

# CHAPTER 2

## INTRODUCTION TO PROVERBS 2

This chapter directs to the means of attaining to the knowledge of divine things, and shows the profit and advantage arising from thence. The means are, embracing the doctrines of the Gospel, and retaining in memory and affection the ordinances of it, (~~2111~~Proverbs 2:1); and an inclination of the ear and an application of the heart to the knowledge of these things, (~~2112~~Proverbs 2:2). An earnest and importunate desire, expressed by prayer, after the same, (~~2113~~Proverbs 2:3); and a diligent and unwearied search for them, as for silver and hid treasure, (~~2114~~Proverbs 2:4). The advantages are, that such shall attain to the fear and knowledge of God; which may be concluded from these being the gift of God to his people, and from their being laid up for them, whom he carefully keeps and preserves, (~~2115~~Proverbs 2:5-8); and not only so, but such learn to do that which is just and right among men, (~~2116~~Proverbs 2:9). And, besides, such is the nature of divine wisdom, that, when it has once got a place in the heart and in the affections, it will be a means of preserving both from the ways of evil men, (~~2117~~Proverbs 2:10-12); who are described, (~~2118~~Proverbs 2:13-15). And from the evil woman, whose character is given, (~~2119~~Proverbs 2:16,17); whose vicious course of life, and the ways she leads persons into, are represented as very dangerous, (~~2120~~Proverbs 2:18,19). And, on the contrary, such is the usefulness of true wisdom, that it leads into the way of good men, who will be happy and safe, when the wicked shall be destroyed, (~~2121~~Proverbs 2:20-22).

**Ver. 1.** *My son*, etc.] These are either the continuation of the words of Solomon to his son Rehoboam; or to anyone that came to him for instruction, or was within the reach of being taught by him; whom he addresses in this tender and affectionate manner, in order to gain his attention to what he was about to say: or else they are the words of Wisdom, or Christ, continued, thus bespeaking: his children and people; and giving them some very wholesome counsel and advice, backed with the most powerful and prevailing arguments;

*if thou wilt receive my words*; or doctrines: the doctrines of the Gospel, relating to the person, office, and grace of Christ, and salvation by him; such as the words of peace, pardon, righteousness, and life; which are to be received, not as the word of man, but as the word of God; and with all readiness of mind and willingness, as they were by the Bereans; and most gladly, as by the three thousand pricked to the heart under Peter's sermon; and as they are and will be by every sensible sinner;

*and hide my commandments with thee*; in the heart; so as to have a high esteem of them, and a hearty affection and value for them; retain them in memory, and frequently think of them and meditate upon them, and constantly observe them; (see <sup><B11></sup>Psalm 119:11,127,128).

**Ver. 2.** *So that thou incline thine ear unto Wisdom*, etc.] Harken to Wisdom, that is, Christ; or rather to the instruction of Wisdom, which is the Gospel; so called, because it is the produce of divine wisdom, what the wisdom of man could never have devised, and which it opposes; and in which there is a most glorious display of the wisdom of God, in the justification and salvation of his people by Christ, (<sup><B16></sup>1 Corinthians 2:6,7); and is worth listening unto with the greatest attention, which is what is designed by this expression;

*[and] apply thine heart to understanding*; to a spiritual and experimental understanding of the Gospel, and the truths of it: for an inclination of the ear, without an application of the heart, which signifies the intenseness of the mind, an earnest and hearty desire after knowledge, will signify nothing; a hypocrite may seemingly hear with great attention, and show much affection, and yet his heart be after the world and the things of it, (<sup><B31></sup>Ezekiel 33:31); (see <sup><B12></sup>Psalm 119:112).

**Ver. 3.** *Yea, if thou criest after knowledge*, etc.] Of God, Christ, and the Gospel; not only bow the ear and bend the mind to these things, but importunately and fervently pray for them; not only attend the ministry of the word by men, but cry to God to give the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of divine and spiritual things; which supposes some sense of a want of it, an hearty desire for it, having some apprehension of the worth and value of it; and that it is to be had, as there is indeed great reason to hope for and expect it, (<sup><B5></sup>James 1:5);

*[and] liftest up thy voice for understanding*; for Christ, who is understanding as well as wisdom, (<sup><B4></sup>Proverbs 8:14); or rather for an

understanding of the Gospel and the mysteries of it, which men do not naturally understand; and for which there must be an understanding given, or the eyes of the understanding must be enlightened; or Christ, by his spirit and grace, must open the understanding, that it may understand these things; which is granted to those who lift up their voice in prayer for it.

**Ver. 4.** *If thou seekest her as silver*, etc.] That is, wisdom, knowledge, and understanding; which all signify and relate unto one and the same thing, expressed here by “her”: namely, the doctrine of wisdom, or Christ; that is, the Gospel, and a spiritual and experimental knowledge and understanding of it, and the truths thereof; which are as desirable and valuable as silver, and more so; and which may be fitly compared to it, and be preferred before it, for their purity, solidity, and duration; (see <sup><13972></sup>Psalm 119:72 <sup><1382-1></sup>1 Corinthians 3:12); and are to be sought after with as much and more eagerness, affection, and diligence, as silver is by those who are most covetous of it, (<sup><1380></sup>Proverbs 8:10);

*and searchest for her as [for] hid treasures*; the Gospel is a treasure, (<sup><1017-2></sup>2 Corinthians 4:7); an accumulation of riches. It contains rich truths, things valuable for their antiquity; for being far fetched and dearly bought, coming from heaven, and sealed by the blood of Christ, and the holy martyrs of Jesus; and for the abundance of them; there are treasures of wisdom and knowledge in the Gospel, and in Christ the sum and substance of it, who is full of truth as well as grace, (<sup><6014-3></sup>Colossians 2:3 <sup><6014-3></sup>John 1:14). It contains rich blessings of grace, such as are spiritual, solid, and substantial, sure and irreversible; and a multitude of them, (<sup><6153></sup>Romans 15:29); and also rich promises, exceeding great and precious ones; which are absolute and unconditional, suited to the various cases of God’s people, and sure to all the seed: and it reveals the riches of God’s goodness, his special goodness in Christ; the unsearchable riches of Christ; and the riches both of grace and glory. And under this notion of a treasure is it to be searched for, and as an hid treasure; in allusion to what is laid up in the cabinets of princes, or lies in the bowels of the earth, as precious stones: Pliny<sup>f36</sup> says, that “topazin”, in the language of the Troglodytes, has the signification of seeking, because “topazes” are diligently sought for and searched after; (see Gill on “<sup><13319></sup>Job 28:19”). The Gospel, and the truths of it, were greatly hid under the former dispensation from the Gentile world, and very much from the Jews themselves; being wrapped up in dark prophecies, obscure hints, and shadowy types and sacrifices; and are now, and always were, entirely hid from the wicked and reprobate part of the world, from them

that are lost, and from God's own elect before conversion. This is "the fellowship of the mystery" that was "hid in God", in his heart, from all eternity, (<sup>488D</sup>Ephesians 3:9,10): the truths of it are the "treasures of wisdom and knowledge hid" in Christ, (<sup>500B</sup>Colossians 2:3); and likewise the "treasure hid [in the] field" of the Scriptures, (<sup>4224</sup>Matthew 22:44); which therefore are to be searched into for them, with like labour and resolution with which men dig into the earth, to find the rich ore that is in the bowels of it: and this should be done by diligent reading them; by frequent and deep meditation on them; by constant hearing the truths of the Gospel preached; by earnest prayer for the illumination of the divine Spirit to understand them; and by all the help of the writings of good men, and conversation with them, that can be had. These are things to be sought for and searched after, in the first place, in the early time of life; and with the utmost diligence and labour, as being of the greatest moment and importance.

**Ver. 5.** *Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord*, etc.] The grace of fear, and the exercise of it: which is the beginning of wisdom and knowledge, and is a treasure itself, (<sup>20007</sup>Proverbs 1:7 9:10 <sup>2336</sup>Isaiah 33:6). By means of the Gospel the Lord works it in the hearts of his people by his Spirit; and by the same leads them into the riches of his special grace and "goodness", which they are influenced by to "fear", and the Lord for the sake of it: and particularly they are led hereby to the pardoning grace and mercy of God, which is with him, that he may "be feared"; and it is the Gospel which induces and encourages a true filial fear of God, by which men "depart from evil"; for that teaches them to deny all manner of sin, and to live a godly life and conversation: so that through a diligent search after the knowledge of the Gospel, and an attaining it, men come to have a spiritual, experimental, and practical understanding of the fear of God as a grace; and also, as it includes the whole worship of God, by means of Gospel light, they come to understand what sort of worship that is God is to be worshipped with; that it is pure, spiritual, and evangelical, suited to his nature and will: what the ordinances of divine service are; and that these are to be kept as they were delivered, and in the exercise of faith, from a principle of love, and with a view to the glory, of God, without trusting to them or depending on them for salvation. And this is the advantage arising from a diligent search after the doctrine of wisdom, or the Gospel, and a knowledge and understanding of it; and is used as an argument encouraging to it; and another follows;

*and find the knowledge of God*; such a knowledge of God as is not to be found by the light of nature, in the whole volume of the creatures, and in all the writings of the philosophers; no, nor in the law of Moses; for though much of God and his perfections may be seen and known by the things that are made, and much of the will of God by the law he gave; yet by neither of these is the knowledge of God in Christ, which is “life eternal”. This only is to be found in the Gospel, and by means of it; here only it is brought to light; and through this men not only find it, but increase more and more in it: herein is a glorious display of his persons and perfections, of his counsels and purposes, of his covenant and promises, of his mind and will, with respect to doctrine and worship; and of the way of peace, life, and salvation, by Jesus Christ; which must serve greatly to engage and excite persons to a diligent search and pursuit after it. And all that is here said is designed to encourage a diligent search after divine things; for, as the poet<sup>f37</sup> says, there is nothing so difficult but by searching may be found out.

**Ver. 6.** *For the Lord giveth wisdom*, etc.] Natural wisdom in all its branches, with all its improvements, and in its utmost latitude and perfection; and spiritual wisdom, which lies in the knowledge of a man’s self, his own folly, impurity, impotence, and misery; being wise unto salvation; in the knowledge of Christ, as the only way of salvation, and of God in Christ; in partaking of the true grace, which is wisdom in the hidden part; in being acquainted experimentally with the doctrines of the Gospel; and in walking wisely and circumspectly, and as becomes it, which is practical wisdom: and all this is the gift of God; as is also Christ, who is wisdom, and is given to be wisdom to his people. He is the gift of God to them, in all characters he bears, and relations he stands in; he is a very large comprehensive gift, an unspeakable one; which is given freely and liberally, and is never taken away again. Now this is said, partly to caution such who search after wisdom, and find it, not to attribute it to their diligence and industry, but to the grace of God; and partly as a direction where to go for it; and as an encouragement to hope to have it, since the Lord freely gives it, (~~SOME~~ James 1:5);

*out of his mouth [cometh] knowledge and understanding*; by the prophets of the Old Testament who came with a “Thus saith the Lord”, and were the mouth of the Lord to the people; from whence flowed the knowledge of divine things; of the will of God; of the Messiah, his person and offices; of his coming, sufferings, death and salvation by him: and by his Son, by whom he has spoke in these last days, and has declared all his mind; and by

whom the doctrines of grace and truth, and the knowledge of them, are come fully and clearly, (<sup><3006></sup>Hebrews 1:1 <sup><4017></sup>John 1:17,18); and by the Scriptures of truth, both of the Old and of the New Testament, which are the word of God; what are breathed by him and come out of his mouth, and are able to make men wise unto salvation: and by the ministers of the Gospel, who speak in the name of the Lord, and the Lord by them; and by means of whom he imparts much spiritual and evangelical knowledge to the sons of men; the mouth of a Gospel minister, who is the month of God to men, “speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment”, (<sup><4873></sup>Psalm 37:30). This clause is added, to encourage to a search after wisdom in the use of means; namely, by attending on the word, and the ministry of it.

**Ver. 7.** *He layeth up sound wisdom for the righteous*, etc.] In order to give it to them that seek for it; which is another encouragement to search after it. By “sound wisdom” may be meant, not the law, as Kimchi and Ben Melech; so called, because it endures for ever, when all beings are defective and come to nothing; but the Gospel, which is sound doctrine, pure and not corrupt; true and real wisdom, in opposition to that which has only the show of wisdom, and is science falsely so called; and this was hid in God, in Christ, and laid up as a treasure in the sacred Scriptures: or else the true grace of God, in distinction from that which is counterfeit; and is that goodness of his, which he has laid up in his heart, and in the covenant of his grace; and the fulness of grace which he has laid up in Christ for them (<sup><4919></sup>Psalm 31:19); or eternal glory and happiness. The word here used signifies “essence”, “substance”<sup>f38</sup>; that which really is, and is solid and substantial; and such are the glories of the other world the crown of righteousness, the hope laid up in heaven, and the inheritance reserved there, (<sup><5005></sup>Colossians 1:5 <sup><5048></sup>2 Timothy 4:8 <sup><6004></sup>1 Peter 1:4). These are real things, though invisible, and are rich and valuable; and have substance and solidity in them, in opposition to earthly riches, which are a vain show, and are things that are not, and at best temporal and perishing; but these are an enduring substance, (<sup><2082></sup>Proverbs 8:21 23:5 <sup><3034></sup>Hebrews 10:34). The Septuagint render it by “salvation”, and the Targum by a word which signifies “glory” and “honour”; all which may well be understood of eternal life which is laid up and reserved “for the righteous”: not for such who are only so in show and imagination, but for those who are really and truly so; not for those who are legally, but evangelically righteous; or not for such that seek righteousness by the law, but by faith in Christ; for such who are made righteous by the righteousness of Christ imputed to them, and by

faith receive it, and lay hold on it as their righteousness; and in consequence of this live soberly and righteously: for these only eternal life is prepared; they only have a right unto it, and a meetness for it, and shall enjoy it;

*[he is] a buckler to them that walk uprightly*; who are sincere in their deportment before God and men; who walk according to the rule of the divine word; who walk by faith on Christ, and walk on in him as they have received him; and go on living by faith on his righteousness, which is walking in his uprightness, till they come to be with him for ever in heaven. To these the Lord is a “buckler” or shield; he covers them with the “shield of faith”, his own Son, his blood righteousness, and sacrifice; which faith lays hold on and uses as a shield against Satan’s fiery darts; and gives them “the shield of salvation” which secures them from sin and wrath and every enemy; and encompasses them about with his “favour”, as a “shield”, which is immutable and invariable; and keeps them by his power through faith unto salvation, (<sup><4116></sup>Ephesians 6:16 <sup><4135></sup>Psalms 18:35 5:12 <sup><4105></sup>1 Peter 1:5); with this compare (<sup><4150></sup>Genesis 15:1) (<sup><4088></sup>Psalms 3:3 18:2 84:11). Some<sup>f39</sup> read these words by way of apposition, and understand them of sound wisdom; that that is a buckler or shield to the persons here described; (see <sup><4072></sup>Ecclesiastes 7:12).

**Ver. 8.** *He keepeth the paths of judgment*, etc.] That is, the Lord keeps them; he does that which is just and right himself, in the course of his providence, and in the methods of his grace; and as he guides the feet of his people in the ways of righteousness and holiness, he keeps them there from turning out of them. The words may be rendered, “to keep the paths of judgment”<sup>f40</sup>; and so expresses the end, fruit, and effect of the Lord’s being a buckler to them, as he is said to be in (<sup><4107></sup>Proverbs 2:7): he is their shield and protection, so as either to keep them in the right ways in which they should go; or that they might studiously observe them, and keep walking therein, without stumbling in them, or declining from them;

*and preserveth the way of his saints*; to whom he has been kind and bountiful; or who have been merciful, liberal, and generous to others; who having partook of the grace of God themselves, are useful to men: the Targum calls them “righteous ones”. These the Lord preserves by his power and grace, in the way in which he has led them, and which is his own way, safe to his kingdom and glory: for none of his saints, his holy and



righteous ones, shall ever perish; the way in which he directs them, and in which he keeps them, leads to everlasting life; see (<sup>(~~911B~~)</sup>1 Samuel 2:9).

**Ver. 9.** *Then shalt thou understand righteousness and judgment*, etc.] This is another fruit and effect of the Gospel, and of a spiritual understanding of it; that besides the knowledge of God, and how to behave with reverence towards him, (<sup>(~~911B~~)</sup>Proverbs 2:5); it leads men into a notion of doing that which is right and just among men; it gives them not only a theoretic but a practical understanding of justice, and a true judgment of what is right and wrong; or gives such an understanding thereof as that they practise it; for it teaches men to live soberly, righteously, and godly, (<sup>(~~911B~~)</sup>Titus 2:11,12). It is not only a revelation and ministration of the righteousness of Christ as the only matter of a sinner's justification before God; and informs a man's judgment so that he can distinguish between truth and error, right and wrong, good and bad notions and practices; but it influences his actions, life, and conversation, and engages him to do works of righteousness from the best principles, upon the best motives, and with the best views;

*and equity; [yea], every good path*; that is, so to understand equity, as to do that which is equitable between man and man; and to understand every good path which the word of God directs to, even all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord, so as to walk in them; these things the Gospel acquaints men with, and urges them to observe: or the words may be rendered, either "the rectitude" or "equity of fall good paths", as the Syriac version; how just, and right, and plain, and equitable, everyone is, and therefore ought to be walked in; or "plainnesses", or "most plain", is or shall be "every good path"<sup>f41</sup>, to them that have a spiritual and experimental knowledge of the Gospel; and by it an understanding of their duty. One word signifies "plain" and "straight", and another "round"<sup>f42</sup>, and both are true of the path of righteousness; for though it is a circle of duty saints walk in, yet straight and plain.

**Ver. 10.** *When wisdom entereth into thine heart*, etc.] Either Christ, the Wisdom of God; who enters there at conversion, and sets up a throne in the heart, and dwells there by faith: or else the Gospel, the wisdom of God in a mystery; which enters not into the head only, as in hypocrites and formal professors; nor into the natural affections, as in the stony ground hearers; but into the heart, opened by the Spirit of God to receive it, so as to have a spiritual understanding of it; which is done when the Gospel comes not in word only, but in the demonstration and power of the Spirit;



when a man truly understands it, approves of it, loves it, believes it; and it has a place in his heart, and richly dwells there;

*and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul*; which the Gospel thus entering gives; even the knowledge of God in Christ, as the God of all grace, as gracious and merciful, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin; the knowledge of Christ, as the only Redeemer and Saviour; and the knowledge of Gospel truths, which lead and relate unto him: all which is pleasant to a gracious soul, and affords unspeakable delight to the mind; and is sweeter, as every truth of the Gospel is, than the honey or the honeycomb; (see ~~2063~~ Proverbs 16:24).

**Ver. 11.** *Discretion shall preserve thee*, etc.] Which wisdom or the Gospel gives, or the Lord by the means of it; for the Gospel makes a man wise and discreet in the business of salvation, and in his conduct and deportment; and the discretion it gives him will put him upon his guard, and direct him to watch against every error, and every false way. And so the words may be rendered, “discretion will watch over thee”; to keep thee from everything pernicious in doctrine and practice. The Septuagint version renders it, “good counsel”; which wisdom gives, and the Gospel is full of; and which, if attended to, is a means of the preservation of the saints;

*understanding shall keep thee*; which is only the same thing expressed in other words. The Septuagint version renders it, “an holy thought”; and the Arabic version, “a just thought shall preserve thee in thy last times”. What these are a means of keeping and preserving from is explained in the following verses.

**Ver. 12.** *To deliver thee from the way of the evil [man]*, etc.] Who is so by nature and practice, who is hardened in sin and abandoned to it, whose course of life is evil, and who endeavours to draw others into the same evil practices; now the Gospel, and a spiritual knowledge of it, are a means of preserving men from following the examples of such persons, and from walking with them in the ways of sin: or from “the evil way”<sup>43</sup>, from every evil way, from a vicious course of life; not from idolatry only, as some interpret it, though this may be included, and chiefly designed; but from all manner of sin, from everything that is contrary to the law of God and sound doctrine;

*from the man that speaketh froward things*; perverse things, things contrary to the light of nature, to divine revelation, to the word of God,

both law and Gospel; if a single man is meant, he might be thought to be the man of sin, antichrist, who has a mouth speaking blasphemies against God, his name, his tabernacle, and them that dwell therein, (~~613B~~ Revelation 13:5,6); and the Gospel delivers men from following him, and falling in with his perverse doctrines and practices; but the word seems to be a collective one, and to be understood of all wicked men, to whom the description agrees, as it is explained in the following verses in the plural number; who out of their evil hearts, and the abundance of wickedness there, speak evil things, tending to debauch the minds and manners of others; to be delivered from whom is a singular mercy. Jarchi restrains this to heretics, and such as caused Israel to apostatize to idolatry, and turned the law into evil. The Gospel is undoubtedly a means of preserving from error and heresy.

**Ver. 13.** *Who leave the paths of uprightness*, etc.] Or “righteousness”, or the “right [and plain] ways”<sup>f44</sup>; which the light of nature and the law of God, and especially the Gospel of Christ, direct to; and in which they have been trained up, having had a religious education; for it supposes them to have been externally in these ways, since they are said to leave them; for though persons do not easily and ordinarily leave the ways they have been brought up in, yet sometimes they do; and there are instances of it, and such generally are the worst of men;

*to walk in the ways of darkness*: sin, ignorance, and infidelity; in which they that walk know not where they are, nor whither they are a going, and which must be very uncomfortable as well as dangerous; in which only works of darkness are done, and which lead to blackness of darkness, the darkness of hell; a miserable choice, a sad change this! So Schultens renders it, “ways of horrid darkness”.

**Ver. 14.** *Who rejoice to do evil*, etc.] At the doing of it, or when they have done it; they are glad of an opportunity of doing mischief, and glory when they have done it; it is a sport and pastime to them, (~~210B~~ Proverbs 10:2); they take pleasure in the act of sin, and have no remorse of conscience afterwards; they speak of it in an exulting manner, and boast of it, and glory in their shame;

*[and] delight in the frowardness of the wicked*: of the wicked man, as Aben Ezra and Gersom supply it; in the perversities and contradictions of every wicked man; they not only take pleasure in their own sins, but in the sins of others, and in them that commit them; which is an aggravation of

their wickedness, (<sup><5112></sup>Romans 1:32); they delight to hear a man speak froward and perverse things; things against God, and Christ, and religion, against all good men, and everything that is good; against the Gospel, the doctrines and ordinances of it; and they delight to see him do things perverse and contrary to the will of God. The Vulgate Latin version renders it, “they exult in the worst things”.

**Ver. 15.** *Whose ways [are] crooked*, etc.] Which swerve from and are not agreeably to the rule of the divine word, either the law of God or the Gospel of Christ; sin is an aberration, a straying from the rule of God’s word, a transgression of his law; and a walk in it is unbecoming the Gospel of Christ; it has many serpentine windings and turnings in it; full of distortions and excursions, and many retrograde actions; (see <sup><4935></sup>Psalm 125:5 <sup><2308></sup>Isaiah 59:8);

*and [they] froward in their paths*; declining here and there, sometimes going one way and sometimes another, but always following that which is evil, and resolute to continue therein.

**Ver. 16.** *To deliver thee from the strange woman*, etc.] As the Gospel of Christ and its doctrines, or the instructions of wisdom, are a means of delivering persons from the evil man, his company, ways, and works; so from a naughty woman, an adulteress, called a “strange” woman; not because of another nation, or unknown, but because she belongs to another person, and not to him whom she entices into her embraces. Gersom interprets this of the sensitive appetite, and Jarchi of idolatry; as others do also of superstition and all false doctrine, and everything that is contrary to true wisdom; and the whole that is here and afterwards said may well enough be applied to the whore of Rome, from whose fornication, or spiritual adultery, that is, idolatry, will worship, and antichristian doctrines, the Gospel delivers men; see (<sup><3105></sup>Proverbs 7:5), etc.

*[even] from the stranger [which] flattereth with her words*; that useth smooth and soft words to work upon the passions, move the affections, and win the hearts of men; and ensnare them and draw them to commit wickedness with her; (see <sup><3108></sup>Proverbs 5:3 7:21); and so antichrist, and all false teachers and heretics, with good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple, (<sup><5168></sup>Romans 16:18).

**Ver. 17.** *Which forsaketh the guide of her youth*, etc.] Not God, the God of her life, and who had provided for her from her youth up; nor her parent

that had taken care of her in her infancy, and had been the guardian of her virgin state; but her husband, to whom she was married in her youth, and to whom she gave up herself to be guided and directed, ruled and governed, by: and as it is an aggravation of evil in a man to deal treacherously against the wife of his youth, and the wife of his covenant, (<sup>3124</sup>Malachi 2:14); so it is in a woman to forsake “the friend” or “companion of her youth”<sup>f45</sup>, as the phrase may be rendered; who loved her and espoused her in his youthful age, and with whom he had lived long in love and friendship, and in great happiness, but now forsakes him; her affections being alienated from him, leaves his company and bed, and associates with others. Gersom interprets this of the human understanding, appointed to govern the other powers and faculties of the soul;

*and forgetteth the covenant of her God:* not the covenant made with Noah, in which adultery, as well as other things, were forbidden; nor the law of Moses, or covenant at Sinai, in which it was condemned; but the marriage covenant, which she entered into with her husband when espoused to him, and when they mutually obliged themselves to be faithful to one another: and this is called “the covenant of God”; not only because God is the author and institutor of marriage, and has directed and enjoined persons to enter into such a contract with one another; but because he is present at it, and is a witness of such an engagement, and is appealed unto in it; which, as it adds to the solemnity of it, makes the violation of it the more criminal. So the church of Rome has forsook Christ, who was her guide in her first settlement, and her husband she professed to be espoused to, as a chaste virgin; and has followed other lovers, and become the mother of harlots; so false teachers leave their guide, the Scriptures, and bring in damnable heresies, and deny the Lord that bought them, (<sup>600E</sup>2 Peter 2:1).

**Ver. 18.** *For her house inclineth unto death,* etc.] Bends, verges, and points that way; it lies in the way to death, and brings unto it, and sinks into it as into a ditch; or all that are in her house, that are familiar with her, live and dwell with her, and commit wickedness with her; these incline or are liable to lose, and do lose, their name, character, and reputation, which is a death upon them; and bring diseases upon their bodies, which issue in corporeal death; or are in danger of dying by the hand of the injured husband, or the civil magistrate; and also are exposed unto eternal death: or “she inclines to death, which is her house”<sup>f46</sup>, so Aben Ezra and Kimchi; and to which the Targum agrees,

“for in the pit of death is her house:”

that is, the house she at last comes to and must dwell in, and all that are ensnared by her; (see <sup><1015></sup>Proverbs 5:5 <sup><6018></sup>Revelation 21:8); and the second death will be the portion of the whore of Rome and all her followers, (<sup><6440></sup>Revelation 14:10,11 17:8 19:20);

*and her paths unto the dead*; that is, her evil ways in which she walks, and into which she draws others to join with her; these lead both her and them to the “damned”<sup>f47</sup> in hell, to keep company with them, and be punished as they are: the word “rephaim”, here used, sometimes signifies “giants”, and so the Targum renders it here; and may refer to the giants of the old world, who were cut off for their debauchery and uncleanness, (<sup><1006></sup>Genesis 6:4,11,12); and with whom such persons shall be for ever.

**Ver. 19.** *None that go unto her return again*, etc.] That is, those that commit whoredom with her return not again by repentance, and to a sober and chaste way of living, at least but very few; hence some of the ancients thought adultery was the unpardonable sin; but it is certain that some have been recovered by the power of divine grace, and have been brought to repentance for their impure manner of life, and have truly believed in Christ, and lived sober and godly lives afterwards; but, as the Targum adds, they do not return “in peace”, but with great distress of mind, remorse of conscience, and bitterness of soul; and these instances are rare; generally speaking, such as are ensnared by an adulterous woman, whose heart is snares and nets, and whose hands are as bands, are held so fast by her that they seldom get out again, though some few may escape, (<sup><2076></sup>Ecclesiastes 7:26). The words may be rendered, “all that go into her”<sup>f48</sup> shall not return again”; no, very few of them. And it is a very rare thing, when men are fallen into idolatry, superstition, will worship, and heresy, that they are recovered out of this snare of the devil; there is a peradventure they may, but it is not often that they be loosed from it, (<sup><5125></sup>2 Timothy 2:25,26);

*neither take they hold of the paths of life*; Christ, and the ways of Christ, which lead to eternal life; few there be that find these paths and walk in them, (<sup><4074></sup>Matthew 7:14); and especially such as are drawn aside by an impure woman, they are held so fast by her alluring charms, and so bewildered by her art of deceiving, that they are like persons that are led out of their way, and cannot find it again.

**Ver. 20.** *That thou mayest walk in the way of good [men]*, etc.] Who are not so by nature, but made so by the grace of God; such as the saints, prophets, and patriarchs of old; and who walked in the way of righteousness, holiness, and truth; being directed therein by the Spirit and word of God: now the use and profit of wisdom's instructions, or of the Gospel of Christ, and the doctrines of it, and a spiritual understanding of them, are not only to deliver men from the wicked man and the naughty woman, but also to influence and engage them to follow the examples of good men, and to walk in the same good old paths as they have done, (<sup><3012></sup>Hebrews 6:12);

*and keep the paths of the righteous*; not only observe them and walk in them, but continue therein, even in the paths of faith and holiness; for righteous men, such as are made righteous by the righteousness of Christ, and are anew created unto righteousness and true holiness, and in consequence thereof live righteously; these walk by faith on Christ, and as becomes his Gospel; and in all the ordinances of it, and in all the duties of religion; and the Gospel teaches all those that receive and profess it to do the same.

**Ver. 21.** *For the upright shall dwell in the land*, etc.] Such as are upright in heart, who have a right spirit renewed in them; whose hearts are right with God, have the truth of grace in them; whose faith is unfeigned, their love without dissimulation, and their hope without hypocrisy; and who are upright in their lives and conversations; these being Israelites according to the flesh, as well as Israelites indeed in a spiritual sense, shall dwell in the land of Canaan, which the Lord promised to such, and which good men enjoyed by virtue of it: or the sense is, that such shall dwell peaceably and quietly in the world, and possess the good things of it, though in a small quantity, in such a comfortable manner, with the love of God and a sense of it, as wicked men do not; or else they shall inhabit the world to come, as Jarchi interprets it; not only a future state of happiness in heaven, but the Messiah's kingdom on earth, the new heavens and new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, (<sup><6113></sup>2 Peter 3:13);

*and the perfect shall remain in it*; or "be left in it"<sup>f49</sup>; or shall be "strengthened"<sup>f50</sup>, confirmed, and established in it; or they shall dwell in it as a tent or tabernacle, bound with strong cords; see (<sup><2331></sup>Isaiah 33:20); or continue there, when others should have no place in it, as follows. By the "perfect" are meant such as have all grace seminally implanted in them,

though it is not come up to maturity; who have a perfection of parts, but not of degrees; are properly men in Christ, though they are not arrived to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ; are perfectly holy in Christ, though not in themselves; and are perfectly justified by his righteousness, and perfectly comely through his comeliness, though as yet imperfect in themselves; and those that shall dwell in the new heavens and new earth, and remain there a thousand years, shall be entirely perfect in soul and body, wholly without sin; and complete in knowledge, holiness, and peace: the Targum renders it, who are “without spot”, undefiled persons; such who are not defiled with women, with the strange woman before mentioned; whose garments are not defiled, and who are free from the pollution of false doctrine, will worship, superstition, and idolatry, (~~4004~~ Revelation 3:4 14:4).

**Ver. 22.** *But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth*, etc.] Suddenly by death; or in a judicial way by the hand of the civil magistrate, before they have lived out half their days; and shall not enjoy the good things of the earth they have been seeking for, and laying up, and promising themselves a long and quiet possession of; but, on the contrary, like unfruitful trees, shall be cut down, and cast into the fire; and, however, shall not dwell in the second Adam’s earth, in the new earth, but shall perish out of his land, (~~4906~~ Psalm 10:16); see (~~4970~~ Psalm 37:2,9,22,28,38);

*and the transgressors shall be rooted out of it*; such as have acted treacherously and perfidiously<sup>f51</sup>, and are opposed to upright men; as the wicked are to the righteous, pure, and spotless; these shall not only be cut off as trees to the stump, but be rooted up, and have neither root nor branch left them; they shall have no posterity to succeed them, and their memory shall utterly perish; (see ~~3901~~ Malachi 4:1); or “shall be scraped off”, or “swept away”<sup>f52</sup>, as the dust and dross of the earth, and the offscouring of all things.