

Defoe Daniel

The Lay-Man's Sermon upon the Late Storm



Daniel Defoe
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Coffee-House-Conventicle:*

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NAHUM. I. III

*The Lord has his way in the Whirle-
Wind and in the Storm, and the
Clouds are the Dust of his Feet*

This Text is not chosen more for the Suitableness to the present Callamity, which has been the Portion of this Place, than for the aptness of the Circumstances, 'twas spoken of God going to Chastise, a Powerful, Populous, Wealthy and most reprobate City.

Nineveh was the Seat of a mighty Empire, a Wealthy Encreasing People, Opulent in Trade, Flourishing in Power and Proud in Proportion.

The Prophet does not seem to deliver these words, to the

Ninevites, to convince them, or encline them to consider their own Circumstances and repent, but he seems to speak, it to the *Israelites* inviteing them to Triumph and Insult over the Heathen adversary, by setting forth the Power of their God, in the most exalted Terms.

And that this is a just Exposition of this Text, seems plain from the words Imediately going before, *the Lord is slow to Anger, and Great in Power and will not at all acquit the wicked*. These words could have no Connexion with the Text, tho' they are joyn'd with them in the same Verse, if it were not meant of his being slow to Anger, to his own People, and Terrible to the Heathen World, and this being spoken as an Expression of his being not easily provoked as to his Church, the Subsequent part of the Verse tells them how his power and Vengeance is matter of particular Satisfaction to his People as being exercis'd in Revenging the affront put upon his Glory by his Enemies, *God is Jealous, and the Lord Revengeth, the Lord Revengeth and is Furious, the Lord will take Vengeance on his adversaries and he reserveth wrath for his Enemies*. Tis plain this is meant of his Enemies, but as if brought in with a Parenthesis, tis spoken for the comfort of his Church, the Lord is slow to Anger as to them, and to lift up their hearts in a further confidence that their Enemies are all in his hand, he goes on discribing the Terrors of his Judgement.

The Lord has his way in the Whirl-wind and in the Storm, and the Clouds are the Dust of his Feet. Eloquent Flourishes upon the Omnipotence of God.

The short Exposition I shall make of the words, Tends only to remind us that the Whirl-wind and Storm which are here made use of, to express the Magnipotent power of God are acted by his Direction, *he has his way in them*, it may note indeed the Invisible secrecy and swiftness of his providences, but to avoid long Paraphrases, I confine my self to my own Construction, as that which, as it is a just inference from the matter of the Text, so 'tis most suitable to the design of this discourse.

And as this Sermon may be a little Immethodical, because I purpose to make it almost all Aplication so I shall advance some Conclusions from the Premises which I lay down, as the Geneuine sence of the Words.

1. The Omnipotence of God gives Christians sufficient ground to Insult their Enemies, *wherefore do the Heathen Mock thy People and say unto them where is now your God? Behold our God is in the Heavens, and doeth whatsoever he pleaseth*; as the Prophet *Elija*, Banter'd the Heathen Priest of *Baal*, with the Impotence of their Gods, Cry aloud for *he is a God, either he is talking or he is Pursuing, or he is in a Journey, or Peradventure he Sleepeth and must be awakned*, so he insulted them about the power of the true God, *let it be known O Lord says he this day that thou art God in Israel*.

2. As God in all the works of his Providence, makes use of the subserviency of means, so the whole Creation is Subordinate to the Execution of his Divine will, *the Clouds are the Dust of his Feet and he rides upon the Wings of the Wind*, the most Powerful

Elements are so subjected to his almighty power that the Clouds are but as Dust under his feet, tis as easy for him to Govern and mannage them; as it is for a man to shake off the Dust from his feet, or he can as easily subdue the fury of them as a man Tramples the Dust, they are small and Triffling things, in his Eyes.

3. The ways of God are unsearchable, the Methods of his Providence are secret and powerfull; his way is in the Whirle-wind, and in the Storm, tis invisible and iresistible, invisible as the Wind, and iresistible as the Storm.

But waving these and abundance more usefull observations which might be justly drawn from so rich a Text, I shall proceed upon one which tho' it favours something more of private authority, and I have not so Authentick Opinion of the Learned Commentators, on my side, yet I shall endeavour not to Merit much Censure, in the Improvement of it, even from those who perhaps may not joyn with me in the Exposition.

According therefore to my own private opinion of these words; I shall for the present occasion only Paraphrase them thus, that *the Lord has a way or an end in the Whirle-wind, and in the Storm*, nor is this a very unusual Method of expressing things in Scripture, where the way is Exprest, to signify the design, or end of a thing.

And from this Exposition I advance this head.

That as God by his power Governs the elements, so in all their Extraordinary Motions, they are in a Perticular manner acted by

his Sovereignty. And,

2. When the Creation is put into any Violent or Supernatural Agitation, God has always some Extraordinary thing to bring to pass, *he has a meaning in all the Remarkables of Nature.*

3. We ought dilligently to observe the extraordinary actings of Providence, in order to discover and Deprecate the displeasure of Almighty God, Providences are never Dumb, and if we can not discern the signals of his Anger, we must be very blind. The Voice of his Judgements is heard in the Voice of Nature, and if we make our selves Deaf, he is pleas'd to make them speak the Louder, to awaken the stupifyed sences, and startle the World, which seem'd rather Amus'd than Amas'd, with the common Course of things. This I take to be some of the true meaning of the way of God, in the Whirle-wind, and in the Storm.

The design of this Discourse therefore, is to put the Nation in general upon proper Resolutions; if we pretend to believe that there is any such thing as a Collateral Sympathy, a Communication of Circumstances, between a Nations Follies, and her Fate. Any Harmony between Merit and Mischief, between the Crimes of Men and the Vengeance of Heaven; we cannot but allow this *Extra-Pulpit* admonition to be just.

And let not any man Object against this being call'd a Sermon, and its being introduc'd from a Text of Scripture while the remainder of this Discourse, seems wholly Civil and Political.

If all our Measures in Civil affairs were deduc'd as Inferences from sacred Texts, I am of the Opinion the Text would be well

improv'd, and Publick matters never the worse Guided.

And for this reason, tho' the Subject be not Treated, with the Gravity of a Sermon, nor in so serious a manner, as would become a Pulpit, yet it may be not the less suitable to the occasion and for the manner, it must be placed to the Authors account.

Besides the Title I think has provided for the Method and If so he that expected it otherwise than it is tis his Fault, and not Mine.

The Term Sermon which is but *Sermo*, a Speech, may Justify all the Novelty of my Method if those who find fault please to give themselves leave to allow it, and since it has never profain'd the Pulpit, I believe the Text will receive no Prejudice by it, I wish every Sermon equally Improv'd.

And what tho' your Humble Servant be no Man of the Text; if he be a Man of Honesty, he may have a hand in making you all Men of Application.

In publick Callamities, every Circumstance is a Sermon, and every thing we see a Preacher.

The trembling Habitations of an Unthinking People Preach to us, and might have made any Nation in the World tremble but us; when we were rock'd out of our Sleep as Children are Rock'd into it; and when the terrible Hand of Sovereign Power rock'd many a Wretch from one Sleep to another, and made a Grave of the Bed, without the Ceremony of waking in the Passage.

The shatter'd Palaces of our Princes Preach to us, and tell us aloud, that without respect to Dignity, he is able to put that Dreadful Text in Execution; *That if a Nation does wickedly they*

shall be destroy'd both they and their King

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