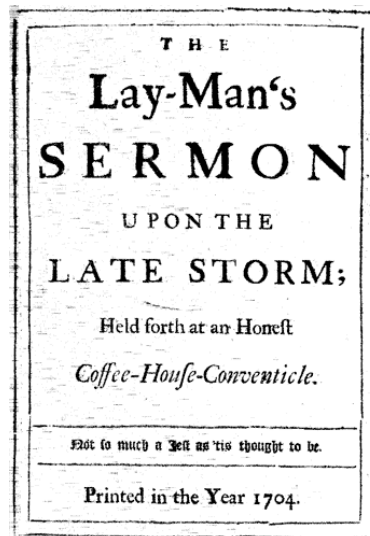


Daniel Defoe, *The Lay-Man's Sermon upon the Late Storm* (1704)

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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 Express, 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 Particular 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.

The fallen Oaks, which stood before to tell us they were the longest liv'd of all God's Creatures, Preach to us, and tell us that the most trowing object of humane Beauty and strength must lye humble and prostrate, when he is pleased to give a Check to that Splendor which was deriv'd from his Power.

The Wrecks of our Navies and Fleets Preach to us, that 'tis in vain we pretend to be Wall'd about by the Ocean, and ride Masters of the Sea: And that, if he who bestow'd that Scituation upon us thinks fit, he can make that Element which has been our Strength, and the Encreaser of our Wealth, be the Grave of our Treasure, and the Enemy of our Commerce; he can put it into so violent Agitation, by the blast of his Mouth, that all our Defence and the Naval Strength we have vallued our selves so much upon, shall at once be swallow'd up in the Mouth of our Friend the Sea; and we shall find our Destruction in the very thing from which we expected our Defence.

Our Seamen and Soldiers, whose Dead Bodies Embrace the English Shores, Preach aloud to us, that whenever we think fit to Embark them on any Design, which Heaven approves not of, he can blast the Embrio, and devour those People whose Hands are lifted up against Justice and Right.

Also they Preach to us, Not to build our hopes of Success upon the multitude of Ships or Men, who are thus easily reduc'd, and the Strength of a whole Nation brought to Ruine in a Moment.

These are the Monitors of our Missfortunes, and some of these admonitions would be well preach'd from the Mouths of those whose Talient as well as Office gives them reason to do it, and us to expect it.

But since the Sons of the Prophets have not yet thought it proper to enter very far into this Matter, not doubting but they will in due time find it as suitable to their Inclination as 'tis to their Duty,

In the mean time let us see if no uncommon Application may be made of so uncommon a Circumstance.

First, 'tis matter of wonder that any Man can be so senceless, as to suppose there is nothing extraordinary in so signal an Instance of a Supream Power; but 'tis much more remarkable that those who have Religion enough to own it a Judgment, are yet at a loss how to appropriate it's signification.

Every one thinks it to be a Judgment upon the Person or Parties they see touch'd with it. W—— the Carpenter was knock'd on the head with a Stack of Chimneys, and his Wife saved; all the Neighbours cried out 'twas a Judgment upon him for keeping a Whore; but if Stacks of Chimnies were to have fallen on the Heads of all that keep Whores, Miserere Dei.

S—— was kill'd by the like Accident, and he must be singl'd out for Extortion; But think ye that he was a Sinner above all the Gallileans?

The Jacobites and Non-Jurants shall rise up in Judgment against this Generation, and shall condemn them, for they tell us, this Storm is a Judgment on the whole Nation, for Excluding their Lawful Sovereign, and Abjuring his Posterity: Upon this head they have been preaching up Repentance, and Humiliation to us; and some of them are willing to reduce all to a very practical Exhortation, and tell us, we ought to look upon it as a Loud Call to Restore the Right Owner (as they call him) to the Possession of his own again; that is, in short, to rebel against a Mild, Gentle, Just and Protestant Queen, and call in the Popish Posterity of an abdicated Tyrant.

These Gentlemen are Men of Uses and Application, and know very well how to make an Advantage of God's Judgments, when they serve their turn.

The Whigs and Occasional Conformists shall rise up in Judgment against this Generation; for they are sensible of the present severe Stroke of Providence, and think 'tis a mark of Heavens Displeasure upon the Nation, for the violent methods made use of by some People against them, for their Religion, contrary to their Native Right, and the Liberty of their Consciences.

Some think a general Blast follows all the Endeavours of this Nation against the Common Enemy, for their slighting and reproaching the Glorious Memory of the late King William, whose Gallant Endeavours for the general good of Europe, and of England in particular, were Treacherously thwarted and disappointed while he was alive, and are Basely and Scandalously undervalued and slighted now he is Dead; and of this sort I confess my self enclined to be one.

From these general Observations we may descend to particulars, and every one judges according to their own Fancy.

Some will have it, that the Slaughter and Destruction among the Fleet, is a Judgment upon them, for going into the Streights, and coming home again without doing any business; but those forget, that if they did all they were ordered to do, the Fault lies in those who sent them, and not in they that went.

Some will have the Damage among the Colliers to be a Judgment, upon those who have Engross'd the Trade, and made the Poor pay so dear for Coals; not enquiring whether those Engrossers of the Coals are not left safe on Shore, while the poor Seamen are drown'd, who know nothing of the matter.

'Tis plain to me, who ever are Punish'd by the Storm, we that are left have a share in the Judgment, and a Trebble concern in the Cause.

If it could be said that those who are destroy'd, or who have suffered the loss of Lives, Limbs or Goods, were the only People who gave any occasion to the Divine Justice thus severely to Revenge it self, then all admonition to the rest of Mankind would be useless, any farther than it directed them to be Cautious how they provoked him in like manner; but have we not all had a hand in the general provocation, though not an equal share in the general Calamity.

Sometimes the Judgements of Heaven, bear so much Analogy to the Crimes, that the Punishment points out the Offence, and 'tis easy to distinguish what it is the perticular hand of Justice points at.

And if we will seek for a Perticular case, in which Heaven seems to have singled out this way of Punishment on the Nation, as best proportion'd to the general National Crime we are all guilty of? what seems more Rational than to Judge that tis a severe Animadversion upon the Feuds and Storms of parties kept up among us in this Nation, with such unnatural Heat, and such unaccountable Fury, that no man, who has the least Compassion for his Native Country, but must with more than Common Grief, be concerned for it, since unless some speedy course be taken to bring a general Composure upon the minds of Men, the general ruin seems Inevitable.

If the matters in Debate were of Extraordinary Consequence, there might be some pretence for Espousing contrary parties with unusual heat; but while the difference lies in small, and, in some cases, indifferent things, tis a most inexcusable Madness that the Feuds shou'd be run up so high, that all manner of Charity should Perish and be lost among us.

We have had an Extraordinary Bustle in the World about Moderation, and all Parties pretend to it, and now we are as busy about Peace, and every one lays in a Loud Claim to it.

I have seen, with some regret, the strange Mysterious Management of this Age about Moderation, and tho' some late Authors have Published that Moderation is a Vertue, It begins to be a question whether it is or no.

I wish some Body would make enquiry after the occasion that has brought this Blessed Word into so much Contempt in the World; tis very hard that a word expressive of the most Glorious Principle in the World, should become the Brand of reproach, and a Badge of Infamy to Parties; be a Nick-name it self, and be Nick-nam'd on every side; and that at a time when the Vertue it self, is perhaps the only thing left in the World, that can preserve this Nation from Destruction.

'Tis an ill sign especially for *England* when Wars abroad wont make us Friends at home. Foreign dangers us'd to Unite us from whence Queen *Elizabeth*, has been said to leave this Character of the Nation behind her, that they were much easier to be Govern'd in a time of War than in Peace.

But when This, which us'd to be the only Cure of all our diseases, fails us, 'tis a sign the Distemper is Grown very strong, and there is some more than usual Room for despair. The only Way left the Nation is to obtain from those in power, that Moderation may cease being the pretence and be really the practice.

These men [i.e. those who persecute Dissenters], 'tis true, Cry out of the danger of the Church, but can they make it appear that the Church is in any danger from Moderation and Temper; can they pretend that there is no way to secure her, but by pulling down all that differ with them, no way to save her but by the ruin of her Protestant Brethren; there are Thousands of Loyal honest Church-men, who are not of this mind; who believe that Moderation and Charity to Protestant Dissenters is very Consistant with the safety of the Church and with the present general Union which they Earnestly desire.

As to Persons we have nothing to say to them, but this, without pretending to prophesy, may be safely advanced, that Heaven it self, has Eminently declared it self against the Fury and Immoderate Zeal of those Gentlemen, and told us as plainly as possible, unless we would Expect a Voice from on high, that he neither Has nor Designs to bless this Generation nor their proceedings.

When ever our rulers think fit to see it, and to employ the Men and the Methods which Heaven approves, then we may expect success from abroad, Peace at home, prosperity in Trade, Victory in War, plenty in the Field, Mild and Comfortable Seasons, Calm Air, Smooth Seas, and safe Habitations.

Till then we are to expect our Houses Blown down, our Pallaces Shatter'd, our Voyages broken, our Navys Ship-wreck'd, our Saylor's Drown'd, our Confederates Beaten, our Trade ruin'd, our Money spent and our Enemies encreased.

'Tis plain Heaven has suited his Punishment to the Offence, has Punish'd the Stormy Temper of this Party of Men with *Storms of his Vengeance, Storms on their Navies,*

*Storms on their Houses, Storms on their Confederates, and I question not will at last with Storms in their Consciences.*

If there be any Use to be made of this matter, 'tis to excite the Nation to Spue out from among them these Men of Storms, that Peace, Love, Charity and a General Union may succeed, and God may Bless us, Return to us and delight to dwell among us, that the Favour of Heaven may Return to us, and the Queen who has heartily declared her Eyes open to this needful happiness, may enjoy the Blessing of Wise Counsellors and Faithful Servants, that Constant Victory may Crown all our Enterprizes, and the General Peace of Europe may be Established.

If any one can tell us a way to bring all these Blessed ends to pass, without a General Peace of Parties and Interests at home, he is Wellcome to do it, for I profess It is hid from my Eyes.

*FINIS.*