

CHAPTER 14

The strain of this chapter differs from that of the foregoing chapters. Those were generally made up of reproofs for sin and threatenings of wrath; but this is made up of exhortations to repentance and promises of mercy, and with these the prophet closes; for all the foregoing convictions and terrors he had spoken were designed to prepare and make way for these. He wounds that he may heal. The Spirit convinces that he may comfort. This chapter is a lesson for penitents; and some such there were in Israel at this day, bad as things were. We have here,

- I.** Directions in repenting, what to do and what to say (v. 1-3).
- II.** Encouragements to repent taken from God's readiness to receive returning sinners (v. 4, 8) and the comforts he has treasured up for them (v. 5-7).
- III.** A solemn recommendation of these things to our serious thoughts (v. 9).

~~341~~ HOSEA 14:1-3

PENITENTS ENCOURAGED

Here we have,

I. A kind invitation given to sinners to repent, v. 1. It is directed to Israel, God's professing people. They are called to *return*. Note, Conversion must be preached even to those that are within the pale of the church as well as to heathen. "Thou art Israel, and therefore art bound to thy God in duty, gratitude, and interest; thy revolt from him is so much the more heinous, and thy return to him so much the more necessary." Let Israel see,

1. What work he has made for repentance: "*Thou has fallen by thy iniquity.*" *Thou has stumbled*; so some read it. Their idols were their *stumbling-blocks*. "Thou has fallen from God into sin, fallen off from all good, fallen down under the load of guilt and the curse." Note, Sin is a

fall; and it concerns those that have fallen by sin to get up again by repentance.

2. What work he has to do in his repentance: “*Return to the Lord thy God; return to him as the Lord whom thou has a dependence upon, as thy God, thine in covenant, whom thou has an interest in.*” Note, It is the great concern of those that have revolted from God to *return to God*, and so to do their *first works*. “Return to him from whom thou has fallen, and who alone is able to raise thee up. Return *even to the Lord*, or *quite home* to the Lord; do not only look to him, or take some steps towards him, but make thorough work of it.” The ancient Jews had a saying grounded on this, *Repentance is a great thing, for it brings men quite up to the throne of glory.*

II. Necessary instructions given them how to repent.

1. They must bethink themselves what to say to God when they come to him: *Take with you words*. They are required to bring, not sacrifices and offerings, but penitential prayers and supplications, the *fruit of thy lips*, yet not of the lips only, but of the heart, else words are but wind. One of the rabbin says, They must be such words as proceed *from what is spoken first in the inner man*; the heart must dictate to the tongue. We must take good words with us, by taking good thoughts and good affections with us. *Verbaque praevisam rem non invita sequentur* — *Those who master a subject are seldom at a loss for language.* Note, When we come to God we should consider what we have to say to him; for, if we come without an errand, we are likely to go without an answer. ³⁹⁰Ezra 9:10, *What shall we say?* We must take with us words from the scripture, take them from the Spirit of grace and supplication, who teaches us to cry, Abba, Father, and makes intercession in us.

2. They must bethink themselves what to do. They must not only take with them words, but must *turn to the Lord*; inwardly in their hearts, outwardly in their lives.

III. For their assistance herein, and encouragement, God is pleased to put words into their mouths, to teach them what they shall say. Surely we may hope to speed with God, when he himself has ordered our address to be drawn up ready to our hands, and his own Spirit has indited it for us; and no doubt we shall speed if the workings of our souls agree with the words here recommended to us. They are,

1. Petitioning words. Two things we are here directed to petition for: —

(1.) To be acquitted from guilt. When we return to the Lord we must say to him, Lord, *take away all iniquity*. They were now smarting for sin, under the load of affliction, but are taught to pray, not as Pharaoh, *Take away this death*, but, *Take away this sin*. Note, When we are in affliction we should be more concerned for the forgiveness of our sins than for the removal of our trouble. “*Take away iniquity*, lift it off as a *burden* we are ready to sink under or as the stumbling-block which we have often fallen over. Lord, take it away, that it may not appear against us, to our confusion and condemnation. Take it all away by a free and full remission, for we cannot pretend to strike any of it off by a satisfaction of our own.” When God pardons sin he pardons *all*, that *great debt*; and when we pray against sin we must pray against it all and not except any.

(2.) To be accepted as righteous in God's sight: “*Receive us graciously*. Let us have thy favour and love, and have thou respect to us and to our performances. Receive our prayer graciously; be well pleased with that good which by thy grace we are enabled to do.” *Take good* (so the word is); take it to bestow upon us, so the margin reads it — *Give good*. This follows upon the petition for the taking away of iniquity; for, till iniquity is taken away, we have no reason to expect any good from God, but the taking away of iniquity makes way for the conferring of good *removendo prohibens* — *by taking that out of the way which hindered*. *Give good*; they do not say what good, but refer themselves to God; it is not good of the world's showing (^{<1906>}Psalm 4:6), but good of God's giving. “*Give good*, that good which we have forfeited, and which thou has promised, and which the necessity of our case calls for.” Note, God's gracious acceptance, and the blessed fruits and tokens of that acceptance, are to be earnestly desired and prayed for by us in our returning to God. “*Give good*, that good which will make us good and keep us from returning to iniquity again.”

2. Promising words. These also are put into their mouths, not to move God, or to oblige him to show them mercy, but to move themselves, and oblige themselves to returns of duty. Note, Our prayers for pardon and acceptance with God should be always accompanied with sincere purposes and vows of new obedience. Two things they are to promise and vow: —

(1.) Thanksgiving. “Pardon our sins, and accept of us, so *will we render the calves of our lips*.” The *fruit of our lips* (so the Septuagint), a word

they used for *burnt-offerings*, and so it agrees with the Hebrew. The apostle quotes this phrase (^{<5835>}Hebrews 13:15), and by the *fruit of our lips* understands the *sacrifice of praise to God, giving thanks to his name*. Note, Praise and thanksgiving are our spiritual sacrifice, and, if they come from an upright heart, shall please the Lord *better than an ox or bullock*, ^{<5830>}Psalms 69:30, 32. And the sense of our pardon and acceptance with God will enlarge our hearts in praise and thankfulness. Those that are *received graciously* may, and must, *render the calves of their lips* — poor returns for rich receivings, yet, if sincere, more acceptable than the calves of the stall.

(2.) Amendment of life. They are taught to promise, not only verbal acknowledgements, but a real reformation. And we are taught here,

[1.] In our returns to God to covenant against sin. We cannot expect that God should take it away by forgiving it if we do not put it away by forsaking it.

[2.] To be particular in our covenants and resolutions against sin, as we ought to be in our confession, because deceit lies in generals.

[3.] To covenant especially and expressly against those sins which we have been most subject to, which have most easily beset us, and which we have been most frequently overcome by. We must keep ourselves from, and therefore must thus fortify ourselves against, *our own iniquity*, ^{<5823>}Psalms 18:23. The sin they here covenant against, owning thereby that they had been guilty of it, is giving that glory to another which is due to God only; this they promise they will never do, *First*, By putting that confidence in creatures which should be put in God only. They will not trust to their alliances abroad: *Asshur* (that is, Assyria) *shall not save us*. “We will not court the help of the Assyrians when we are in distress, as we have done (^{<3833>}Hosea 5:13; 7:11; 8:9); we will not contract for it, nor will we confide in it, or depend upon it. Having a God to go to, a God all-sufficient to trust to, we scorn to be beholden to the Assyrians for help.” They will not trust to their warlike preparations at home, especially not those which they were forbidden to multiply: “*We will not ride upon horses*, that is, we will not make court to Egypt,” for thence they fetched their horses, ^{<5716>}Deuteronomy 17:16; ^{<2316>}Isaiah 30:16; 31:1, 3. “When our enemies invade us we will depend upon our God to succour our infantry, and will be in no care to remount our cavalry.” Or, “We will not *post on horseback*, for haste, from one creature to another, to seek relief, but will

take the nearest way, and the only sure way, by addressing ourselves to God,” ^{<2305>}Isaiah 20:5. Note, True repentance takes us off from trusting to an arm of flesh, and brings us to rely on God only for all the good we stand in need of. *Secondly*, Nor will they do it by paying that homage to creatures which is due to God only. *We will not say any more to the works of our hands, You are our gods.* They must promise never to worship idols again, and for a good reason, because it is the most absurd and senseless thing in the world to pray to that as a god which is the work of our hands. We must promise that we will not set our hearts upon the gains of this world, nor pride ourselves in our external performances in religion, for that is, in effect, to say to the work of our hands, *You are our gods.*

3. Pleading words are here put into their mouths: *For in thee the fatherless find mercy.* We must take our encouragement in prayer, not from any merit God finds in us, but purely from the mercy we hope to find in God. This contains in itself a great truth, that God takes special care of fatherless children, ^{<3884>}Psalms 68:4, 5. So he did in his law, ^{<1722>}Exodus 22:22. So he does in his providence, ^{<1270>}Psalms 27:10. It is God's prerogative to help the helpless. In him there is mercy for such, for they are proper objects of mercy. In him they find it; there it is laid up for them, and there they must seek it; *seek and you shall find.* It comes in here as a good plea for mercy and grace and an encouraging one to their faith.

(1.) They plead the distress of their state and condition: “We are fatherless orphans, destitute of help.” Those may expect to find help in God that are truly sensible of their helplessness in themselves and are willing to acknowledge it. This is a good step towards comfort. “If we have not yet boldness to call God *Father*, yet we look upon ourselves as fatherless without him, and therefore lay ourselves at his feet, to be looked upon by him with compassion.”

(2.) They plead God's wonted lovingkindness to such as were in that condition: *With thee the fatherless not only may find, but does find,* and shall find, *mercy.* It is a great encouragement to our faith and hope, in returning to God, that it is his glory to father the fatherless and help the helpless.

~~2804~~ HOSEA 14:4-7

ASSURANCES OF MERCY

We have here an answer of peace to the prayers of returning Israel. They seek God's face, and they shall not *seek in vain*. God will be sure to meet those in a way of mercy who return to him in a way of duty. If we speak to God in good prayers, God will speak to us in good promises, as he *answered the angel with good words and comfortable words*, ~~3013~~ Zechariah 1:13. If we take with us the foregoing words in our coming to God, we may take home with us these following words for our faith to feast upon; and see how these answer those.

I. Do they dread and deprecate God's displeasure, and therefore return to him? He assures them that, upon their submission, his *anger is turned away from them*. This is laid as the ground of all the other favours here promised. I will do so and so, for my *anger is turned away*, and thereby a door is opened for all good to flow to them, ~~2911~~ Isaiah 12:1. Note, Though God is justly and greatly angry with sinners, yet he is not implacable in his anger; it may be turned away; it shall be turned away, from those that turn away from their iniquity. God will be reconciled to those that are reconciled to him and to his whole will.

II. Do they pray for the *taking away of iniquity*? He assures them that he will *heal their backslidings*; so he promised, ~~2492~~ Jeremiah 3:22. Note, Though backslidings from God are the dangerous diseases and wounds of the soul, yet they are not incurable, for God has graciously promised that if backsliding sinners will apply to him as their physician, and comply with his methods, he will heal their backslidings. He will heal the guilt of their backslidings by pardoning mercy and their *bent to backslide* by renewing grace. Their *iniquity shall not be their ruin*.

III. Do they pray that God will receive them graciously? In answer to that, behold, it is promised, *I will love them freely*. God had hated them while they went on sin (~~3095~~ Hosea 9:15); but now that they return and repent he loves them, not only ceases to be *angry* with them, but takes complacency in them and designs their good. He *loves them freely*, with an *absolute entire* love (so some), so that there are no remains of his former displeasure, with a *liberal bountiful* love (so others); he will be open-

handed in his love to them, and will think nothing too much to bestow upon them or to do for them. Or with a *cheerful willing* love; he will love them without reluctance or renitency. He will not say in the day of thy repentance, *How shall I receive thee again?* as he said in the day of thy apostasy, *How shall I give thee up?* Or with an *unmerited preventing* love. Whom God loves he loves *freely*, not because they deserve it, but of his own good pleasure. He loves because he *will* love, ^{<810E>}Deuteronomy 7:7, 8.

IV. Do they pray that God will *give good*, will make them good? In answer to that, behold, it is promised, *I will be as the dew unto Israel*, v. 5. Observe,

1. What shall be the favour God will bestow upon them. It is the blessing of their father Jacob, *God give thee the dew of heaven*, ^{<078>}Genesis 27:28. Nay, what they need God will not only give them, but he will himself be *that* to them, all that which they need: *I will be as the dew unto Israel*. This ensures *spiritual blessings in heavenly things*; and it follows upon the healing of their backslidings, for pardoning mercy is always accompanied with renewing grace. Note, To Israelites indeed God himself will be *as the dew*. He will instruct them; his doctrine shall drop upon them as the dew, ^{<630>}Deuteronomy 32:2. They shall know more and more of him, for he will come to them *as the rain*, ^{<303>}Hosea 6:3. He will refresh them with his comforts, so that their souls shall be as a *watered garden*, ^{<2811>}Isaiah 58:11. He will be to true penitents *as the dew to Israel* when they were in the wilderness, dew that had manna in it, ^{<034>}Exodus 16:14; ^{<019>}Numbers 11:9. The graces of the Spirit are the hidden manna, hidden in the dew; God will give them bread from heaven, as he did to Israel in the dew in abundance, ^{<016>}John 1:16.

2. What shall be the fruit of that favour which shall be produced in them. The grace thus freely bestowed on them *shall not be in vain*. Those souls, those Israelites, to whom God is as the dew, on whom his grace distils,

(1.) Shall be growing. The bad being by the grace of God made good, they shall by the same grace be made better; for grace, wherever it is true, is growing.

[1.] They shall grow upwards, and be more flourishing, *shall grow as the lily*, or (as some read it) shall *blossom as the rose*. The growth of the lily, as that of all bulbous roots, is very quick and speedy. The root of the lily seems lost in the ground all winter, but, when it is refreshed with the dews

of the spring, it starts up in a little time; so the grace of God improves young converts sometimes very fast. The lily, when it has come to its height, is a lovely flower (^{<4069>}Matthew 6:29), so grace is the comeliness of the soul, ^{<2364>}Ezekiel 16:14. it is the *beauty of holiness* that is produced by the *dew of the morning*, ^{<8818>}Psalms 110:3.

[2.] They shall grow downwards, and be more firm. The lily indeed grows fast, and grows fine, but it soon fades and is easily plucked up; and therefore it is here promised to Israel that with the flower of the lily he shall have the root of the cedar: He shall *cast forth his roots as Lebanon*, as the *trees of Lebanon*, which, having taken deep root, cannot be plucked up, ^{<3095>}Amos 9:15. Note, Spiritual growth consists most in the growth of the root, which is out of sight. The more we depend upon Christ and draw sap and virtue from him, the more we act in religion from a principle and the more steadfast and resolved we are in it, the more we *cast forth our roots*.

[3.] They shall grow round about (v. 6): *His branches shall spread* on all sides. And (v. 7) he shall *grow as the vine*, whose branches extend furthest of any tree. Joseph was to be *a fruitful bough*, ^{<1442>}Genesis 49:22. When many are added to the church from without, when a hopeful generation rises up, then Israel's branches spread. When particular believers abound in good works, and increase in the knowledge of God and in every good gift, then their branches may be said to spread. The *inward man is renewed day by day*.

(2.) They shall be graceful and acceptable both to God and man. Grace is the amiable thing, and makes those that have it truly amiable. They are here compared to such trees as are pleasant,

[1.] To the sight: *His beauty shall be as the olive-tree*, which is always green. *The Lord called thy name a green olive-tree*, ^{<2416>}Jeremiah 11:16. Ordinances are the beauty of the church, and in them it is, and shall be, ever green. Holiness is the beauty of a soul; when those that believe with the heart make profession with the mouth, and justify and adorn that profession with an agreeable conversation, then their beauty is as the olive-tree, ^{<3518>}Psalms 52:8. It is a promise to the trees of righteousness that their leaf shall not wither.

[2.] To the smell: *His smell shall be as Lebanon* (v. 6) and his *scent as the wine of Lebanon*, v. 7. This was the praise of their father Jacob, *The smell*

of my son is as the smell of a field which the Lord has blessed, ^{<1277>}Genesis 27:27. The church is compared to a garden of spices (^{<2342>}Song of Solomon 4:12, 14), which *all her garments smell of*. True believers are *acceptable to God* and *approved of men*. God *smells a sweet savour* from their *spiritual sacrifices* (^{<1821>}Genesis 8:21), and they are *accepted of the multitude of the brethren*. Grace is the perfume of the soul, the perfume of the name, makes it like a precious ointment, ^{<2111>}Ecclesiastes 7:1. *The memorial thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon* (so the margin reads it), not only their reviving comforts now, but their surviving honours when they are gone, shall be as *the wine of Lebanon*, that has a delicate flavour. Flourishing churches have *their faith spoken of throughout the world* (^{<8108>}Romans 1:8) and *leave their name to be remembered* (^{<19817>}Psalms 45:17); and *the memory of flourishing saints is blessed*, and shall be so, as theirs who *by faith obtained a good report*.

(3.) They shall be fruitful and useful. The church is compared here to the vine and the olive, which brings forth useful fruits, to the honour of God and man. Nay, the very shadow of the church shall be agreeable (v. 7): *Those that dwell under his shadow shall return* — under God's shadow (so some), under the shadow of the Messiah, so the Chaldee. Believers *dwell under God's shadow* (^{<1911>}Psalms 91:1), and there they are and may be safe and easy. But it is rather *under the shadow of Israel*, under the shadow of the church. Note, God's promises pertain to those, and those only, that dwell under the church's shadow, that attend on God's ordinances and adhere to his people, not those that flee to that shadow only for shelter in a hot gleam, but those that *dwell under it*. ^{<1274>}Psalms 27:4. We may apply it to particular believers; when a man is effectually brought home to God all that *dwell under his shadow* — children, servants, subjects, friends. *This day has salvation come to this house*. Those that dwell under the shadow of the church shall return; their drooping spirits shall return, and they shall be refreshed and comforted. He *restores my soul*, ^{<1273>}Psalms 23:3. *They shall revive as the corn*, which, when it is sown, dies first, and then revives, and *brings forth much fruit*, ^{<8124>}John 12:24. It is promised that God's people shall be blessings to the world, as corn and wine are. And a very great and valuable mercy it is to be serviceable to our generation. Comfort and honour attend it.

HOSEA 14:8-9

REPENTANCE OF EPHRAIM

Let us now hear the conclusion of the whole matter.

I. Concerning Ephraim; he is spoken of and spoken to, v. 8. Here we have,

1. His repentance and reformation: *Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols?* As some read it, God here reasons and argues with him, why he should renounce idolatry: “*O Ephraim! what to me and idols? What concord or agreement can there be between me and idols? What communion between light and darkness, between Christ and Belial?*” ⁴⁶⁴2 Corinthians 6:14, 15. Therefore thou must break off thy league with them if thou wilt come into covenant with me.” As we read it, God promises to bring Ephraim and keep him to this: *Ephraim shall say, God will put it into his heart to say it, What have I to do any more with idols?* He has promised (v. 3) not to *say any more to the works of his hands, You are my gods.* But God’s promises to us are much more our security and our strength for the mortifying of sin than our promises to God; and therefore God himself is here *surety for his servant to good*, will put in into his heart and into his mouth. And, whatever good we say or do at any time, it is he that works it in us. Ephraim had solemnly engaged not to call his idols *his gods*; but God here engages further for him that he shall resolve to have *no more to do with them*. He shall abolish them, he shall abandon them, and that with the utmost detestation; for it is necessary not only that in our lives we be turned from sin, but that in our hearts we be turned against sin. See here,

(1.) The power of divine grace. Ephraim had been *joined to his idols* (³⁰⁴⁷Hosea 4:17), was so fond of them that one would have thought he could never fall out with them; and yet God will work such a change in him that he shall loathe them as much as ever he loved them.

(2.) See the benefit of sanctified afflictions. Ephraim had smarted for his idolatry; it had brought one judgment after another upon him, and this at length is the fruit, even the *taking away of his sin*, ³⁷¹⁹Isaiah 27:9.

(3.) See the nature of repentance; it is a firm and fixed resolution to have no more to do with sin. This is the language of the penitent: “I am ashamed that ever I had to do with sin; but I have had enough of it; I hate it, and by the grace of God I will never have any thing to do with it again, no, not with the occasions of it.” Thou shalt say to thy idol, *Get thee hence* (²³¹²Isaiah 30:22), shalt say to the tempter, *Get thee behind me, Satan*.

2. The gracious notice God is pleased to take of it: *I have heard him, and observed him. I have heard, and will look upon him*; so some read it. Note, The God of heaven takes cognizance of the penitent reflections and resolutions of returning sinners. He expects and desires the repentance of sinners, because he has no pleasure in their ruin. *He looks upon men* (¹⁸³⁷Job 33:27), *hearkens and hears*, ²⁴⁸⁶Jeremiah 8:6. And, if there be any disposition to repent, he is well pleased with it. When *Ephraim bemoans himself* before God, he is a *dear son*, he is a *pleasant child*, ²⁸¹¹Jeremiah 31:20. He meets penitents with mercy, as the father of the prodigal met his returning son. God *observed* Ephraim, to see whether he would bring forth fruits meet for this profession of repentance that he made, and whether he would continue in this good mind. He observed him to do him good, and comfort him, according to the exigencies of his case.

3. The mercy of God designed for him, in order to his comfort and perseverance in his resolutions; still God will be all in all to him. Before, Israel was compared to a tree, now God compares himself to one. He will be to his people,

(1.) As the branches of a tree: “*I am like a green fir-tree, and will be so to thee.*” The fir-trees, in those countries, were exceedingly large and thick, and a shelter against sun and rain. God will be to all true converts both a delight and a defence; under his protection and influence they shall both dwell in safety and dwell in ease. He will be either *a sun and a shield* or a *shade and a shield*, according as their case requires. They shall sit down *under his shadow with delight*, ²¹¹⁸Song of Solomon 2:3. He will be so all weathers, ²⁰⁰⁶Isaiah 4:6.

(2.) As the root of a tree: *From me is thy fruit found*, which may be understood either of the fruit brought forth to us (to him we owe all our comforts) or of the fruit brought forth by us — from him we receive grace and strength to enable us to do our duty. Whatever fruits of righteousness we brought forth, all the praise of them is due to God; for he works in us both to will and to do that which is good.

II. Concerning every one that hears and reads the words of the prophecy of this book (v. 9): *Who is wise? and he shall understand these things.* Perhaps the prophet was wont to conclude that sermons he preached with these words, and now he closes with them the whole book, in which he has committed to writing some fragments of the many sermons he had preached. Observe,

1. The character of those that do profit by the truths he delivered: *Who is wise and prudent? He shall understand these things, he shall know them.* Those that set themselves to understand and know these things thereby make it to appear that they are truly wise and prudent, and will thereby be made more so; and, if any do not understand and know them, it is because they are foolish and unwise. Those that are wise in the doing of their duty, that are prudent in practical religion, are most likely to know and understand both the truths and providences of God, which are a mystery to others, ^{<417>}John 7:17. *The secret of the Lord is with those that fear him,* ^{<454>}Psalms 25:14. *Who is wise?* This intimates a desire that those who read and hear these things would understand them (*O that they were wise!*) and a complaint that few were so — *Who has believed our report?*

2. The excellency of these things concerning which we are here instructed: *The ways of the Lord are right;* and therefore it is our wisdom and duty to know and understand them. The way of God's precepts, in which he requires us to walk, is right, agreeing with the rules of eternal reason and equity and having a direct tendency to our eternal felicity. The ways of God's providence, in which he walks toward us, are all right; no fault is to be found with any thing that God does, for it is all well done. His judgments upon the impenitent, his favours to the penitent, are all right; however they may be perverted and misinterpreted, God will at last be justified and glorified in them all. His *ways are equal.*

3. The different use which men make of them.

(1.) The right ways of God to those that are good are, and will be, a savour of life unto life: *The just shall walk in them;* they shall conform to the will of God both in his precepts and in his providences, and shall have the comfort of so doing. They shall well understand the mind of God both in his word and in his works; they shall be well reconciled to both, and shall accommodate themselves to God's intention in both. *The just shall walk in those ways* towards their great end, and shall not come short of it.

(2.) The right ways of God will be to those that are wicked a savour of death unto death: *The transgressors shall fall* not only in their own wrong ways, but even *in the right ways of the Lord*. Christ, who is a foundation stone to some, is to others a *stone of stumbling* and a *rock of offence*. That which was *ordained to life* becomes through their abuse of it, death to them. God's providences, being not duly improved by them, harden them in sin and contribute to their ruin. God's discovery of himself both in the judgments of his mouth and in the judgments of his hand is to us according as we are affected under it. *Recipitur ad modum recipientis* — *What is received influences according to the qualities of the receiver*. The same sun softens wax and hardens clay. But of all transgressors those certainly have the most dangerous fatal falls that fall *in the ways of God*, that split on the rock of ages, and suck poison out of the balm of Gilead. *Let the sinners in Zion be afraid* of this.