

ed in my text. *Now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts, and not your garments.* To turn to the Lord with all the heart implies a separation from all idols, a renunciation of every sin, and sincerity in opposition to all hypocritical service. Many in the time of trouble will discover some marks of humility and concern; they may be anxious that God would remove their afflictions: but their hearts may be unaffected; they may still cleave to their idols. And while their hearts are unbroken for sin, the great purpose for which afflictions are sent is not answered. Though such people may fast and pray, they are neither penitent nor humble. Hence God addresses them in this manner: *When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands, to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do well.* Now instead of offering to God mere lip service, we must return to him with all our hearts. We must be filled with self abasement and self abhorrence, with godly sorrow and unfeigned contrition; our hearts must be broken off from sin. With unfeigned submission to the righteousness of God, we must earnestly supplicate the pardon of *our* sins and the sins of this nation. This should be accompanied with fasting, and other tokens of humiliation. To abstain from food, so far as health and circumstances will allow, is a suitable acknowledgement that we have forfeited our most common mercies; it is some proof also that we are so deeply engaged in our religious services, that we cannot suffer the least interruption, not so much as to eat and to drink. In this way we ought to submit to the chastisement of a righteous Providence, and to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts.