

seives, it is the usual method of Providence to chastise or destroy them. Nations are generally threatened, before they are punished. The voice of Providence declares to them, that judgments are preparing for them, that all who understand the signs of the times may know what they ought to do. When therefore the clouds of divine anger hang over any people, or for a serious calamity has actually come upon them, they may know their sins have reached up to heaven, and that the Lord of Hosts is about to enter into judgment with them. In such a situation, what are people to do? My text teaches them. They cannot hope to prevent or remove their afflictions, unless they turn to the Lord with all their hearts by fasting and supplication. Judgments are the punishment of sin, and repentance and prayer are the appointed means to obtain deliverance from them. For many years the judgments of Heaven have been hanging over this land; but we have not turned unto God, and hence they have come down upon us in one general and distressing calamity. We are now loudly called upon to turn to the Lord, by fasting and prayer. These are the means, which alone can encourage us that our afflictions will be mitigated or removed.

The divine conduct towards individuals and nations is regulated by the same principles. All men are sinners. A plan of mercy has been devised and published to the world, by which every penitent may be pardoned, and exempted from the punishment due to sin. Every sinner, who now exercises repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and makes supplication for mercy, is graciously forgiven, and made an heir of eternal life. In like manner, when a goodly number in a guilty nation repent and turn to God by fasting and prayer, the Lord repents of the evil he had thought to do to that people. He is as ready to pardon a guilty nation, as a guilty individual. The Lord is slow to anger, of great kindness, and delights in mercy,