**THE EXPOSITION OF HOLY SCRIPTURE BY ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

**ISAIAH-027. GOD'S STRANGE WORK by ALEXANDER MACLAREN**

*"That He may do His work, His strange work; and bring to pass His act, His strange act."*

*Isaiah 28:21*

How the great events of one generation fall dead to another! There is something very pathetic in the oblivion that swallows up world-resounding deeds. Here the prophet selects two instances which to him are solemn and singular examples of divine judgment, and we have difficulty in finding out to what he refers. To him they seemed the most luminous illustrations he could find of the principle which he is proclaiming, and to us all the light is burned out of them. They are the darkest portion of the verse. Several different events have been suggested. But most probably the historical references here are to David's slaughter of the Philistines (2 Sam. v., and I Chron. xiv.). This is probable, but by no means certain. If so, the words are made still more threatening by asserting that He will treat the Israelites as if they were Philistines. But the point on which we should concentrate attention is this remarkable expression, according to which judgment is God's strange work. And that is made more emphatic by the use of a word translated act, which means service, and is almost always used for work that is hard and heavy--a toil or a task.

**I. The work in which God delights.**

It is here implied that the opposite kind of activity is congenial to Him. The text declares judgment to be an anomaly, out of His ordinary course of action and foreign to His nature.

We may pause for a moment on that great thought that God has a usual course of action, which is usual because it is the spontaneous expression and true mirror of His character. What He thus does shows that character to His creatures, who cannot see Him but in the glass of His works, and have to infer His nature, as they best may, from His works. The Bible begins with His nature and thence interprets His work.

The work in which God delights is the utterance of His love in blessing.

The very essence of love is self-manifestation.

The very being of God is love, and all being delights in its own self-manifestation, in its own activity.

How great the thought is that He is glad when we let Him satisfy His nature by making us glad!

The ordinary course of His government in the world is blessing.

**II. The Task in which He does not delight, or His Strange Work.**

The consequences of sin are God's work. The miseries consequent on sin are self-inflicted, but they are also God's judgments on sin. We may say that sin automatically works out its results, but its results follow by the will of God on account of sin.

That work is a necessity arising from the nature of God. It is foreign to His heart but not to His nature. God is both the light of Israel for blessing, and a consuming fire. The two opposite effects are equally the result of the contact of God and man. Light pains a diseased eye and gladdens a sound one. The sun seen through a mist becomes like a ball of red-hot iron. The whole revelation of God becomes a pain to an unloving soul.

But God's very love compels Him to punish.

Some modern notions of the love of God seem to strike out righteousness from His nature altogether, and substitute for it a mere good nature which is weakness, not love, and is cruelty, not kindness.

There is nothing in the facts of the world or in the teachings of the gospel which countenances the notion of a God whose fondness prevents Him from scourging.

What do you call it when a father spares the rod and spoils the child?

Even this world is a very serious place for a man who sets himself against its laws. Its punishments come down surely and not always slowly. There is nothing in it to encourage the idea of impunity.

That work is to Him an Unwelcome Necessity. Bold words. I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner. He doth not willingly inflict. The awful power of sin to divert the current of blessing. Christ's tears over Jerusalem. How unwelcome that work is to them is shown by the slowness of His judgments, by multiplied warnings. Rising up early, He tells men that He will smite, in order that He may never need to smite.

That work is a certainty. However reluctantly He smites, the blow will fall.

**III. The Strange Work of Redemption.**

The mightiest miracle. The revelation of God's deepest nature. The wonder of the universe.