

CHAPTER 12

Ver. 1. *Whose loveth instruction loveth knowledge*, etc.] That loves the instruction of Wisdom, or Christ, (⁽²⁰¹³⁾Proverbs 4:13 8:10); the means of instruction, the Scriptures, which are profitable for instruction in righteousness, and are written for our learning; the Gospel, which instructs into the person, office, and grace of Christ; the ministers of the word, who are so many instructors in Christ; and even the rod of afflictions, by which men are taught their duty, and the will of God: and these are to be loved; and he that loves them clearly shows that he loves knowledge; since the means of instruction, making use of them, and getting instruction by them, are attended with labour, trouble, and difficulty; which a man would not choose, had he not a love unto and a desire after knowledge, and an increase of it; as the knowledge of God, of Christ, and of his truths. Aben Ezra inverts the words;

“he that loves knowledge loves instruction;”

but the sense is much the same;

but he that hateth reproof [is] brutish; or a “beast”⁽³²³⁾: as the man that is willing to be instructed, in order to gain knowledge, shows himself to be a wise and understanding man; so he that hates the reproof the word of God gives, or the ministers of it, or God by them, appears to be no better than a brute, than the horse or mule that want understanding: so the man of sin hates the Scriptures, the Gospel, and the ministers of it, and the reproofs and convictions they give of his idolatry, superstition, and will worship; nor does he care that his doctrines and practices should be brought to this test, or that the people should have knowledge of them; but keeps them from them, and sets up his own infallibility as the rule of judgment; and it is one character of his followers, that they “receive not the love of the truth”, (⁽⁵¹²⁾2 Thessalonians 2:10); and both he and they are represented by a beast, (⁽⁶¹³⁾Revelation 13:1,11 17:3); and are more brutish than any man; see (⁽¹⁵¹⁾Proverbs 5:11,12).

Ver. 2. *A good [man] obtaineth favour of the Lord*, etc.] One that is made so by the grace of God, for no man is so naturally; there is none good, nor does good, no, not one, until some good thing is put into him, or the good work of grace is begun in him. And such a man obtains favour or good will

from the Lord; that is, as Gersom explains it, what he himself wills, for the will of God is his will; or rather the good will of God, his grace, and layout; fresh manifestations and discoveries of which he obtains and enjoys, not by merit, through any goodness of his own, or by means of his obedience but he draws it out, as the word^{f324} signifies, as out of a fountain, by prayer and supplication, and by fresh repeated acts of faith upon it; which may be said to be ad and enjoyed, when it is remembered to him, he is encompassed with it, or it is shed abroad in his heart, or his heart is directed into it; and he also obtains and enjoys all the blessings, of grace here, and glory hereafter, as springing from it;

but a man of wicked devices will he condemn; whose thoughts, and the imaginations of his heart, are evil continually; who is always contriving mischief to others: such a man shall be so far from enjoying the favour of God, that he shall be pronounced guilty of death, and condemned to it; he shall be banished from the presence of the Lord, and be punished with everlasting destruction. As the man of sin is continually devising wicked things against God, against Christ, against his interest and people; he shall be condemned by the Lord, consumed with the breath of his mouth; go into perdition, and be cast into the lake burning with fire and brimstone: and this will be the portion of all his followers, that join with him in forming and executing his wicked devices.

Ver. 3. *A man shall not be established by wickedness*, etc.] Not any man, though he may be established in his wickedness, so as not to be rooted out of it; yet he cannot be so established by it as not to be removed from a prosperous state and condition into an unhappy and distressed one; he may seem to be in a firm and settled state of prosperity, amidst all his wickedness; be like a green bay tree, spreading itself, and seemingly immovable, when on a sudden it is blown down and rooted up, and is no more: so Babylon will seem to be in a settled state of grandeur, ease, and rest, and say, “I sit a queen, and shall see no sorrow”; when in one day, and in one hour, her destruction shall come upon her, (~~680~~ Revelation 18:7,8);

but the root of the righteous shall not be moved; they are rooted and grounded in the love of God, which is immovable; they are rooted and built up in Christ, and so are as Mount Zion, which can never be removed; the root of the matter, or of grace, is in them, which can never be lost; while others wither away, because they have no root in them, these abide; and though they may be shaken with the persecutions of men, the temptations

of Satan, the errors of the wicked, and their own corruptions, yet they afresh take root again downward, and bring forth fruit upward.

Ver. 4. *A virtuous woman [is] a crown to her husband,* etc.] One that is loving and chaste, constant and faithful, obsequious and submissive to him; that is diligent in the affairs of her house, takes care of her family, brings up her children, and keeps up a good order and decorum among her servants, is an honour and credit to her husband. Such is the true church of Christ, who is compared to a woman, (^{f321} Revelation 12:1); to a woman of purity and chastity, whose members are virgins, not defiled with the corruptions, errors, and superstition of the apostate church; to a woman of fortitude and courage, as the word ^{f325} signifies, who resists sin, temptation, error, heresy, and idolatry, even unto blood; and whose true members love not their lives unto death, but freely lay them down in the cause of truth; such an one is an honour to Christ her husband;

but she that maketh ashamed; makes her husband ashamed, by her levity and wantonness, her negligence and slothfulness, so that he is ashamed to be seen with her, or to be known that he stands in such a relation to her; she

[is] as rottenness in his bones; a constant grief to his mind, a pressure upon his spirits, a wasting of his body, and a consumption of his estate; she is, as the Targum has it, “as a worm in wood”, which rots and consumes it ^{f326}; so the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions. Thus the apostate church of Rome, that professes to be the spouse of Christ, has made him ashamed of her; as being the Jezebel, that seduces his servants to fornication or idolatry; and whose doctrine and superstition eat, like a canker, the vitals of religion.

Ver. 5. *The thoughts of the righteous [are] right,* etc.] Or “judgment” ^{f327}. The thoughts of men’s hearts are naturally evil, nor can any think a good thought of themselves; but the thoughts of the righteous are directed and influenced by the grace of God, and are formed according to that Word which is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart; their thoughts concerning God and religion, concerning Christ and his Gospel, his ways and worship, his truths and ordinances, they are judiciously framed according to the rule of God’s word, the revelation he has made, and so are right; and such are their resolutions and designs to serve the Lord their God, and him only, and to cleave to him with full purpose of heart

[but] the counsels of the wicked [are] deceit; the designs, schemes, and contrivances of wicked men, are to trick, and overreach, and defraud their neighbours in civil affairs; and of false teachers, to deceive the hearts of the simple in religious ones. The coming of the man of sin was with all deceivableness; and all the gaudy show and pageantry he makes, and pretended miracles he works, are to deceive the inhabitants of the earth; and by his sorceries all nations are deceived, (^{<310>}2 Thessalonians 2:10 ^{<634>}Revelation 13:14 18:23).

Ver. 6. *The words of the wicked [are] to lie in wait for blood,* etc.] Which some understand of perjury and false witness, as Jarchi, whereby the lives of innocent persons are taken away: or it may be interpreted either of the smooth words and fair speeches, and secret artifices, antichrist and his emissaries make use of to entrap the innocent, and draw them into their net, to their ruin; (see ^{<900>}Psalm 10:7-10); as the Jews attempted to deal with Christ, (^{<420>}Luke 20:20,21); or of the laws and edicts of the beast, that such should be killed who would not worship his image; and with the blood of these innocent ones the whore of Rome is said to be drunk, (^{<635>}Revelation 13:15 17:6);

but the mouth of the upright shall deliver them: the innocent laid in wait for; either by their prayers to God, which are of great avail with him, and through whose importunity he will avenge his elect, and deliver them; or through their apologies for them, and defences of them, as in the times of Pagan persecution; or rather through the doctrines of the reformation, whereby many simple and unwary souls were delivered, who were in danger of being ensnared; and whereby the eyes of many princes were opened, and were stirred up to protect those innocent ones, and prevent their blood being shed.

Ver. 7. *The wicked are overthrown, and [are] not,* etc.] With such an overthrow as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. The kingdom of the beast shall not only be full of darkness, as at the pouring of the fifth vial, and be in the utmost confusion, but it shall be brought to ruin and destruction; which stands opposed to “the house of the righteous”, in the next clause: the ten kings, the supporters of antichrist, shall be overcome by the Lamb, with whom they will make war; the beast, and the false prophet, shall be taken by him, and destroyed; and Babylon shall sink like a millstone into the sea, and be no more; the wicked shall be consumed out

of the earth; these Heathens shall be no more in the land; the man of sin shall never revive again;

but the house of the righteous shall stand; not his material dwelling house; nor the earthly house of his tabernacle, his body; nor his family, as the generality of interpreters, for the family of the righteous may be extinct, and especially not continue as righteous; but the church of God, as the gloss upon the text, the house of the living God, the pillar and ground of truth; the church which is built on the Rock, Christ; the mountain of the Lord's house, which shall be established upon the top of the mountains in the latter day, when the kingdom of antichrist shall be overthrown, and be no more. This is the same with the household of faith, and the household of God, and here called "the house of the righteous"; because they dwell in it, have a place and a name in it better than sons and daughters; and indeed none but they ought to be in it, that have on the wedding garment, the robe of Christ's righteousness; and who walk uprightly, and work righteousness. Now this house shall stand; its foundation, which is Christ, is sure, an everlasting one; its pillars are firm and stable, the ministers of the word, who will be to the end of the world; the ordinances of it will continue till Christ's second coming; the doctrines of it are the word of God, which standeth for ever, when all flesh is as grass. This house stands, notwithstanding all the persecutions of men; it has stood against all the fury of Rome, Pagan and Papal, and still will continue, notwithstanding the craft of false teachers to undermine it; and though it may sometimes be in a waste and ruinous condition seemingly, yet the Lord will raise it up again, and glorify this house of his glory, and make it beautiful and honourable: it shall stand, because it is the Lord's house, of his building, and where he delights to dwell in; because it is the house of Christ, which he, Wisdom, has built; and where he presides as a Son, as a Prophet, Priest, and King; and because it is the house where his people are born and brought up, and therefore shall continue till everyone are brought in; and because it is built on a rock, against which the gates of hell cannot prevail, (⁴¹⁶⁸Matthew 16:18); compare with this (⁴¹⁷²Matthew 7:24,25).

Ver. 8. *A man shall be commended according to his wisdom*, etc.] Not according to his birth and pedigree; not according to his riches and wealth; not according to the places of honour and trust he may be in; but according to his wisdom, which he discovers in his words and actions, in his life and conversation: not according to the wisdom that is earthly, sensual, and devilish; not according to the wisdom of the world, which comes to

nought, either natural or civil; especially that which lies in sophistry and subtlety, in wicked craft and cunning, whereby men trick, overreach, and defraud one another; but according to that which is spiritual and evangelical; which lies in the knowledge of Christ, and of God in Christ, and of those things which belong to salvation; the beginning of which is the fear of the Lord, and which comes from above, and is pure and peaceable. A man possessed of this is commended by all wise and good men, and by the Lord himself; as the wise man is by Christ, (^{<41724>}Matthew 7:24,25); who builds his house on a rock; for which reason it stands, as in the preceding verse;

but he that is of a perverse heart shall be despised; and which appears by the perverse words he speaks against God and Christ; against his people, ways, and worship, as antichrist and his followers do; and by his perverse actions, which are contrary to the light of nature, to the law of God, and Gospel of Christ: and such vile persons are contemned in the eyes of all good men, and are had in abhorrence by the Lord himself; for such who despise him are lightly esteemed; (see ^{<21833>}Proverbs 18:3).

Ver. 9. [*He that is*] *despised, and hath a servant*, etc.] Meaning not the same person as before, but one in mean circumstances of life; and because he has not that substance as others have, at least does not make that show and figure in the world as some; and mean in his own eyes, as Jarchi; and does not affect grandeur, and to look greater than he is; has just sufficiency to keep a servant to wait upon him; or, as some render it, is “a servant to himself”^{<f328>}; to this purpose the Septuagint; and so Jarchi and Gersom interpret it, who does his own work at home and abroad, in the house and in the field, and so gets himself a competent living. He

[is] better than he that honoureth himself, and lacketh bread; that boasts of his pedigree, and brags of his wealth; dresses out in fine clothes, keeps a fine equipage, makes a great figure abroad, and has scarce bread to eat at home, and would have none if his debts were paid; the former is much the better man on all accounts, and more to be commended; (see ^{<21837>}Proverbs 13:7). And so, as Cocceius observes, the least shepherd (under Christ) that has ever so few sheep, one or two under his care, whom he brings to righteousness, and by whom he is loved, is preferable to the pope of Rome, who is adored by all; and yet neither has nor gives the bread of souls; and without the offerings of others has not anything to eat.

Ver. 10. *A righteous [man] regardeth the life of his beast*, etc.] Or “knoweth” it^{f329}; knows the worth of it and values it, and takes care of it, and is concerned for the preservation of it; he provides sufficient food for it, and gives it; he does not overwork it, but allows it proper rest from labour; and, if in any disorder, will make use of all suitable means to heal it; see an instance of the care of Jacob, that righteous man, of his cattle, (^{<0394>}Genesis 33:14); and, on the other hand, see an instance of a wicked man’s cruelty to his beast in Balaam, for which he was reproved, (^{<0228>}Numbers 22:28); by various laws and rules which God has given, it is his will that men should be merciful to their beasts, (^{<0274>}Deuteronomy 25:4 ^{<0210>}Exodus 20:10); and such who are so will be more especially pitiful and tenderhearted to their fellow creatures;

but the tender mercies of the wicked [are] cruel; or “[are] the mercies of a cruel one”^{f330}; the most tender things which are expressed or done by them are nothing but cruelty; and what then must be their more severe expressions and actions? so the most tender concern which antichrist and his followers show to the souls of men breathes nothing but cruelty; the compassionate methods they take to convert heretics, as they call them, are dark dungeons and stinking prisons, racks and tortures, fire and faggots; these are their wholesome severities; this their kindness to men, to deliver them up to the secular power, to inflict pains and punishments on them the most grievous to save their souls. Thus, while the beast of Rome looks like a lamb, he speaks like a dragon, and exercises all the cruelty of the first beast, Rome Pagan, (^{<6311>}Revelation 13:11,12).

Ver. 11. *He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread*, etc.] This was man’s work in innocence; this he was doomed to do with the sweat of his brow after his fall; every man has his land to till, or some calling, work, or business, to be employed in, either civil or sacred; and it becomes him to be diligent therein, and such as are shall not want bread, but shall have a sufficiency of it;

but he that followeth vain [persons is] void of understanding: that neglects his business, loiters away his time, spends it in the company of vain, empty, and unprofitable persons; as he shows himself by such a choice that he is void of understanding, or “wants a heart”^{f331}, to improve his time and talents; so before long it is much if he does not want a piece of bread. Thus he that is concerned to have the fallow ground of his heart ploughed up, and righteousness, truth, and holiness, sown therein, that it may bring forth

fruit; or who is careful about the welfare and salvation of his immortal soul, and makes diligent use of all means to promote its spiritual good, shall be filled with the bread of life, shall find it and eat it, to the joy and rejoicing of his heart; and, on the contrary, he that associates himself with vain persons, empty of all that is spiritually good, that have only empty notions of religion; or who attend to the profane and vain boastings of antichrist, and all false teachers; and give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, whose words eat as do a canker; these, as they show themselves to want wisdom, so they are and will be brought into starving and famishing circumstances in a spiritual sense. Jarchi interprets the former clause of a man that is studious in his doctrine, that revolves it in his mind, that he may not forget it; and the Arabic version renders the last clause,

“they that run after false demons, their minds are deficient;”

(see ^{<600>}Revelation 9:20).

Ver. 12. *The wicked desireth the net of evil [men]*, etc.] To be master of all the wicked arts and methods evil men use to ensnare and oppress others; to get them and their substance into their hands; or “desireth the evil net”, as the Targum; the evil net of antichrist, which he lays for the poor, whom he draws into it and catches them; (see ^{<900>}Psalm 10:9). Jarchi understands it of “hunting”^{f332} and of wicked men desiring to be fed and nourished with what evil men get by hunting; compare with this (^{<2300>}Ezekiel 13:18-21). Some render it the “fortress” or “strong hold”^{f333} of evil men, in which they fortify and secure themselves to do mischief to others, and to prevent any besieging them, so Gersom; and this is what all wicked men are desirous of;

but the root of the righteous yieldeth [fruit]; or “shall give”^{f334} that; that security and protection from real evil and mischief which the wicked cannot obtain; or he, that is, God, “shall give the righteous root”^{f335}, firmly fix them that they shall not be moved; or as we supply it, and so Aben Ezra, “yieldeth fruit”, much more desirable than the net of evil men the wicked covet: righteous men are compared to trees, they are called “trees of righteousness”, (^{<2300>}Isaiah 61:3); these have a root in the love of God, in the person of Christ, and in the grace of the Spirit, and this root yieldeth fruit; the love of God is the root and source of all good things, of all the blessings of grace, of the fruit of grace, faith, hope, and love, and of evangelical obedience; the person of Christ is the source of all spiritual blessings, of salvation and eternal life; the righteous have their being in him

as a root; they are bore by him, have all their life, grace, holiness, fruitfulness, and perseverance therein, from him; and the grace of the Spirit in the heart, which is the root of the matter, the hidden man of the heart, from hence are fruits meet for faith and repentance, and good works, which are both pleasant and profitable. The Targum is,

“the root of the righteous shall remain, or be established;”

(see ^{<1118>}Proverbs 12:3).

Ver. 13. *The wicked is snared by the transgression of [his] lips*, etc.] A wicked man often brings himself into trouble by giving his tongue too great a liberty, and by making free with the characters of others; sometimes by treasonable speeches against his sovereign; sometimes by bearing false Witness, and by lies and perjuries, of which he is convicted in open court; and by calumnies, reproaches, detraction, and scandal raised by him, and cast on his neighbour, who sues him for these things: or “in the transgression of the lips [is] an evil snare”; or “the snare of an evil man”^{<f336>}; by the wicked things they say they lay a snare for others, which the simple and incautious are taken in; so heretics ensnare men by their good words and fair speeches, and plausibility of their doctrines; so antichrist, by lies in hypocrisy, and by his deceivableness of unrighteousness;

but the just shall come out of trouble; or escape it; he escapes the snare that is laid for him, and so the trouble consequent upon it; a just man escapes trouble by not giving his tongue the liberty wicked men do; and when he by any means falls into trouble, he gets out of it again by giving good words to those in whose hands he is; and by his prayers and supplications unto God. The righteous are sometimes in trouble, and in such sort of trouble as others are not; by reason of their own corruptions, Satan’s temptations, the hidings of God’s face, as well as various outward afflictions; out of all which the Lord delivers them sooner or later, in life or in death, (^{<1249>}Psalm 34:19). Jarchi exemplifies this in the case of righteous Noah, who escaped the flood, when the world of the ungodly were destroyed by it, for the transgression of their lips, saying, as in (^{<1215>}Job 21:15), “what is the Almighty?” etc.

Ver. 14. *A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of [his] mouth*, etc.] The wholesome advice, the good instruction, and sound doctrine he delivers to others, which are the fruit of his lips, and come forth by them from his heart; these rebound to his own advantage, are not only a

satisfaction to his mind upon reflection, but because of these he is filled with good things, even to satiety, both in this life and that to come; (see ^{<4016>}1 Timothy 4:6); or a “man shall be satisfied with good from the fruit of the mouth”; or “be satisfied from the fruit of the mouth of a man”^{f337}; that is, of another man; either of a private man, by his prayers, by the account he gives of his own experience, by the conversation he has with him about the truths of the Gospel; or of a faithful minister of the word, who is the means of feeding the souls of men with good things, even to satisfaction, with the wholesome words of our Lord Jesus Christ, with the sincere milk of the word, with the bread of life, even with the finest of the wheat;

and the recompence of a man’s hand shall be rendered unto him; if his words turn to his account, much more his works; if he is filled with good things for the sake of the one, much more will he be recompensed in a way of grace on account of the other; and not for the one without the other, nor for words without works: or “the recompence of a man’s hands”, or of his works which his hands do, “he shall render to him”^{f338}; that is, God, who renders to every man according to his works; which serves not to establish the doctrine of merit, but to show the goodness and grace of God in taking notice of and accepting the imperfect works of men through Christ, and for his sake.

Ver. 15. *The way of a fool [is] right in his own eyes*, etc.] Whether it be the way of open profaneness, or self-righteousness, it appears to him to be the right way; it seems to him a very plain one, and he finds it pleasant; and, trusting to carnal sense, corrupt reason, and a false judgment, and having a high opinion of himself and his own knowledge, never asks after the right way, nor takes the advice of others;

but he that hearkeneth unto counsel [is] wise; that asks advice and takes it of such who are men of age and experience, men of longer standing, and are wiser than himself; who consults the word of God about the right way of walk, worship, and salvation, and makes the testimonies of God the men of his counsel, which are able to make him wise unto salvation; who hearkens to the counsel of Gospel ministers, and obeys it; and especially to Jesus Christ the wonderful Counsellor, and to the advice he gives, (^{<4018>}Revelation 3:18); and who not only hears his words, but does them; such an one is a wise man, (^{<4024>}Matthew 7:24,25).

Ver. 16. *A fool’s wrath is presently known*, etc.] Having no command of himself, he cannot repress it, nor keep it in; no sooner is he provoked but

he shows it in his countenance, and by his words and actions; it is to be seen in the fire of his eyes, in the frowns of his face, in the gnashing of his teeth, and in the stamping of his feet, as well as in the bitter expressions of his mouth: or “a fool’s wrath in that day is known”^{f339}; in the same day in which the provocation is given; yea, in the same hour, and in the same moment; he cannot defer showing it for the least space of time; or it is openly known, it is to be seen and observed by everyone: or thus, “a fool is presently known by his wrath”^{f340}; (see ^{<2009>}Ecclesiastes 7:9);

but a prudent [man] covereth shame; conceals his anger and resentment at any injury done him by words or actions, which if suffered to break out would bring shame and disgrace to him; or he covers the injury itself, the disgraceful words that are spoken of him, and the shameful actions done unto him; he puts up with the contempt that is cast upon him, and bears it patiently; takes no notice of the offence given him, and much less seeks revenge; in which he acts a prudent part, for by so doing he creates less trouble to himself, and gains more credit and reputation from others.

Ver. 17. [*He that*] *speaketh truth showeth forth righteousness*, etc.] He that “blows” or “breathes out truth”^{f341}, as the word signifies; that utters it freely and fully without any hesitation; that speaks nothing but truth, and speaks out the whole truth without any reserve; such a man upon every occasion will declare that which is just and right, and show himself to be an honest and upright man; he that uses himself to speak truth in common conversation, will, in a court of judicature, whether upon his oath or not, testify that which is just and the real matter of fact; there is a connection between truth and righteousness, for though they are distinct things they go together, what is true is just, and what is just is true; so he that speaks the truth of the Gospel, or is a faithful preacher of it, will show forth righteousness, what is the righteousness of the law, and what is the righteousness of faith; how insufficient a man’s own righteousness is to justify him in the sight of God; the necessity of the righteousness of Christ, how free and full, excellent and glorious, suitable and useful it is, (^{<8017>}Romans 1:17);

but a false witness deceit; that is, one that is used to lying, when he is called to give testimony upon any affair in judgment, he will declare that which is false and deceitful, having no regard to truth and justice. So a false teacher, instead of showing men the insufficiency of their own righteousness, and directing them to the righteousness of Christ for

justification, will utter deceitful doctrine, and build up their hopes upon the sandy and deceitful foundation of their own works; as Popish teachers, and such as verge towards them.

Ver. 18. *There is that speaketh like the piercings of a sword*, etc.] Whose words are like sharp swords, cutting, wounding, dividing, killing; (see ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 57:4 59:7 64:3); such are the words of false witnesses, who by their false testimonies and perjuries are as guilty of the murder of men as cutthroats; such are the words of slanderers, backbiters, and talebearers, who grieve the innocent, wound their characters, destroy their good name and credit, and separate chief friends; and such are the words of antichrist, who looks like a lamb, but speaks like a dragon, (~~Revelation~~ Revelation 13:11);

but the tongue of the wise [is] health; or “healing”^{f342}; by giving a faithful testimony which sets matters right; by clearing and defending the character of those who are falsely accused and wrongfully charged; by making up differences, and reconciling persons at variance through the detracting and lying insinuations of others; and by speaking comfortable, cheerful, and refreshing words to the injured and abused; especially the tongue of a wise minister of the Gospel is health, or healing, to wounded souls, to whom he ministers the Gospel of the grace of God, which directs to Christ for healing, peace, pardon, righteousness, and eternal life.

Ver. 19. *The lip of truth shall be established for ever*, etc.] The man that speaks truth is and will be established in his credit and reputation among men; he is uniform and all of a piece, and what he says is believed; truth, though it may be opposed, will prevail against lies and falsehood; the word of truth, the Gospel of Christ, will stand for ever; the ministers of truth and righteousness will be continued to the end of the world; Christ, who is truth itself, abides the same to day, yesterday, and for ever;

but a lying tongue [is] but for a moment; if a liar speaks truth for once, he does not continue in it long, but quickly returns to his former course; or rather the lie he tells is very short lived, it is soon discovered, and he comes into contempt and disgrace, and loses all his credit and reputation among men of honour and honesty, and is sometimes suddenly snatched away by death, as Ananias and Sapphira; all error and heresy in a short time will cease and be no more; and antichrist, whose coming is with lying wonders, the direct opposite of the lip of truth, will be brought to ruin in a moment. Aben Ezra, Kimchi, and Ben Melech, who are followed by some Christian interpreters, as Montanus, and some in Vatablus, render it, “but”, or “for

ever, I will cause the lying tongue to cease”, or “be at rest” from speaking; as if they were the words of God, threatening to cut off the lying tongue; but Jarchi and Gersom render it “for a moment”, or a very short time, as we and others do; or, “whilst one winks”,^{f343} in the twinkling of an eye; so soon is such a person removed.

Ver. 20. *Deceit [is] in the heart of them that imagine evil*, etc.] That secretly devise mischief in their hearts against their neighbours; that plough evil, as the word^{f344} signifies, and sow discord among men; and by many artful and deceitful methods promote contention and division, in order to answer some base designs of theirs; but sooner or later they are deceived themselves, are disappointed of their views, the consequence of which is vexation and sorrow;

but to the counsellors of peace [is] joy: such who consult the good of others, who advise to peace, concord, and unity; who seek to cultivate it in their families and neighbourhoods, and in the church of God, in which, if they succeed, they have joy and pleasure; if not, they have a satisfaction, in their own minds and consciences that they have done what is right and good; such have a conscience peace now, and an eternal one hereafter; or, as Aben Ezra calls it, the joy of salvation; (see ^{<118>}Matthew 5:9).

Ver. 21. *There shall no evil happen to the just*, etc.] The evil of sin: no iniquity, as the Targum; which, and the Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions, interpret of sin not being agreeable, convenient, suit able, and pleasing to a righteous man. Moreover, the Lord, by his Spirit and grace, weakens the power of sin in them; and, by his providence, prevents and removes occasion of sinning; and by his power preserves from it, from being overcome and carried away with it, at least finally and totally. Or the evil of punishment is here meant; no penal evil shall befall them; the punishment of their sin has been inflicted on Christ their surety, and therefore shall never be laid on them; and whatever afflictions may happen to them, which have the name and appearance of evil, these work together for their good, spiritual and eternal; so that, in reality, no evil thing, properly speaking, happens to them; (see ^{<910>}Psalms 91:10). Or whatever does come to them comes not by chance unto them, but by the decree and will of God, and is overruled for good;

but the wicked shall be filled with mischief; or “with evil”^{f345}, the evil of sin; with malice and wickedness, with all impiety and unrighteousness, with ignorance and error; with all kind of sins, both against the first and second

table of the law, and so with all the consequences of sin: with the evil of punishment; with an evil conscience, with the terrors of it; with many distresses here, and with everlasting destruction hereafter. Some understand it of the mischief they devise to others, which they are full of and big with; and “though” they are, as Aben Ezra interprets the word, yet no evil shall happen to the righteous; the mischief contrived by them shall fall upon themselves.

Ver. 22. *Lying lips [are] abomination to the Lord*, etc.] Such that speak lies in common talk; and that deliver out doctrinal lies, false doctrines, lies in hypocrisy, as are the doctrines of Rome; these are abominable unto God; as being contrary to his nature as the God of truth; contrary to the Scriptures of truth he has endited; contrary to the truth of the Gospel he has published; contrary to his Son, who is truth itself; and to the Spirit of truth, which leads into all truth, as it is in Jesus; wherefore an abomination and a lie are joined together, (~~627~~ Revelation 21:27);

but they that deal truly [are] his delight; or the objects of “his good will” and pleasure, as the word ^{f346} signifies; they are grateful and acceptable to him; he is well-pleased with them, and delights in them. Not only such that speak the truth, but “do the truth”^{f347}, as the words may be rendered; whose words and actions, doctrine and life, agree together: it is not enough to embrace, profess, or preach the truth, but he must practise it; (see ~~821~~ John 3:21 ~~606~~ 1 John 1:6); he must deal truly with God and men, or faithfully, as the Targum and Vulgate Latin version; he must be true to his word and promises, and faithfully perform what he has agreed unto. Or, “that work faith”; that work the work of faith, that faith which works by love; that live on Christ and his righteousness; such are well pleasing to God; without which faith it is impossible to please him, (~~816~~ Hebrews 11:6).

Ver. 23. *A prudent man concealeth knowledge*, etc.] Of things natural or divine, which he is furnished with; not but that he is willing to communicate it, as he should, at proper times, in proper places, and to proper persons; but he does not needlessly and unseasonably speak of it; he does not make a show of it, or boast and brag of it: he modestly forbears to speak of what he knows, but when there is a necessity for it, even of that which may be lawfully divulged; which is a point of prudence and modesty; otherwise it is criminal to reveal secrets, or publish what should be kept private or should not be known. Aben Ezra interprets it of a wise man’s hiding his knowledge in his heart, that he may not forget it;

but the heart of fools proclaimeth foolishness; that which they have in their hearts and minds, and which they take for deep knowledge, profound and recondite learning, they proclaim with their mouths in a noisy and clamorous way; and while they declare their ill shaped notions, their incoherent and unconnected ideas of things, they betray their ignorance and folly, as ostentatious men do.

Ver. 24. *The hand of the diligent shall bear rule*, etc.] “Shall become rich”, so Jarchi interprets it, according to (¹⁰⁰⁶Proverbs 10:4); Through diligence men get riches, and through riches they arrive to power and authority over others: from apprentices and journeymen workmen they become masters of their business; diligent men become masters of families, and have servants and workmen under them; become magistrates in cities, and bear rule over their fellow citizens, and are advanced to places of power and authority in the commonwealth; (see ¹⁰²⁹Proverbs 22:29);

but the slothful shall be under tribute; the “slothful” or “deceitful hand”^{f348}, for so it may be rendered and supplied; for usually such who are slothful, and do not care for business, get their living by deceitful methods, by tricking and sharpening; and such become subject to others, to them that are diligent; hence said to be “under tribute”, or tributary; because those that are tributary are in subjection to those to whom they pay tribute.

Ver. 25. *Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop*, etc.] Either an anxious care and solicitude about living in the world, as the word^{f349} signifies; when it seizes a man’s spirits, it depresses them, and keeps them down: or a fear and dread of adversity, or sorrow and grief, on account of some calamity and distress; when it gets into a man’s heart, it sinks and bows it down, that it cannot take any pleasure or comfort in anything. The Septuagint and Arabic versions render it, a “terrible word troubles the heart of a just man”; or “troubles the heart of man”, as the Syriac version; the Targum is,

“a word of fear in the heart of man causes fear:”

such is the law, which is a word of terror; which speaks terrible things to men; fills the mind with terror; works wrath in the conscience, and induces a spirit of bondage to fear; bows and keeps under the spirits of men, through a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation;

but a good word maketh it glad; a comforting, cheering, and encouraging word from any friend, that compassionates their distressed case; this lifts

up the heart and inspires it with joy; so a word in season, spoken by a Gospel minister, raises up a soul that is bowed down, and gives it comfort and joy: such a good word is the Gospel itself; it is good news from a far country, which is like cold water to a thirsty soul, very refreshing and reviving. The Septuagint and Arabic versions here render it, “a good message”, and such the Gospel is; which, when brought to the heart of a poor sinner, depressed with the terrors of the law, causes joy in it; such is the word of peace, pardon, righteousness, and eternal life by Christ; such is the word that he himself spoke, (⁴⁰⁹²Matthew 9:2). Kimchi instances in (⁴⁰⁷²Psalms 55:22).

Ver. 26. *The righteous [is] more excellent than his neighbour*, etc.] Not than his neighbour who is righteous also; for though one may have more excellent gifts than another, or a larger measure of grace; one righteous man may have more faith than another, yet not more righteousness; every truly righteous man is justified by the same righteousness, even the righteousness of Christ; and therefore one cannot be more excellent, considered as righteous: but the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour, who is ungodly and unrighteous, or however who has no other righteousness than his own; though his neighbour may be of more noble birth, and have even the title of “his excellency” given him; though he may have a larger share of wealth and riches; and though he may have attained a greater degree of natural wisdom and understanding, be a man of brighter parts, and of a larger capacity; yet, being righteous, he is more excellent than he: his superior excellency lies in his righteousness, from whence he is denominated; the righteousness of Christ, imputed to him, is far better than the best righteousness of his neighbour; it being the righteousness of God, his is the righteousness of a creature; a perfect righteousness, whereas his is imperfect; a splendid and glorious one, his filthy rags; a very extensive one, by which all the seed of Israel are justified, his such as not one individual person can be justified by it; an everlasting one, that will answer for him that has it in a time to come, his like the morning cloud and early dew that passes away; yea, the inherent righteousness of a righteous man, or the grace of Christ, imparted to him and implanted in him, that principle of holiness in him is greatly better than the righteousness of his neighbour a Pharisee; for this is true and real holiness, truth in the inward part, whereas the other’s is only a shadow of holiness, a form of godliness without the power; this has the Spirit of God for its author, it is his workmanship, and a curious piece it is, whereas the other is only the produce of nature; this

makes a man all glorious within, and gives him a meetness for heaven, whereas, notwithstanding the other, the man is inwardly full of all manner of iniquity, and has neither a right nor meetness for eternal glory. Nay, the external works of righteousness done by a truly righteous man are preferable to his neighbour's, destitute of the grace of God; the one being a course of obedience to the will of God, and a respect to all his commandments; when the other consists only of a little negative holiness, and of an observance of a few rituals of religion: the one spring from a heart purified by the blood of Christ, and the grace of the Spirit, and from principles of grace and love, and are done to the glory of God; whereas the other do not arise from a pure heart, and faith unfeigned; nor are they done sincerely, with a view to the glory of God: only to be seen of men, and gain credit and reputation among them; and in these respects the righteous man is more excellent as such than his neighbour, who at most and best is only externally and morally righteous: his superior excellency does not lie in nature, in which they are both alike; nor in outward circumstances, in which they may differ; nor in the opinion of men, with whom the saints are the offscouring of all things; but in the, esteem of Christ, and through his grace and righteousness; (see ^{494B} Psalm 16:3); Some render the words, "the righteous explores [his way] more than his neighbour"^{f350}; seeks and finds out a better way than he does; and is careful that he is not seduced and carried out of the way, and perish;

but the way of the wicked seduceth them; or causes them to err; it deceives, by promising the honour, pleasure, and profit, which it does not lead unto and give, and which they find not in it; and hereby they are led to wander from the way of the righteous, by which they attain a superior excellency to them.

Ver. 27. *The slothful [man] roasteth not that which he took in hunting,* etc.] Because he takes none. The slothful man takes no pains to get anything for a livelihood, by hunting or otherwise; and though he loves to live well, and eat roast meat, yet what he roasts is not what he has got himself, but what another has laboured for. It is observed^{f351} that fowlers burn the wings of birds taken by them, that they may not fly away; to which the allusion may be. Or, "the deceitful"^{f352} man, as it may be rendered; though he may get much in a fraudulent way, yet it does not prosper with him, he does not enjoy it; it is taken away from him before he can partake of it, or receive any comfort from it, or advantage by it; just as a man that has took anything in hunting, he cannot keep it; it is taken away

from him, perhaps by a dog or some man, before he can roast it, and make it fit for eating. Ben Melech, from Joseph Kimchi, observes, that fowlers, when they catch fowls, burn the top of their wings, that they may not fly away at once; and they do not cut their wings off, that they may be left, and appear beautiful to them that buy them: but the slothful or deceitful man does not let the fowl remain in his hands till he burns it; for before that it flies out of his hands, and it is lost to him; which is figuratively to be understood of riches and wealth, gathered by violence and deceit, and lost suddenly. What is ill gotten does not spend well; it does not last long, it is presently gone; there is no true enjoyment of it. Or he will not shut it up within lattices^{f353} and reserve it, but spend it directly; (see ²¹¹¹Song of Solomon 2:9);

but the substance of a diligent man [is] precious; what is gotten by industry and diligence, and in an honest way, is valuable; it comes with a blessing; there is comfort in the enjoyment of it, and it continues. Some render it, “the substance of a precious man [is] gold”^{f354}; so the Targum,

“the substance of a man is precious gold;”

and to the same purpose the Vulgate Latin version: a diligent man grows rich; and what he gets spends well, and his substance is daily increasing.

Ver. 28. *In the way of righteousness [is] life*, etc.] The life of the soul, or spiritual life, as Aben Ezra; and eternal life, as Gersom. One that is in the true way of righteousness is one that is instilled by the righteousness of Christ, which justification is the justification of life: such an one is made alive, and reckons himself alive in a law sense; and enjoys true spiritual peace and comfort, arising from the love and favour of God, and acceptance with him, in which he sees his interest, and in which is life; and this righteousness, by which he is justified before God, entitles him to eternal life; to which the path of holiness, he is directed and enabled to walk in, leads; though it is a narrow way, and a strait gate, (⁴¹⁷⁴Matthew 7:14). Christ, and righteousness and holiness in and by him, are the way, the truth, and the life, or the true way to eternal life; and all in this way now live spiritually, and shall live eternally, (⁴¹⁴⁶John 14:6);

and [in] the pathway [thereof there is] no death; no condemnation to them that are in Christ, the way, and are justified by his righteousness; the law’s sentence of death shall not be executed on them, though it passed upon them in Adam; spiritual death shall not again prevail over those who are

passed from death to life; nor shall they be hurt at the second death; they shall never die that death, it shall have no power over them; life and immortality are the sure effects of being in the way of righteousness. The Targum renders it, “the way of the perverse”: and the Septuagint version, “of those that remember evil”: and the Syriac and Arabic versions, “the way of angry men is unto death”: and so the Vulgate Latin version,

“the out of the way path leads to death:”

and so some Hebrew copies read, instead of “no death, unto death”; but the most read as we do, and which the Jewish commentators follow.