

confessed his sin unto God, and "though the Lord would forgive his sin on repentance, yet, as it was a public offence, he would correct it in a public manner, by destroying his subjects before his eyes."* "The word of the Lord came unto the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, Go and say unto David, Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things, choose thee one of them, that I may do it unto thee. So Gad came to David, and told him and said unto him, shall seven years of famine come unto thee in thy land? or wilt thou see three months before thine enemies, while they pursue thee? or that there be three days pestilence in thy land? now advise, and see what answer I shall return to him that sent me. And David said unto Gad, I am in a great strait: let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man."

The direction, or permission of God is to be acknowledged in all the calamities which men experience. "Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?" The Psalmist viewing Saul and his attendants, instrumentally, as the sword and hand of God, wherewith he chastised others, prays in the 17th psalm, "Deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword, from men, which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life." But when there is evil in the city, the wickedness of men has procured it. The overruling providence of God is to be acknowledged in all events; but there is a plain distinction between his committing and his suffering providence. David, therefore, made a very just distinction in the text, between falling into the hand of God and falling into the hand of man. He chose to endure the immediate chastisements of God, whose mercies are great, rather than such calamities as men are instrumental of inflicting; for he knew, that man, when let loose upon his brother man, and actuated by hostile passions, becomes a monster more outrageous and relentless, than the beasts of the desert. The ferocity of man, when his passions are unrestrained, is attested by the horrid events of every age. The ancient historian, Plutarch, says, and adduces melancholy instances which prove, "that no beast is more savage, than man, when possessed of power equal to his passions." In view of the horrid massacre of the Shechemites, with what abhorrence of the nature and dire effects of the ungoverned passions of man, did the good old patriarch, Jacob, exclaim concerning the fruit of his own body, his own sons, Simeon and Levi, "Instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret: unto their assembly, mine honor, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their self will they digged down a