

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION TO EZEKIEL 3

This chapter contains a further account of the prophet's call and mission; of his preparation of him for his work; of the persons to whom he was sent; of what happened to him upon this; of the nature of his office, and the work of it; and of what followed upon the renewal of his call. His further preparation for prophesying is in (^{<A180>}Ezekiel 3:1-3); where he is bid to eat the roll showed him, which he did, and found it in his mouth as honey for sweetness; and then he receives fresh orders to go to the people of Israel, and prophesy to them, (^{<A180>}Ezekiel 3:4); and, that he might not be discouraged, an account is given beforehand of the people to whom he was sent; of their language, behaviour, and disposition; by which he could not expect success, (^{<A180>}Ezekiel 3:5-7); and, for his further encouragement, strength, boldness, resolution, firmness, and presence of mind, are promised him, (^{<A180>}Ezekiel 3:8,9); also a revelation of mere things to him; all which he should hear, receive, and speak, whether the people would attend to them or not; which ought to be no discouragement to him, since it was not regarded by the Lord, (^{<A180>}Ezekiel 3:10,11); then follows an account of his being lifted up by the Spirit from the earth, when he heard a voice, which is described by the manner and matter of it; and a noise, both of the living creature's wings, and of the wheels he had seen in a former vision, (^{<A180>}Ezekiel 3:12,13); and next of his being carried away by the same Spirit; and of the condition he was in, in his own spirit, as he went; and of the strength he received from the Lord; and of the place to which he, was carried; and his state and circumstances, and time of continuance there, (^{<A180>}Ezekiel 3:14,15); where, after a time mentioned, he has a fresh call to his office, under the character of a watchman, whose business was to hear Christ's words, and warn the house of Israel from him; and who are distinguished into wicked and righteous; and whom the prophet was to warn at his own peril, (^{<A180>}Ezekiel 3:16-21); and the chapter is concluded with a narration of various events which befell the prophet; he is bid by the Lord to go into the plain, which he did, and there saw the glory of the Lord, as he had before seen it at the river Chebar; which so affected him, that he fell upon his face, (^{<A180>}Ezekiel 3:22,23); the spirit entered into him,

let him on his feet, and spake with him; ordered him what he should do himself, that he should shut himself up in his house, (^{<3193>}Ezekiel 3:24); informed him what the people would do to him; bind him with bands, that he should not come forth, (^{<3195>}Ezekiel 3:25); and what Christ would do to him; strike him dumb in judgment to the people, that he might not be a reprover of them, (^{<3195>}Ezekiel 3:26); but he is told that, when the Lord spoke to him; his mouth should be opened, and he should declare what was said to him, (^{<3197>}Ezekiel 3:27).

Ver. 1. *Moreover he said unto me, &c.*] The same glorious Person who had been speaking all along in the preceding chapter; and who was seen by the prophet on a sapphire throne, and described in (^{<3125>}Ezekiel 1:26-28); the first fifteen verses of this chapter are by Junius and Tremellius made a part of the second:

son of man, eat that thou findest; not anything, but what he found in the hand sent unto him; wherefore the Targum is,

“son of man, receive what is given thee;”

which was the roll, as follows:

eat this roll; not literally, but figuratively, as John is bid to eat the little book, (^{<610>}Revelation 10:9,10); that is, read it, meditate upon the things contained therein; and digest them, that he might be able to impart them, and make them known to others: it is explained in (^{<3110>}Ezekiel 3:10); by hearing and receiving the words of the prophecy; and so the Targum,

“receive what is written in this roll;”

this is to eat it; as great readers of books are called “helluones librorum”, eaters of books, gluttons at them; read them greedily, deeply meditate upon what is in them, and thoroughly digest them; so it becomes all good men to eat the word, to mix it with faith, to receive it in the love of it, and constantly meditate on it, (^{<3001>}Psalms 1:1,2); and especially ministers of the Gospel, (^{<3115>}1 Thessalonians 4:15);

and go, speak unto the house of Israel; or, as the Targum,

“go, and prophesy to the house of Israel;”

for by eating the roll, in the sense given, he was fit for it; and when ministers of the word have read, and thought of, and digested the truths of

the Gospel themselves, then they are prepared to go and enter upon their work, and feed others with knowledge and understanding.

Ver. 2. *So I opened my mouth, &c.*] To take in the roll, and eat it; he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision; he did all that he could towards eating it, but was not sufficient of himself; and therefore it follows:

and he caused me to eat that roll; he, the Lord, put it into his mouth, caused him to eat it, and tilled him with it, according to his promise, (⁽⁻¹⁸¹⁰⁾Psalm 81:10). The efficacy and sufficiency to think of good things, to meditate upon them, receive and digest them, are of God; it is he that makes men prophets, and able ministers. The Targum is,

“and I inclined my soul, and he taught me (or made me wise “with”) what was written in this roll.”

Ver. 3. *And he said unto me, son of man, cause thy belly to eat, &c.*] Or “devour”^{f54}, and consume; that is, concoct and digest; do not cast it out of thy mouth, as soon as thou hast tasted of it; but let it go down into the stomach, and there digest it; and from thence into the belly, that so, upon the whole, virtue may be received, and nourishment come by it:

and fill thy bowels with this roll that I give thee; eat to satiety; so the Targum,

“son of man, thou shalt satiate thy soul, and fill thy belly, if thou receivest what is written in this roll, which I give thee:”

this was sufficient to qualify the prophet for prophesying, and furnish him with materials enough; and these fit and proper for the discharge of his office; and so such who study the word of God with application become scribes well instructed in the kingdom of heaven; and being filled themselves, are able to bring forth things to the comfort and satisfaction of others:

then did I eat [it], and it was in my mouth, as honey for sweetness; that is, as the roll was spread before him, he looked into it, and read it, and meditated upon it, and laid it up in his memory, in order to deliver it out when commanded; and though it contained things very distressing, and which would occasion lamentation, and mourning, and woe; yet, considering that these were the will of God, and in righteous judgment to men, he could not but acquiesce in and approve of them. All the words that

come out of the mouth of God are as sweet as, honey, yea, sweeter than that, (^{459B}Psalm 19:10 119:103); and so the Targum interprets it of the words of the Lord,

“and I took it, and his words were in my mouth as sweet honey;”

and especially the Gospel, and the truths of it, are like honey; they are gathered by laborious ministers, as honey by the industrious bee, out of the various flowers of the Scriptures, with which being laden, they bring into the hive of the church, and dispose of for general usefulness; these are like honey for healthfulness, for nourishment, and for sweetness to the taste; that which makes the Gospel so are the exceeding great and precious promises in it: its doctrines of grace, and those of peace and reconciliation, of pardon, righteousness, eternal life and salvation, by Jesus Christ; and, above all, Christ himself, who is the sum and substance of it; and all its truths being quickening; comforting, and refreshing: but thou the Gospel is, only sweet when it is eaten; not merely heard, assented to, and superficially tasted of, but eaten and fed upon by faith; and so, it is sweet, not to unregenerate persons, whose taste is not changed; nor to nominal and notional professors, who have only a superficial taste of it; but to true believers in Christ, spiritual men, who judge and discern all things; (see ^{460B}Revelation 10:9,10).

Ver. 4. *And he said unto me, son of man, go, &c.*] After he had eaten the roll; for then was he qualified to prophesy:

get thee unto the house of Israel; to whom he was to prophesy:

and speak with my words unto them: not with his own words; nor with the words of men, the enticing words of man’s wisdom; but with the words of Christ; with the taught words of the Holy Ghost; with what is written in the roll; the words of this prophecy are meant. So the Targum,

“and thou shalt prophesy the words of my prophecy unto them;”

in like manner John after he had eaten the little book, is told that he must prophesy before many people, nations, tongues, and kings, (^{460B}Revelation 10:9-11); though Ezekiel was only sent to one nation, as follows:

Ver. 5. *For thou [art] not sent to a people of a strange speech, &c.*] “Deep of lip”⁴⁵⁵, or “speech”; difficult to be got at and understood:

and of a hard language: or “heavy of tongue”^{f56} of a barbarous and unknown language, whom he could not understand, nor they him; and so would have been barbarians to one another; and consequently it could not be thought his prophesying among them, could have been of any use. This may be considered, either by way of encouragement to the prophet to go on his errand to such a people; since as he could understand them, and they him he might hope to meet with success; or, however he could deliver his message so as to be understood: or as an aggravation of the impiety perverseness and stupidity of the Israelites; that though the prophet spoke to them in their own language, yet they would not hear nor receive his words:

[but] to the house of Israel; who were a people of the same speech and language with the prophet; all spoke and understood the language of Canaan; nor were the things he delivered such as they were altogether strangers to being the same, for substance, which Moses, and the other prophets, had ever taught.

Ver. 6. *Not to many people of a strange speech and of an hard language, &c.*] The prophet was sent, not to different nations, of different languages; but to one nation of the same language; indeed several of his prophecies concern other nations, as the Ammonites, Moabites, Edomites, Tyrians, Philistines, Egyptians, and Assyrians; but then these had a relation to the, people of Israel, and were chiefly on their account; and therefore he was not sent to those nations to deliver his prophecies unto them, but to the people of Israel only; and so had no difficulty on his part concerning their language, which he would have had, had he been sent to the barbarous nations;

whose words, thou canst not understand: the prophet being, only used to the language of the Jews and not having the gift of speaking with and understanding divers tongues; as the apostles of Christ had, when they were sent to many people of different languages, and which is here tacitly intimates:

surely, had I sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee; which is an aggravation of the obstinacy and disobedience of the people of Israel; that had the barbarous nations been favoured with the same means of instruction they were they would have been obedient; (see ^{<4112>}Matthew 11:21,23); for though they could not understand the prophet’s language, nor he theirs; yet, as Kimchi observes, they would have sought for an

interpreter to have explained the prophecy to them. The thing is very strongly affirmed, “surely”, verily, **tmab**, “of a truth”; as the same Jewish writer interprets **al ma**; and both he and Jarchi take it to be the form of an oath. Some render the words, “if I had not sent thee to them, they would have hearkened unto thee”^{f57}; and the sense is, either that if the Lord had not sent him to the Israelites, but to the people a strange speech, they, the people, would have hearkened to him: or, if the Lord had not sent the prophet, but he had gone of himself, as the false prophets in their own name, the Israelites would have hearkened to him; such was their perverseness and rebellion: others render the words, “if not”, or had it not been for their strange speech and hard language, “I would have sent thee to them”^{f58}, the barbarous nation, and “they would have hearkened unto thee”; but the first sense seems best; which is confirmed by the Targum, Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and the Oriental versions.

Ver. 7. *But the house of Israel would not hearken unto thee, &c.*] “They are not willing”^{f59}; they have no desire, no inclination, to hear and hearken; but the reverse; they were capable of hearing and understanding his speech and language, and though he was sent unto them by the Lord: and indeed the reason why they did not hearken to him was not because they rejected him and his words, but because they rejected the Lord and his words; they were the words of the Lord, and his reproofs; and therefore they would not hearken to them as follows:

for they will not hearken unto me; and which is an argument why the prophet should bear with patience their disregard to him and his words, and their neglect and contempt of them; for, seeing they would not hear the Lord, how could he exact they should hear him? and therefore he should not be uneasy at it; (see ^{<B15D>}John 15:20);

for all the house of Israel [are] impudent and hardhearted; or, “strong of front, and hard of heart”^{f60}; they had a whore’s forehead, an impudent face, that could not blush and be ashamed; and hearts of stone, like a rock, and harder than the nether millstone, on which no impressions, could be made by all the admonitions and reproofs given them; (see ^{<B104>}Ezekiel 2:4); and this was the case of all of them in general, excepting some very few; which shows the sad degeneracy of this people.

Ver. 8. *Behold, I have made the, face strong against their faces, &c.*] Not that the prophet should have the same sort of impudence and confidence

they had; but that God would “give”^{f61} him such a face, as it is in the Hebrew text, such spirit and courage, that he should neither be ashamed of the words of the Lord, nor afraid to speak them to this people; so that he should be a match for them; they should not be able to outface him, or look him out of countenance; he should behave with an undaunted spirit, and with great intrepidity, amidst all opposition made to him: the Lord fits his ministers for the people he sends them to, and gives them courage and strength proportionate to the opposition they meet with; as their day is, their strength is; and all that invincible courage, boldness, and strength, with which they are endowed, it is all from the Lord, and a gift of his:

and thy forehead strong against their foreheads; which is the same thing in different words.

Ver. 9. *As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead, &c.]* Or, “than a rock”^{f62}; the “adamant” has its name in Greek, because it cannot be conquered or subdued, neither by the hammer, nor by fire; the one cannot break, nor this other consume it; land it is called “shamir” in Hebrew, from its preserving itself from both; it will cut iron in pieces, which is harder than stone, and therefore must be harder than that. Bochart takes it to be the same with “smiris”, a hard stone, which jewellers use to polish their gems with; (see ^{<3470>}Jeremiah 17:1 ^{<3472>}Zechariah 7:12). The design of the simile is to set forth the courage and fortitude of mind the prophet was endowed with, in order to face an impudent and hardhearted people;

fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they [be] a rebellious house; (see Gill on “^{<3476>}Ezekiel 2:6”).

Ver. 10. *Moreover he said unto me, son of man, &c.]* The same glorious Person as before continued speaking to him, and added, as follows:

all my words that I shall speak unto thee; not only what he had spoken to him, but what he should hereafter; for he did not tell all at once what he should say, but gradually, revealing his mind to him by little and little; but then he was to receive all that he should say, and reject nothing, nor shun to declare the whole counsel of God:

receive in thine heart, and hear with thine ears; what the Lord says should not only be diligently attended to, and heard with eagerness, but should be received, in the love of it, into the heart, and laid, up in the mind and memory, in order to be delivered out to others at a proper time.

Ver. 11. *And go, get thee to them of the captivity, &c.*] Not in the times of Hoshea king of Israel, by Shalmaneser king of Assyria, for these were placed in the cities of the Medes, (^{<2776>}2 Kings 17:6); but in the times of Jeconiah king of Judah, (^{<3000>}Ezekiel 1:2);

unto the children of thy people; the Jews, which were in the land of Chaldea:

and speak unto them, and tell them: the words the Lord spoke to him:

thus saith the Lord God; whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear: (see Gill on "^{<3016>}Ezekiel 2:5").

Ver. 12. *Then the spirit took me up, &c.*] Not the wind, nor an angel, but the Spirit of God; who took up the prophet from the ground, from the place where he was, among the captives by the river Chebar, and had seen the glorious vision described in the first chapter; and had had his call and mission, as expressed in the second chapter, and hitherto in this; and was carried by him to another company of captives, who were at another place by the same river, as appears by comparing (^{<3000>}Ezekiel 1:1-3), with (^{<3016>}Ezekiel 3:15); for this was not done in a visionary way, as Kimchi thinks, but in reality; not in spirit, but in body; just as the Spirit caught away Philip from the eunuch, (^{<4039>}Acts 8:39);

and I heard behind me a voice of a great rushing; of the living creatures and wheels, as is afterwards explained:

[saying], blessed [be] the glory of the Lord out of his place; either out of heaven, the place where his glory is manifested; so the Targum, out of the place of his Shechinah or majesty; or out of the temple, from between the cherubim over the mercy seat, from whence he was about to remove, (^{<3004>}Ezekiel 10:4). These words may be considered either as a doxology of the church, and people of God, ascribing glory, blessing, and praise unto him; not only on account of the perfections of his nature, but because of his works of nature, providence, and grace, and even for his righteous judgments on men. Maimonides^{f63}, by his place, understands the essence of God. Or as a lamentation for the departure of the blessed and glorious majesty of God from the temple, which seemed to be threatened; for the words may be rendered, "the blessed glory of the Lord out of his place"^{f64}; that is, it is just ready to go out of his place.

Ver. 13. [*I heard*] *also the noise of the wings of the living creatures, &c.*] Which they clapped, when they uttered the preceding words; (see Gill on “²⁰²⁴Ezekiel 1:24”);

that touched one another; or “kissed, a woman her sister”^{f65}; denoting their affection and agreement in the doxology or ascription of glory to God; (see ²⁰⁰⁹Ezekiel 1:9,11,23);

and the noise of the wheels over against them: the living creatures; for the wheels were by the living creatures, and went over against them, as they went, (²⁰¹⁵Ezekiel 1:15,19-21); ministers and churches join together in this doxology:

and a noise of a great rushing; which is repeated for the confirmation of the thing, and to express the greatness of the noise made by the living creatures and wheels, like that of thunder or an earthquake; it is said to be like the noise of great waters, (²⁰²⁴Ezekiel 1:24).

Ver. 14. *So the spirit lifted me up, and took me away, &c.*] Lifted him up from the earth, and carried him through the air:

and I went in bitterness; full of trouble and sorrow, that the Lord was departing from the temple; that his people had been guilty, of such crimes they had, and were such an impudent, and hardhearted people they were; and that such judgments were coming upon them he had seers written in the roll, full of lamentations, mourning, and woe:

in the heat of my spirit; the Targum and Vulgate Latin render it, “in the indignation of my spirit”; his spirit was hot and angry, he was froward and unwilling to go on the errand, to prophesy sad and dismal things to his people:

but the hand of the Lord was strong upon me; the Spirit of the Lord powerfully wrought upon him, and obliged him to go; and the hand of the Lord strengthened him, and removed his frowardness and perverseness of spirit. The Targum is,

“and prophecy from before the Lord was strong upon me;”

so Kimchi interprets it of the hand of prophecy; the Spirit of the Lord, as a spirit of prophecy, came upon him, with great impulse upon his spirit, and he could not refuse going to his people, to declare it to them.

Ver. 15. *Then I came to them of the captivity at Telabib, &c.*] For it seems the captive Jews were disposed of at different places, and there were some at this place; for this was the name of a place, as Jarchi and Kimchi observe; as were Telmelah, and Telharsa, (^{<1379>}Ezra 2:59 ^{<1079>}Nehemiah 7:69); it signifies “a heap of new fruit”, and so the Vulgate Latin version renders it: not that there were such at this time here; and the captives were beating out the ripe ears of corn, as “abib” signifies; whence the month Abib has its name, and which was the first month with the Jews; whereas it was in the fourth month when Ezekiel was here, and there could no ears of new corn, (^{<3001>}Ezekiel 1:1); according to Junius, this Telabib was a tract in Mesopotamia, reaching from Mount Masius to the river Euphrates, and lay between two rivers, Chebar and Saocoras; and he thinks the captive Jews were placed here, partly that they might be secured safe from getting away, or returning from their captivity; and partly that they might secure and defend the place from enemies, it being through inundations uninhabited, and so exposed unto them:

that dwelt by the river of Chebar; (see Gill on “^{<3001>}Ezekiel 1:1”);

and I sat where they sat; there is a double reading here; the “Cetib” or writing is **rçaw**, which Junius takes to be the name of a river the prophet calls Haesher, the same with Saocoras, connecting it with the preceding clause, “that dwelt by the river of Chebar and Haesher”; the “Keri” or marginal reading is **bçaw**, “and I sat” or “dwelt”; but both signify the same thing, Since **rça** is from **hrç**, which in Chaldee signifies to dwell⁶⁶; and the “Keri” is confirmed by the Targum, which we follow. The sense is, that he placed himself among the captives,

and remained there astonished among them seven days: at the change of place and company; at the sad condition his people were in; and, above all, at the dreadful things he had to deliver to them. The Targum renders it, “silent”; through grief and trouble. So many days Job’s friends kept silence, when they came to visit him, and saw his distress, (^{<3023>}Job 2:13). Or he might be waiting all this time for orders and instructions to prophesy; or to prepare the people to attend with more reverence and earnestness, to hear what he had to say when he should break silence. The Septuagint render it the reverse, “conversing in the midst of them”.

Ver. 16. *And it came to pass at the end of seven days, &c.*] Some think it was on the sabbath day he had the following declaration made to him, and

instructions given him; but this is not certain; nor does it follow, or to be concluded, from such a way of speaking:

that the word of the Lord came unto me, saying; the Targum is,

“the word of prophecy from before the Lord.”

Ver. 17. *Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel*, &c.] Not in a civil sense, a watchman of a town or city, or of the whole country, but in an ecclesiastical sense. So the Targum renders it by **Pyl m**, “a teacher”; whose business it was to instruct the people in divine things, to warn them of their evil ways, and of the danger they exposed them to; such were the prophets of old, and such are the ministers of the New Testament: the office is the same with that of bishops or overseers; and lies in watching over the souls of men, as shepherds over their flocks, that they go into right pastures, and not astray, and so preserves them from beasts of prey; and as watchmen of cities, to give the time of night, and, notice of approaching danger; to the discharge of which office are necessary quick sight, diligence in looking out, sobriety and vigilance, courage, constancy, and faithfulness: and they are “sons of men” that are put into this office, and not angels; sons of fallen Adam, sinful men; men subject to infirmity, weak, frail, mortal men, and oftentimes of a mean and low extraction, and greatly unworthy of so high an honour; but Christ counts them faithful, and puts them into this office; they are not made and constituted watchmen or ministers by themselves or by others, but by him; and they are given by him as such to the church of God: “son of man, I have given thee a watchman”^{f67}, &c. they become watchmen through gifts bestowed upon them, qualifying them for this office; and they themselves are gifts to the churches over whom they are placed, signified by “the house of Israel”; for a church is a house of Christ’s building, and where he dwells, and a family named of him, which he takes care of, and consists of Israelites indeed;

therefore hear the word at my mouth; for, as the prophets of old, so the ministers of the Gospel are first to hear what Christ says; and then deliver out his doctrine, called the doctrine of Christ, and the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus. So the Targum,

“and thou shalt receive the word from my Word;”

the word of prophecy, or the word of the Gospel, from Christ the essential Word;

and give them warning from me; in his name and stead, and as from his mouth, to take care of sinning against him, dishonouring his name, and wounding their own souls; that they live soberly, righteously, and godly, and adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour; that they avoid all appearances of evil, and shun the company of wicked men; the house of Israel, or church of God, are to be warned to be careful who they take into their communion, and to exclude such that are bad in principle and practice; to beware of innovations in worship, and of false teachers and false doctrines; and that they do not forsake the word, worship, and ordinances of God's house, but fill up their places, and perform all duties incumbent on them. The Targum is,

“and thou shalt warn them from sinning before me.”

Ver. 18. *When I say unto the wicked, thou shalt surely die*, &c.] Not only a corporeal but an eternal death for this is what the law threatens with, and there the Lord says this; and this is the wages, end, and issue of sin, if grace prevent not:

and thou givest him not warning; of the evil nature of sin, and of the danger it exposes to:

nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way; to abstain from it, and live another course of life:

to save his life; for such warning, caution, exhortation, and doctrine, may be a means of converting a sinner from the evil of his way, and of saving a soul from death, (⁵⁰¹⁶1 Timothy 4:16 ⁵⁰¹⁰James 5:20);

the same wicked [man] shall die in his iniquity; with the pollution and guilt of sin upon him, and so be punished for it; (see ⁴⁰²⁴John 8:24);

but his blood will I require at thine hands; thou shalt be answerable for him; his death shall be laid to thy charge, and thou shalt be chastised for thy negligence; (see ⁴⁰²⁵Acts 20:26).

Ver. 19. *Yet if thou warn the wicked*, &c.] Of his sin and danger; lay before him his evil, and show him the sad consequences of going on in a course of sin, and warn him to flee from wrath to come:

and he turn not from his wickedness, and from his wicked way; does not repent of it, nor abstain from it:

he shall die in his iniquity; and for it, and that very righteously:

but thou hast delivered thy soul; thou hast done the duty of thine office; thou art clear from the charge of negligence and sloth, and from being answerable for the death of the sinner; and shalt save thyself, though not the wicked man; (see ^{<5016>}1 Timothy 4:16).

Ver. 20. *Again, when a righteous [man] doth turn from his righteousness, &c.]* This is to be understood not of one that is truly righteous, or is justified by the righteousness of Christ; for such can never turn from that righteousness, or be in an unjustified state; seeing that is the righteousness of God, and an everlasting one; but of one that is denominated righteous, from “his” own righteousness, from a righteousness “which he hath done”, as is afterwards expressed; one that is outwardly righteous before men, that is outwardly reformed, that has a righteousness of his own, consisting of a little negative holiness, and a few moral performances; from such righteousness a man may apostatize, and go into a vicious course of life:

and commit iniquity; live in sin, make a trade of it; lead a life, the whole series and course of which is nothing else but sin; in this sense, one that is born of God, and has the righteousness of Christ revealed from faith to faith unto him, and lives by faith upon it, cannot commit sin, (^{<6189>}1 John 3:9);

and I lay a stumbling block before him; the Targum renders it, “the stumbling block of sins”; which designs either an occasion of sinning, which God permits, leaving him to his own lusts, and suffering him to fall thereby; and by this means he is discovered to be what he is, not a truly righteous man, but only one in appearance; that looked like a righteous person, but secretly a sinner, and now the Lord by such means exposes him openly; so Jarchi and other Jewish Rabbins; but Kimchi’s father interprets the stumbling block of prosperity in this world ^{f68}: or rather the punishment of sin is meant, as Kimchi himself observes; and the Septuagint renders it “torment”; since this follows up on his turning from righteousness, and committing sin; and seems to be explained by the next clause:

he shall die; the second death:

because thou hast not given him warning: of the dreadful evil of apostasy, and the sad estate of apostates, and the danger they are in, their last estate being worse than the first:

he shall die in his sin; of apostasy, and for it, being never to be recovered and brought to repentance:

and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered; according to the “Keri” or marginal reading it is, “his righteousnesses”; all his works of righteousness which he hath done; and which reading is followed by the Targum, Septuagint, Vulgate Latin, and the eastern versions; these shall not be remembered, neither in this world nor in that to come; no account shall be taken of them, nor shall they be reckoned as a righteousness unto him:

but his blood will I require at thine hand; (see Gill on “~~21:18~~ Ezekiel 3:18”).

Ver. 21. *Nevertheless, if thou warn the righteous [man], &c.*] Every righteous man, that is so in a judgment of charity, whether truly righteous or not, which the event shows; who should be warned not to trust in their own righteousness, but to depend on the righteousness of Christ; that they be careful to maintain good works, to avoid sin, and live holy lives and conversations, as follows:

that the righteous sin not; not that there is any just man that does good, and sins not; the best of men are often sinning in thought, word, or deed; but he is to be warned that he does not continue in sin, and lead a sinful course of life; which is contrary to his character, and to his faith in Christ for righteousness, which is attended with good works:

and he doth not sin; the warning and exhortation given him having so good an effect, through the power of divine grace, as to be a means of preserving him from a vain conversation:

he shall surely live; spiritually and comfortably now, and eternally hereafter:

because he is warned; that being a means, and with the divine blessing taking effect:

also thou hast delivered thy soul; (see Gill on “~~21:19~~ Ezekiel 3:19”).

Ver. 22. *And the hand of the Lord was there upon me, &c.]* At Telabib, (^{אֶבְיָב}Ezekiel 3:15). The Targum interprets “the hand of the Lord” of the spirit of prophecy, which remained upon him there; but it seems to design a fresh impulse of the Spirit, a powerful emotion of the spirit upon his spirit, stirring up to attention to what might be said unto him:

and he said unto me; the same glorious Person, the Lord Christ, described in (^{אֶבְיָב}Ezekiel 1:26-28);

arise, go forth into the plain; or “the valley”^{f69}; the Arabic version renders it, “the desert”; a solitary place, free from noise and hurry, and from the company and conversation of men; and so more fit for retirement and contemplation, and for attention to divine orders. What plain this was is not certain; Kimchi thinks it was the plain in which Babel was built, and where the Lord showed the prophet what he had in his providence done in this place formerly, in confounding the languages of men, and causing their devices to cease;

and I will there talk with thee; when alone, sedate, and composed; so God sometimes brings his people into a low and humble state and condition, into the valley of humility, and there grants them communion with himself; (see ^{אֶבְיָב}Hosea 2:14); perhaps the allusion to a custom among the Jews of revealing secrets to others in fields and deserts, and such like solitary places; (see ^{אֶבְיָב}Genesis 31:4,5)^{f70}.

Ver. 23. *Then I arose and went forth into the plain, &c.]* He was obedient to the heavenly vision, which was owing to the hand of the Lord being upon him; the power of the Spirit and grace of God influences and engages to obedience; he went forth where he was ordered, though he knew not what would be said to him, or what he should see there:

and, behold, the glory of the Lord stood there; the glorious Person described in (^{אֶבְיָב}Ezekiel 1:26-28);

as the glory which I saw by the river of Chebar; (^{אֶבְיָב}Ezekiel 1:1-3:27 28:1-26); which vision was repeated for greater certainty, and to confirm the prophecies delivered to him, and to encourage him in the performance of his office:

and I fell on my face; as he did before, when he first saw this glorious object, (^{אֶבְיָב}Ezekiel 1:28).

Ver. 24. *Then the spirit entered into me,* &c.] Again; the Spirit of God, that was in the wheels and living creatures: (see <sup>^{AMM>}Ezekiel 2:2);

and set me upon my feet; as he had done before, when in the same prostrate condition, (<sup>^{AMM>}Ezekiel 2:2);

and spake with me; either the Spirit that entered into him, and set him upright; or rather the Lord Christ, the glory of the Lord that stood where he was, and appeared to him:

and said unto me, go, shut thyself within thine house: this was not said ironically, but in earnest; and the reason either was, because the people were not fit for reproof and correction, as Jarchi thinks, being a rebellious people; or that the prophet might receive further instructions, and have all the words of his prophecy delivered to him, before he began to prophesy. Some think this shutting up was an emblem of the siege of Jerusalem. It may seem strange that the prophet should be bid to go into the plain, where the Lord promised to talk with him; and this is all that is said to him, to go home, and shut himself up in his house: but it should be observed, that this was not the only thing for which he went into the plain: he was to have, and had, a fresh view of the glory of the Lord, and of the vision he had before, for the further confirmation of him; besides, this moving him from place to place, before he prophesied, might be partly to try his faith, and partly to preserve him from the violence of the people; who, had he delivered his message at once, might have been so provoked, as to have fallen upon him, and destroyed him; as well as to prepare them to receive his prophecies with more respect and reverence, when they saw he did not rashly, and at once, deliver them out to them.

Ver. 25. *But thou, O son of man, behold, they shall put bands upon thee,* &c.] Or, “bands shall be put upon thee”; either visionally, or really; not by angels, but by the Jews, who, taking the prophet for a madman by his motions and gestures; would bind him, and keep him within doors: or figuratively this may be understood of the sins of the people, their rebellion and obstinacy, which hindered the prophet from prophesying among them as yet; and so this is observed to conciliate his mind to the divine order, to shut up himself for a while in his own house, and be silent: or else by these bonds may be meant the divine order itself, which restrained him from doing his office as yet. So the Targum,

“behold, I have appointed the words of my mouth upon thee, as a band of ropes with which they bind;”

and shall bind thee with them; which some think is emblematical of the Jews being bound by the Chaldeans:

and thou shall not go out among them; to converse with them, or prophesy unto them. The Septuagint version renders it, “shall not go out from the midst of them”; as if he should be taken out of his own house by the Jews, and be bound by them, and kept among them, and not able to get away from them; but it is to be understood of his being bound in his own house, and not able to go out of that to them; and may signify, that in like manner the Jews should not be able to go out of Jerusalem when besieged by the Chaldeans.

Ver. 26. *And I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shall be dumb*, &c.] Which is to be understood not literally, as if he was really struck dumb, as Zechariah was; (see ²⁶⁰⁹Ezekiel 4:9,14); but that such silence should be charged upon him by the Lord, that he should be as if his tongue cleaved to the roof of his mouth, as Kimchi interprets it, and as if he was a dumb man: and so the Septuagint version renders it, “I will bind thy tongue”; lay an embargo upon it, that is, it shall be silent; and this sense is confirmed by what follows:

and shall not be to them a reproof; which was in judgment to them, and a giving them up to their own hearts’ lusts; for, though reproofs were disagreeable to them, and they chose to be without them, yet they were necessary for them, and might have been useful to them; but they provoking the Lord, he takes away his word from them, and commands his prophet to be silent, and let them alone, to go on in their sins without control; which was a sore judgment upon them:

for they [are] a rebellious house; (see Gill on “²⁶¹⁵Ezekiel 2:5”).

Ver. 27. *But when I speak with thee*, &c.] Either when I have made an end of speaking to thee, when I have told thee all my mind, and have given thee all the instructions and prophecies thou art to deliver out; or when I shall speak to thee again, and give thee orders to speak:

I will open thy mouth; loose thy tongue, cause thee to break silence, and thou shall speak freely and fully all that I command thee; fulness of matter, and freedom of speech, are both from the Lord; liberty and opportunity of

speaking are at his pleasure; and when he speaks his servants must prophesy, (^{<3188>}Amos 3:8);

and thou shalt say unto them, thus saith the Lord God; so and so, whatsoever he is pleased to order to be spoken; not that the following words are what were to be said to the people; but they are said to the prophet for his own use, that he might not be uneasy at the unfruitfulness and failure of his ministry:

he that heareth, let him hear; if any will hearken to what is sent to them, as few of them will, it is very well:

and he that forbeareth, let him forbear; or, “he that ceaseth, let him cease”^{f71}; he that ceaseth from hearing, let him do so, do not mind it, or be discouraged at it:

for they [are] a rebellious house; (see Gill on “^{<3188>}Ezekiel 2:5”). The Targum is,

“he that receiveth, let him receive instruction; and he that ceaseth, let him cease from sinning, for it is a rebellious people.”