: his eagerness therefore to it must imply a love of it. Now an attachment to any of the things of time and sense, especially such an attachment as stimulates us earnestly to pursue them, argues a want of true love to God [1 John 2:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 John 2.15); for to love both God and mammon is impossible [Matthew 6:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 6.24). Moreover, such an eagerness shows, that we have no just value for our souls: for if we had once learned to appreciate the soul aright, the whole world would appear as nothing in comparison of it [Matthew 16:26](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt 16.26). [Philippians 3:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 3.7-8). Will any one then justify a conduct that involves in it such consequences? As long as the love of God, and a care for our own souls, be our bounden duty, so long must the eager pursuit of any earthly vanity be incompatible with the Christian character.

3. Why we should not seek anything merely for ourselves—

We are not our own, but God's. He both formed [Isaiah 43:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 43.21). and redeemed [1 Corinthians 6:20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 6.20). [2 Corinthians 5:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 5.15). us, that we might glorify his name: and he represents his faithful servants as seeking, not their own things, out the things of Jesus Christ [Philippians 2:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 2.21). Are we then at liberty to rob God of his glory? and to defeat the great end both of our creation and redemption? Besides, our fellow-creatures also have a claim upon us. We are commanded not to "seek every man his own, but every man another's wealth [Philippians 2:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Phil 2.4) and [1 Corinthians 10:24](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Cor 10.24). Ought we then to deprive them of their right? Doubtless we may without impropriety labor in our respective callings to provide for ourselves and families; but we must take care that, in doing this, we have a view to God's honor, and the general welfare of mankind. Else our labor is mere selfishness, that contracts and hardens our hearts, while it violates every obligation to God and man.

ADDRESS—

1. Those who are seeking only the things of this world—

What have you gained by all your past exertions? You are pleased, perhaps, with your success, and have your pride gratified: but are you really happier than you were before you possessed your present honors and emoluments? Perhaps we may rather ask, Have you not, together with your means of self-indulgence, multiplied also your vexations and disappointments? But supposing you to be unusually favored in these respects, we still ask, What comfort will these things afford you in the hour of death, and the day of judgment? Will they not then at least, whatever they may now do, appear to be lighter than vanity itself? Then in the name of God, "Seek them not."

If however you be determined to seek great things, we will change our voice, and say, "Seek them:" yes, seek them: only take care that they be truly great. Be not contented with the poor pitiful things of time and sense: let your ambition rise to the very throne of God, and all the glory of Heaven. Seek the favor of God: seek an union with Christ: seek an abiding fellowship with him: seek such discoveries of his love as produce in you a perfect conformity to his image. In pursuit of such things, you cannot aim too high; your eagerness cannot be excessive; your very selfishness becomes a virtue. Other things that you acquire, are for yourselves and heirs; these shall be for yourselves alone, and that, forever and ever.

2. Those who profess to seek higher and better things—

Many a Baruch is to be found in the house of God: even the people who are truly beloved of the Lord, may need reproof for being too much cumbered about earthly things [John 11:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 11.5) with [Luke 10:41-42](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 10.41-42),. If then such a character be present, let him consider the text as applied to himself in particular; Seek you great things unto yourself? you, who profess to be dead to the world? you, who pretend to walk in the steps of Christ? you, who boast that you have God for your portion? How dishonorable is such conduct! O "remember whence you are fallen; and repent." Remember what was the root of Demas' apostasy [2 Timothy 4:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Tim 4.10); and know that the same root of bitterness, if nourished in your hearts, will bring forth the same malignant and destructive fruit. The best, the only antidote to this poison is, "the love of Christ shed abroad in your hearts [2 Corinthians 5:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 5.14-15)." As a sight of the meridian sun unfits our organs of vision for beholding for a time, any inferior objects, so will a sight of Christ efface the beauty of all sublunary things; or, to use the language of inspiration, "by the cross of Christ, the world will soon be crucified unto us, and we unto the world [Galatians 6:14](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 6.14),"

[Jeremiah 47:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 47.6-7)

DISCOURSE 1085

THE MEANS OF TERMINATING WAR

[Jeremiah 47:6-7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 47.6-7). O sword of the Lord, how long will it be before you be quiet? Put up yourself into your scabbard; rest, and be still. How can it be quiet, seeing the Lord has given it a charge against Ashkelon, and against the sea-shore? there has he appointed it.

THOUGH the two nations of Judah and Israel were the primary objects of attention to the prophets, yet many other nations were referred to in their prophecies; and the most important events respecting them were circumstantially foretold. The chapter before us relates to the Philistines: and it was written at a time when they had recovered the power, of which David had deprived them. It foretells the invasion of their land by the Chaldeans, together with the long continuance of the conflict, which should end in the subjugation of them and their allies.

We shall not confine our attention to them, but take the text as expressing generally,

I. The evils of protracted war—

War is a tremendous evil—

It is so even in its commencement: the distress of the Philistines at the approach of the invading army is very strongly depicted "The men cry and howl:" and the fathers are so terrified and enfeebled, as either to forget their own children, or to be afraid to look back for them. verse 2, 3; and doubtless the representation is suited to any other country that is similarly circumstanced: What then must be the miseries attendant on a protracted warfare! the desolations must spread far and wide; the slaughters be multiplied; famines be produced; perhaps pestilence also be generated. But who can enumerate the miseries which war brings in its train?.

Well might the prophet desire its speedy termination—

Humanity alone, independent of patriotic feelings or private interests, would make one desire to see the sword restored to its scabbard. Some who fatten on the spoils of war, or whose ambition is insatiable, may wish to have these fatal contests protracted; but every one who regards either the temporal or spiritual welfare of mankind, will ardently wish for the termination of them. The days described by the prophet will be desired, infinitely beyond any national aggrandizement, or personal advancement [Isaiah 11:6-9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 11.6-9).

While all acknowledge the evils of war, few seem to be aware of,

II. The reason of its continuance—

War is one of those judgments with which God punishes the sins of men—

We are apt to look only to second causes, instead of acknowledging, as we ought, the First Great Cause. Doubtless the passions of men are the immediate sources from whence the calamities of war arise: and men are strictly amenable, both to God and their fellow-creatures, for the evils, which, by their undue exercise of those passions, they inflict upon the world, But God, who accomplishes his own purposes without at all infringing on the liberty of the human will, renders those passions subservient to his own designs; and employs men as his agents, as a man employs an axe in the execution of any work which he chooses to effect [Jeremiah 51:20-23](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 51.20-23). Man is the instrument; but God is the real author of the work that is done [Isaiah 10:14-15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 10.14-15).

Until he has effected his own purposes by it, no human efforts can bring it to a close—

What are his ultimate designs, is known to himself alone: but whatever "his counsel be, it shall stand; and he will do all his will." He had "given the sword a charge against Ashkelon and the sea-shore; and therefore it could not be quiet," until it had executed its commission. He puts a cup into the hand of different nations; and it must go round, until they have all drunk of it. In vain will any refuse it: taste they must, yes and drink too, even to the dregs, if God has so decreed [Jeremiah 25:15-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 25.15-17); [Jeremiah 25:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 25.27-28). And, as we ourselves have been his instruments, to carry war to coasts which were, according to human appearances, most secure; so may we have it brought to our own shores, not with standing the security we appear to enjoy; and, if "God has so appointed," no power or policy of men will be able to avert the storm: we have partaken largely of the sins of other nations; and we must expect to partake also of their punishments [Ezekiel 23:31-35](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 23.31-35).

But what is impossible with man, is possible with God; who has mercifully declared to us,

III. The means of its termination—

The intention of God's chastisements is to bring us to repentance—

God has no pleasure in correcting the children of men: on the contrary, "judgment is his strange act," to which with reluctance and difficulty he proceeds. But he tells us plainly, that he will proceed, until he has accomplished his gracious ends; yes that, if we hold fast our iniquities, he will increase his chastisements seven-fold [Leviticus 26:27-28](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lev 26.27-28). On the contrary, he promises, that if we humble ourselves before him, he will remove them [Leviticus 26:40-42](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Lev 26.40-42). When his rod does not produce the desired effect, he complains of us [Zechariah 7:11-12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zech 7.11-12), and expresses the deepest regret that we have not suffered him to exercise the mercy which was in his heart towards us [Psalm 81:13-16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 81.13-16). In a word, his message to the whole world is this, "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin [Ezekiel 18:30](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 18.30)."

On the attainment of his end, he will instantly remove his judgments from us—

What an example is given us, in his mercy towards the inhabitants of Nineveh! How did he regard even the humiliation of Ahab, though he knew it to be only external, selfish, and partial [1 Kings 21:29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Kings 21.29). This then is the way to terminate the calamities of war. Sin is, as it were, the target, at which God shoots his arrows. The sword is drawn, "to avenge the quarrel of his covenant:" let that quarrel be composed, and "the sword will be returned to its scabbard; it will rest, and be still."

Having considered the means of terminating the calamities of war, and of averting the judgments of God from our land, we would, in

Conclusion—

Suggest some hints respecting those heavy judgments, which God has denounced against sinners in another world, and respecting the best means of averting them from our souls—

That the sword has a charge against impenitent sinners, is certain [Psalm 7:11-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 7.11-13); [Psalm 9:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 9.17); [Psalm 11:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 11.6); nor, however secure they may think themselves, shall they be able to escape it [Proverbs 11:21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 11.21); "Except they repent, they must all inevitably perish [Luke 13:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 13.3); [Luke 13:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke 13.5)." Moreover, if it be once drawn out against a person in the eternal world, it shall never be returned to its scabbard. Think then whether it have not received a charge against you. It is true, you are not mentioned by name; but you may be as clearly marked by character, as if your very name were specified. Possibly enough your works are such as to determine your state, beyond any possibility of doubt [Galatians 5:19-21](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gal 5.19-21); or, if not, your want of regeneration and conversion may no less clearly mark you as monuments of God's displeasure [John 3:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 3.3); [John 3:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 3.5); Know then, that in Christ only can you obtain pardon and peace: "There is no other name given, whereby you can be saved." Seek then "to be found in him:" and know for your comfort, "if your life be hid with Christ in God," it will be out of the reach of God's avenging sword; and "when Christ, who is your life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory."

[Jeremiah 50:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 50.4-5)

DISCOURSE 1086

REPENTANCE DESCRIBED

[Jeremiah 50:4-5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 50.4-5). In those days, and at that time, says the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping: they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten.

THESE words refer to the Jewish people, and to a period yet future. The junction of Israel with Judah took not place in any great degree at the return of the Jews from Babylon; nor was their return signalized by any such piety as is here described. But, at the time ordained of God for their restoration from their present dispersion, the whole Scriptures attest, that a very extraordinary spirit of piety shall be poured out upon them; and that, in the remembrance of all their past sins, they will be filled with the deepest contrition before God [Jeremiah 31:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.9). But among the Gentiles, also, will the same holy ardor be expressed in returning to the Lord [Isaiah 2:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 2.3); and therefore we will not confine our attention either to the one or to the other; but rather regard the words before us as expressive of genuine repentance wherever it exists; and as consequently declaring,

I. Our duty—

Of the Jews, it is said, "They shall go and seek the Lord their God."

Now this is a duty,

1. Of universal obligation—

There is not a man in the universe to whom it does not appertain. There is no man who has not sinned, "in departing from the living God;" and consequently, there is no man who does not need to seek his favor, and to implore mercy at his hands. The king upon the throne is not so elevated, but that he needs to turn to God in this way: nor is the meanest subject in his realm so insignificant, as that this can be dispensed with at his hands.

2. Of prime and indispensable importance—

There are many duties binding upon all, and all important in their place: but this is "the one thing needful;" the one thing, without which no man can have peace with God, or peace in his own conscience, or any hope of happiness in the eternal world.

But in this passage we see also,

II. The manner in which it should be performed—

We must all seek the Lord,

1. With deep humiliation of soul—

The Jews will look on Him whom they have pierced, and mourn, and be in bitterness, as one that is in bitterness for his first-born. But if they were the agents in the crucifixion of our Lord, our sins were the procuring cause; yes, and we have even "crucified the Son of God afresh," by continuing in our sins. And who among us has not also "done despite unto the Spirit of grace," "resisting" his sacred motions, until we have even "quenched" them in our souls? It is not, surely, necessary that we should have committed flagrant acts of immorality, in order to call for humiliation before God: the whole state of our souls, from the first moment of our existence to the present hour, shows how totally we have fallen from God, and what contrition becomes us in our return to him. The man that thinks a less measure of shame and sorrow becomes him, because he has not been guilty of any atrocious crime, has yet to learn the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the desert of every child of man before God. Methinks it is scarcely necessary to remind you, that you must "sow in tears, if you would reap in joy; and that they only who go on their way weeping, bearing precious seed, can ever hope to come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them [Psalm 126:5-6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 126.5-6)."

2. With diligent inquiries after the way of life—

The Jews, dispersed throughout the world, will have to make many inquiries, when once they have set out towards the promised land. And we also, at this time, need to "ask the way towards Zion," even after "our faces are directed thitherward," There is but one way, that is, the Lord Jesus Christ; who says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man comes unto the Father but by me." But we do not readily find that way: we have many paths which nature points out, and which we greatly prefer: we would come to God in a way of self-righteousness and self-dependence, instead of relying solely and exclusively on the Lord Jesus Christ. Besides, at our first seeking after God, there will arise many doubts respecting the precise path in which it is our duty to proceed, and in relation to which the more experienced Christian may be well qualified to instruct us. To avail ourselves of all possible information, is our wisdom; and especially to seek direction from God in prayer: and it is in answer to such inquiries only that we can hope to "hear a voice behind us, saying, "This is the way; walk you in it."

3. With a fixed determination of heart to give ourselves unreservedly unto God—

This is implied in entering into covenant with God. A man may make a promise, which yet he has no deliberate determination to keep: but if he enter into a solemn covenant with God, as Josiah did [2 Chronicles 34:31](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Chron 34.31), he shows that he is altogether in earnest, and that he is engaged in a transaction which it is his solemn purpose "never to forget." In this way should every Penitent approach his God; solemnly giving up himself to him in his secret chamber; and openly also, at the table of the Lord; from henceforth renouncing all other lords, and cleaving only to his God and Savior, in newness of heart and life. In truth, the real penitent will not be content to go to Heaven alone. He will propose to those around him to unite in the blessed work in which he has engaged. In perfect accordance with the Church of old, he says, "Draw me; and we will run after you:" that is, 'Draw me, O God; and I will never willingly come to you alone.'

And now let me ask,

1. Who among you are inclined to make this proposal?

Truly, there is a sad want of zeal, even in multitudes of whom, in the judgment of charity, we should say, They are in the way to Heaven, We do not find that holy boldness for the Lord, which every penitent should feel; nor that compassion for man, which a just sense of our own danger would naturally inspire. We affect prudence; or, in other words, we shun the cross which a more decided conduct would bring upon us. But so did not Paul, or any of the saints of old. They imparted to others the light they had received; and sought to introduce others to the Savior whom they had found [John 1:35-45](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John 1.35-45). Let us go and do likewise: and if this zeal will characterize the piety of the latter day, let it not be found wanting in the religion which we profess.

2. Who among you would accede to it, if made?

We wish to lower the standard of true repentance. 'Surely, a less measure of humiliation will suffice for me; nor can such diligence and self-devotion be required of me.' But that which will be the duty of men in the latter day, must be our duty now: and therefore settle it in your minds, that we must be wholly for God, if we would obtain favor at his hands; and that, "whatever our hand finds to do, we must," if we would succeed, "engage in it with all our might."

[Jeremiah 50:20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 50.20)

DISCOURSE 1087

GOD'S MERCY TO HIS PEOPLE

[Jeremiah 50:20](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 50.20). In those days, and in that time, says the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found; for I will pardon them whom I reserve.

THE promises of God in his word are said to be "exceeding great and precious [2 Peter 1:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Pet 1.4);" and, in truth, they are so great, that we are apt to feel a jealousy respecting them, as though they were not sufficiently guarded: they are apt to appear to us too free, too full, too unqualified, too fixed. Hence we would clog them with limitations and conditions: we would confine them to objects in whom should be found some antecedent worthiness, and suspend the performance of them upon the faithfulness of man. I mean not, by this observation, to say, that great caution is not to be used in the application of them to individual persons; for I well know, that men may easily deceive themselves respecting their own personal interest in them: but I mean to say, that God's blessings are his own; that he has a right to confer them on whoever he will; and that he both does, and will, bestow them according to his own sovereign will and pleasure, without respect to any previous goodness in man, or any dependence on man's strength for the performance of conditions previously imposed upon him. See to whom the promise in my text is made. It is made to the Jewish people, in their present dispersion. For, if we suppose it to have been in part accomplished by the two tribes renouncing idolatry upon their return from Babylon, yet it can be only in part that it can have been fulfilled at that time; because it is evident that, since the return of the Jews from Babylon, "their sins have been found," and visited too, in wrathful indignation, for many hundreds of years. At a period, however, that is fast approaching, God's elect among them shall be restored to his favor, and be made partakers of everlasting felicity in his immediate presence.

In considering these words, I shall notice,

I. The extent of God's mercy to his chosen people—

God's people are constantly represented as a remnant—

Such they have been in all ages of the world; and at different periods they have been "a very small remnant:" but, whether more or less numerous, they are, as the Apostle calls them, "a remnant according to the election of grace [Romans 11:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 11.5)." It is, in fact, for the sake of God's elect that are yet unborn, that the wickedness of many who are now living is endured. God says, respecting many a corrupt and worthless plant, "Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it [Isaiah 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 1.9); [Isaiah 65:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 65.8)."

For them, however, God designs the richest mercy—

When he returns unto them in mercy, which, at his appointed period, he will do, he will grant to them blessings far beyond any that he conferred upon his people of old. To those who approached him with their sacrifices, he dispensed a pardon for some sins only, and that only until the time should come for a renewal of the same sacrifices: but to his remnant who believe in Christ, and seek acceptance through his all-atoning sacrifice, he imparts a full and perfect remission of all sin; so that, whatever iniquity they may have committed in their unconverted state, it shall be altogether and forever cancelled: "it shall be blotted out, even as a morning cloud," which passes over the earth, and is seen no more; and it shall be "cast behind God's back [Isaiah 38:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 38.17)," never to be seen again; and "into the very depths of the sea [Micah 7:19](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Micah 7.19)," from whence it shall never be recovered. In a word, he covenants with them to "remember their sins no more;" so that, whoever may "search for them, they shall be found no more" forever [Jeremiah 31:31-34](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 31.31-34) with [Hebrews 10:14-17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Heb 10.14-17). God will henceforth view them, not as they are in themselves, but as they are in Christ, "without spot or blemish [Ephesians 5:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Eph 5.27)." Clothed in his perfect righteousness, they are presented faultless before God, and they are so regarded by God himself to their exceeding joy Jude, verse 24."

In further noticing this glorious promise, I must proceed to mark,

II. The interest which the Jews have in it—

We ought not to overlook this; which is, in fact, the direct object which God himself has in his view—

It is evidently spoken respecting the Jews: and though we do right in applying it to God's elect people generally, we do exceeding wrong in overlooking those to whom it primarily belongs. We are ready to think that the conversion and salvation of the Jews is a subject in which we have no interest: and on this account, we almost grudge the mention of it in a Christian assembly. On the conversion of the Gentiles we are at liberty to expatiate: but a few words on the restoration of God's ancient people will be deemed more than sufficient, unless the particular occasion demand for it a distinct and formal consideration. But we err exceedingly in this, and cast a veil over numberless prophecies, which, if duly explained, would open to us all the mysteries of God's love, to the very end of time.

As applied to the Jews, the promise should fill us with unutterable joy—

It is plain that it primarily belongs to them. And should it not be an occasion of joy to us to reflect, that among them God has a remnant, "whom he has reserved for himself," and to whom the promise in my text will be fulfilled in its utmost extent? I call upon you, then, to contemplate this blessed event; and to hasten forward, by all possible means, the destined period. Even supposing that their national conversion were not near at hand, I should say, it is nearer than it was in the Apostle's days; and that if he, at that distant period, labored to the utmost to turn to the faith of Christ the remnant of God's hidden ones among them, much more should we do it now: and therefore I commend to you this part of my subject, as deserving at all times the deepest attention If this be a Sermon for the Jews, it should here be shown that the time then present was peculiarly proper for a fuller consideration of the subject.

But that we may bring home the promise to ourselves, let us consider,

III. The effect which the contemplation of it should produce on us—

Have we any hope that we are of the number of God's elect? Let the thought of his promised mercy fill us with,

1. Humiliation—

Can we reflect a moment on the thought that our sins are thus blotted out, and not stand amazed at the riches of God's sovereign grace? Truly, we should be altogether lost in wonder, love, and praise: and the more assured our hope is, that God has forgiven us, the more determined we should be never to forgive ourselves. We should go softly all our days, in the remembrance of our sins; and should "loath ourselves for our abominations," in proportion as we hope that "God is pacified towards us [Ezekiel 16:63](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezek 16.63)."

2. Gratitude—

What bounds should there be to our thankfulness before God? Methinks our language day and night should be, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?" This, at all events, we should do: we should show our indignation against sin, which is so hateful in his eyes; and take occasion from his mercies to devote ourselves to him in a way of holy and unreserved obedience [Romans 12:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 12.1).

3. Affiance—

St. Paul well says, "If God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" The same conclusion would I draw from that perfect forgiveness which God vouchsafes to his believing people: Has he so blotted out our iniquities, and will he refuse us strength to resist and mortify sin in future? Has he rescued us thus from all the powers of darkness, and will he again suffer them to pluck us out of his hands? No: we may ask with confidence, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect," or condemn so much as one of his believing people? In all that lie has done, in redeeming us from death, he has given us a pledge of what he will hereafter do; and never will he suffer any one to "separate us from his love in Christ Jesus our Lord [Romans 8:32-39](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rom 8.32-39)."

[Jeremiah 51:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 51.5)

DISCOURSE 1088

GOD'S MERCY CONTRASTED WITH OUR SINFULNESS

[Jeremiah 51:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 51.5). Israel has not been forsaken, nor Judah of Ms God, of the Lord of Hosts; though their land was filled with sin against the Holy One of Israel.

THE peculiar people of God in their most afflictive circumstances have a sure prospect of a happy deliverance. But his enemies in their most prosperous state are only like beasts fattening for the slaughter. The Jews were reduced to the lowest ebb of misery in Babylon, on account of their multiplied iniquities: yet did God promise to restore them to their native land. On the contrary, the Babylonians, who were exalted to the highest pitch of grandeur, were in due time to be altogether extirpated. Both these events were foretold by the prophet in this and the preceding chapters: and, in the text, he appeals to the Jews that they had not been forsaken, notwithstanding the abundant cause they had afforded for an utter dereliction—

From these words we shall take occasion to consider,

I. The provocations we have given to God,

1. In our national capacity—

All "sin," of whatever kind, is properly and primarily "against the Holy One of Israel [Psalm 51:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 51.4)." Now there is no sin, whether against the first or second table of the law, which has not abounded in this land: Nor is there any rank or order of men, from the highest to the lowest, that have not yielded up themselves as willing servants to sin and Satan: Even the flock of Christ itself, both the pastors who watch over it, and the people who compose it, have contributed in no small degree to the tremendous mass of iniquity, that has incensed our God against us.

2. In our individual capacity—

Since a sight of others' sins rarely begets any true humiliation in us, let each of us in particular search out his own. Let our thoughts, words, and actions be strictly scrutinized. Let those sins which are more immediately against God, be inquired into; our pride, our impenitence, our unbelief, our ingratitude for temporal blessings, and especially for the unspeakable gift of God's dear Son; our obstinate resistance of God's Holy Spirit, together with all our neglect of duties, or our coldness in the performance of them; let these be counted up, and be set in order before us; and the very best of men will see cause for the deepest humiliation; yes, we shall wonder that we have not long since been made like to Sodom and Gomorrah.

Having taken a view of our sins, let us contrast with them,

II. The mercies God has given to us—

Justly have we deserved to be entirely abandoned by our God—

The history of the Jews shows us what we ourselves deserve. He himself bids us go to Shiloh, and see what he did to it for the wickedness of his people [Jeremiah 7:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 7.12) with [1 Samuel 4:10-11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/1 Sam 4.10-11). Indeed the whole of his dealings with them in their Assyrian and Babylonish captivity, and in their present dispersion, may teach us what we might well expect at his hands.

But he has not dealt with us according to our desert—

He has "not forsaken us" as a nation. In proof of this, we appeal to the comparative lightness of our troubles—the signal interpositions with which we have been favored in the midst of our troubles—and lastly, the happy termination of them, by a seasonable restoration both of peace and plenty October 4, 1801, on a Thanksgiving for peace and plenty.

Nor has he forsaken us as individuals. He is yet calling us by his word, and striving with us by his Spirit. And we behold among us the evident tokens of his presence, in that sinners are yet awakened to repentance, and saints are edified in faith and love.

ADDRESS—

1. Let the long-suffering of God be gratefully acknowledged—

We should "account the long-suffering of God to be salvation [2 Peter 3:15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Pet 3.15)." Let us not, however, rest in carnal mirth; but let his temporal mercies to our land, and his spiritual mercies to our souls, call forth our liveliest gratitude and our devoutest praise.

2. Let it also be practically improved—

In the words immediately following our text, the prophet says, "Flee out of the midst of Babylon, and deliver every man his own soul." It was the duty of the Jews to cast on their bondage as soon as God should open a way for their escape. Thus must we also cast off the servitude in which we have been detained, and go forth from among all the enemies of God. If we continue in sin, we must take our portion with the ungodly. But if we give up ourselves unreservedly to God, he will blot out our past iniquities in the blood of his Son, and make us partakers of an everlasting salvation.

[Jeremiah 51:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 51.10)

DISCOURSE 1089

DUTY OF ACKNOWLEDGING GOD'S MERCIES

[Jeremiah 51:10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Jer 51.10). Come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God!

THE prophets, while foretelling future events, are often transported in spirit to the period of which they speak; and are enabled to see, as it were, the events themselves actually passing before their eyes. Hence, if they speak of the rise or fall of kingdoms, they behold the armies marching to their destination, engaging in the conflict, and either conquering or conquered, according as the Governor of the universe has fore-ordained. This is peculiarly manifest in relation to the destruction of Babylon; which is more frequently and more fully predicted than any other event, except those which immediately relate to God's chosen people See the thirteenth and fourteenth chapters of Isaiah throughout, and especially chapter 14:4–12. It is of that event that the prophet speaks in the chapter before us, as he has also done in the preceding chapter. Having said in the foregoing verses that God would "send fanners to Babylon, to fan," to destroy her, though the event was not to take place for sixty years, yet he says, "This is the time of the Lord's recompense;" and then exclaims, "Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed! howl you for her!" He then speaks of the deliverance of the Jews from their captivity as already effected, and calls on them to declare in Zion the wonders which God had wrought for them: "The Lord has brought forth our righteousness (that is, our deliverance): come, and let us declare in Zion the work of the Lord our God."

It is not of future events that we are now called to speak, but of things accomplished, as it were, before our eyes, and of things that demand our most grateful acknowledgment.

Let us consider,

I. What is that work which we are now called to declare—

At no period of our history had we ever more reason to bless and adore our God than at this day This was preached on Jan. 13, 1813. The mercies given to us have been exceeding great and numerous. We cannot enter into them indeed very fully; but we will suggest some distinct heads, under which they may be arranged for your own more easy and profitable contemplation of them. Consider them then as agricultural and commercial, political and religious. Consider,

1. The agricultural—

Heavy was the pressure on all the lower orders of society, by reason of the dearness of provisions, throughout the last year: and, if the late harvest had been as unproductive as that which preceded it, their distress would have been at this hour exceeding great. But God in his mercy given to us a very abundant harvest, so that now all may "eat and be satisfied, and bless the name of their God." True it is, that other things still continue at a high price: but that very circumstance only shows us the more forcibly, how rich a mercy it is to have plenty of that which is "the staff of life." In enumerating then the mercies for which we have now peculiar reason to be thankful, let us not be unmindful of that in which the great mass of the community are so deeply interested, and which is perhaps the first of all national blessings.

2. Commercial—

To abridge and to destroy our commerce has been the incessant labor of our enemies: and to such a state was it reduced, that it could scarcely be carried on to any extent, without involving; all the persons engaged in it in the guilt of perjury. The whole continent almost was closed against us: and whatever was surreptitiously introduced there, was subjected to such peril, as to prove a most serious discouragement to all commercial enterprise. But now, within these few weeks only, the whole continent is anxious to receive our goods: our manufactures are revived; our people, who during the last year were almost in a state of insurrection on account of the want of work, are employed; and a good prospect is opened to us of increased and permanent prosperity. This, whether viewed in its aspect on individuals or the nation at large, is another blessing, which ought on no account to be overlooked.

3. Political—

Who that looks back to the earlier period of the French Revolution, and recollects what sentiments of insubordination and sedition pervaded the land, must not be surprised at the change that has taken place in relation to those things? Formerly the cry of liberty and equality was raised in almost every place, to instigate the people to throw off all submission to the Government: and such was the delusion by which the minds of many were blinded, that thousands were panting to destroy the constitution, and to establish a democracy in its place. The same bloody scenes as took place in France were preparing for this land also; and so great and general was the infatuation, that many, even of religious characters, were ready to help forward the designs and efforts of those who sought our ruin. But now the excellence of our constitution is duly appreciated; the persons who were once ready to subvert it have now seen their error; and perhaps there is scarcely a man in the land who would not willingly die in its defense. Nor is this change peculiar to us: it is now seen in every part of Europe; and those very people who banished their former Rulers, and overturned fill their former establishments, are now desirous of returning to the state they have forsaken, and are actually fighting for the restoration of their former Governments. Thus has order taken the place of anarchy, and respect for constituted authorities banished from among us the demon of discontent.

4. Religious—

With a contempt for all ancient institutions, there went forth an utter disregard of Revealed Religion. Infidelity stalked abroad, as it were, at noon-day. It no longer blushed to show its face, but obtruded itself upon the attention of all; and reviled, as enemies to sense and reason, all who dared to maintain the cause of God in the world. Philosophy forsooth was deemed a safer guide than the voice of inspiration; and the word of God itself was held up to ridicule, as a composition of falsehood and absurdity. How different is the state of things among us at this time! The Holy Scriptures are revered and honored to a degree altogether unprecedented and unknown in this country. All ranks and orders of men among us not only receive the sacred volume as true, but stand forth to advocate its cause, and to extend the knowledge of it to every quarter of the globe. If we judged from the zeal exerted for the diffusion of the Holy Scriptures, we should be ready to think that the Millennial period were already come. But, though we cannot yet congratulate ourselves on such an extensive change as this, we nevertheless behold a most astonishing increase of true religion in the land. We are happy too to declare, that a similar spirit is rising in other lands; and that, "while God's judgments have been poured out so awfully and so extensively upon the earth, the inhabitants thereof have been learning righteousness [Isaiah 26:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 26.9)."

These then are mercies which may well "be declared in Zion," and which we are now called in a more especial manner to commemorate.

Having drawn your attention to some of those mercies which deserve especial notice at this time, I proceed to show,

II. In what manner we should declare them—

Since these mercies are so great and numerous, let us all unite in improving them as we ought to do:

1. Let us acknowledge God in them—

Who is it that "has wrought all these deliverances for us?" Is it our own hand, our own arm, that has effected them? Who is it that gave us such a rich abundant harvest? We must be blind indeed, if we see not the hand of God in it [Hosea 2:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos 2.8). [Psalm 65:9-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 65.9-13); Who is it that has opened all the ports of the continent to our manufactures? Backward as men are to trace the operation of God in such things, there is scarcely a person in the land that does not say, "This is your hand; and you, Lord, have done it [Psalm 109:27](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 109.27); [Psalm 44:3](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 44.3). [Isaiah 45:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 45.7)." And must we not trace the revolution of sentiment to the same source? Who but God can "still the madness of the people?" It is he, and he alone, that "turns the heart, whether of princes or of people, wherever he will [Proverbs 21:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Prov 21.1). [Psalm 65:7](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 65.7)." Above all, to whose agency must we refer that great work of dispelling the clouds of infidelity, and of making his light to shine into the hearts of men? Truly, none but He "who commanded the light to shine out of darkness" at the first creation of the world, is sufficient for these things [2 Corinthians 4:6](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/2 Cor 4.6); 2 Corinthians 5:5. In reference then to everything that has been done for us, we must say, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but to your name be the praise!"

2. We must adore him for them—

It is not a cold and speculative acknowledgment only that we are called to make: our hearts should be warmed with a sense of God's mercies: and our lips be devoutly occupied in his praise. The first effect indeed which they should have upon our minds is, to fill us with wonder and admiration of the Divine goodness [Psalm 40:5](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 40.5); but when we have, as it were, recovered from the overwhelming sense of his goodness, then should we declare it, and publish it with all the powers of our souls. Look at David, when recounting the mercies God had given to Israel [Psalm 98:1-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 98.1-8); such is the language which well befits us on the present occasion; yes, we should "make our boast in God all the day long, and praise his name forever and ever [Psalm 44:7-8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 44.7-8)." In this way "we must declare his work, if we would wisely consider of his doing [Psalm 64:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps 64.9)."

3. Let us, by anticipation, bless God for the yet richer mercies which he has in reserve for us—

We began with observing, that "the deliverance" from Babylon was yet distant, at least sixty years, though the prophet spoke of it as already accomplished. So may we look forward to the blessings which are made over to us by the sure word of promise, and may even now bless God for them as though they were already possessed. As Abraham rejoiced at the prospect of the day of Christ, just as if he had actually seen it with his eyes, so may we do, and so we ought to do, in reference to his future advent to reign on earth. Then will peace and plenty, and truth and righteousness, prevail throughout the world. Then shall men "beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and they will learn war no more." Then "Judah will no more vex Ephraim, nor Ephraim envy Judah," but all will "sit harmonious and contented under their own vine and fig-tree." "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid:" nor shall any hurt or destroy in God's holy mountain. Then, while plenty abounds in every place [Amos. 9:13-15](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Amos. 9.13-15), "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth, as the waters cover the sea." O what a day of wonders will that be! It is our privilege to look forward to it, and even to see it now, as it were, before our eyes. See how the prophet, who lived almost three thousand years ago, beheld it, and gloried in the sight [Isaiah 49:12-13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 49.12-13); [Isaiah 60:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 60.1); [Isaiah 60:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 60.4); [Isaiah 60:8](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 60.8). and shall not we, who are almost on the very eve of that day? We have no doubt but that all these events, which have been taking place in the world these twenty years, are preparing the way for the promised advent of our Lord. Let us then anticipate it with joy and gratitude [Isaiah 52:9-10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa 52.9-10); let us adore our God for giving such prospects to sinful man: and let us endeavor to hasten it forward by every possible exertion in the cause of Christ.