

## CHAPTER 14

**Ver. 1.** *Every wise woman buildeth her house*, etc.] Not only by her fruitfulness, as Leah and Rachel built up the house of Israel; but by her good housewifery, prudent economy; looking well to the ways of her household; guiding the affairs of her house with discretion; keeping all things in a good decorum; and bringing up her children in virtue, and in the fear and admonition of the Lord. So Christ, who in this book goes by the name of “Wisdom”, or the wise woman, builds his house upon himself, the Rock; and all his people on their most holy faith, by means of the ministry of the word, and administration of ordinances: he guides and governs his house, where he is, as a Son in it and over it; and of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, taken care of, and wisely and plentifully provided for: and so Gospel ministers, who are wise to win souls, being well instructed in the kingdom of God; these “wise women”<sup>f384</sup>, so it is in the original text, or wise virgins; these wise master builders lay the foundation Christ ministerially, and build souls on it; and speak things to the edification of the church and people of God, and the building of them up in faith and holiness;

*but the foolish plucketh it down with her hands*; the Vulgate Latin version adds, “being built”; this she does by her idleness and laziness; by her lavish and profuse way of living; by her negligence and want of economy; by her frequenting playhouses, and attention to other diversions; and so her family and the affairs of it go to wreck and ruin. Thus the apostate church of Rome, who is called a “woman”, and may be said to be a “foolish” one, being a wicked one and a harlot; (see ~~617D~~ Revelation 17:2,3); pulls down the true church and house of God with both hands, as much as in her lies, by her false doctrines, and superstitious worship and idolatry; and by her murders and massacres of the saints, with the blood of whom she is said to be drunk; nay, not only pulls it down with her hands, but treads upon it with her feet, (~~617D~~ Revelation 11:2). So likewise all false teachers do as this foolish woman does, by their impure lives and impious doctrines, defile the temple of God, subvert the faith of many; by means of whom the tabernacle of David, or house of God, is fallen down; the ruins and breaches of which Christ will repair in the latter day.

**Ver. 2.** *He that walketh in his uprightness feareth the Lord*, etc.] It is plain that the fear of the Lord is upon the heart and before the eyes of such that walk according to the word of God, with a sincere desire to glorify him; for it is by the fear of the Lord that men depart from evil, and because of that they cannot do what others do; and therefore when a man walks uprightly, and his conversation is in all holiness and godliness, it shows that the fear of God has a place in his heart, which influences his outward behaviour;

*but [he that is] perverse in his ways despiseth him*; either God himself, whom the upright walker fears; for he that acts perversely, contrary to the law of God, or transgresses that, and goes out of the way, despises God the lawgiver, tramples upon his authority, stretches out his hand, and commits acts of hostility against him; and he that perverts the Gospel of Christ despises his ministers, and despises Christ himself, and him that sent him. Or else the meaning is, that such a perverse walker despises him that fears the Lord; so Aben Ezra interprets it; and such are generally the contempt of wicked men: to this sense is the Vulgate Latin version,

“he that walks in a right way, and fears God, is despised by him that walks in an infamous way;”

but the Septuagint and Arabic versions render it, “is despised”: meaning the perverse man.

**Ver. 3.** *In the mouth of the foolish [is] a rod of pride*, etc.] A proud tongue, or a tongue speaking proud and haughty things; with which foolish or wicked men smite others and wound and hurt their reputation and credit, and in the issue hurt themselves also; their tongue is not only a rod to others, but a scourge to themselves, or is the cause of evil coming upon them; such was the tongue of Pharaoh, as Jarchi on the place observes, (<sup><1018></sup>Exodus 5:2); and of those the psalmist speaks of, (<sup><1073></sup>Psalms 73:9); and particularly of antichrist, whose mouth is opened in blasphemies against God, and his tabernacle, and his saints, (<sup><6115></sup>Revelation 13:5,6);

*but the lips of the wise shall preserve them*; from speaking such proud and haughty things against God and men; or from being hurt by the tongues of men or their own; yea, what coaxes out of their mouth is confounding and destructive to their enemies, (<sup><6115></sup>Revelation 11:5).

**Ver. 4.** *Where no oxen [are] the crib [is] clean*, etc.] Or “empty”<sup>f385</sup>, so Jarchi and Aben Ezra. Oxen were used in Judea in several parts of

husbandry; in ploughing the land, bringing home the corn, and in threshing or treading it out, (<sup><f320></sup>Deuteronomy 22:10 25:4). Now where these are not, or not used, where husbandry is neglected, there is no straw in the crib for beasts, and much less food for men; or rather, no corn or “wheat”<sup>f386</sup> on the “threshingfloor”<sup>f387</sup>, or in the barn, granary, or storehouse; for so the same word is rendered, (<sup><2f105></sup>Jeremiah 50:26); and in this manner it is interpreted by Gersom here, as also by Kimchi<sup>f388</sup>: the word translated “clean” is used for “wheat”, (<sup><30f5></sup>Amos 8:5). By supplying the negative particle, the whole may be rendered thus; “where no oxen are, the threshingfloor”, “granary”, or storehouse, “is without wheat”; or there is no wheat “on the floor”, or “in the barn”, etc. the note of Jarchi on the text is,

“where there are no scholars of the wise men, there is no instruction in the constitutions.”

But much better is the mystical sense, thus; that where there are no ministers of the Gospel, there is no food for souls. Oxen are an emblem of faithful and laborious ministers. The ox was one of the emblems in the cherubim, which design Gospel ministers; the names by which oxen are called agree with them. Here are two words used of them in the text; the one comes from a root which signifies to “teach”, “lead”, “guide”, and “govern”; and the same word for “oxen” signifies “teachers”, “leaders”, “guides”, and “governors”; names which most properly belong to ministers of the word: the other word comes from a root which signifies to “see”, to “look”; because these creatures are sharp sighted. Ministers are seers, overseers, and as John’s living creatures in (<sup><60f5></sup>Revelation 4:6); one of which was an ox, were full of eyes, within, and before, and behind. So ministers of the word had need to have good sight, to look into the Scriptures, and search them; to look to themselves and to their flock, and to look out to discover enemies, and danger by them; and to look into their own experience, and into things both past and to come. There is a likeness in ministers to these creatures, as to the nature of them; they are clean, creatures, as such should be that minister in holy things; and chew the cud, as such should revolve in their minds and constantly meditate upon divine things; and, like them, are patient and quiet under the yoke; and are not only strong to labour, but very laborious in the word and doctrine; submit to the yoke, draw the plough of the Gospel; bring home souls to Christ, to his church, and to heaven; and tread out the corn, the mysteries of grace, out of the sacred writings. Now where there are no such laborious and

diligent ministers of the word, as there are none in the apostate church of Rome, there is no spiritual food for the souls of men; but a famine of the word, and men perish for lack of knowledge;

*but much increase [is] by the strength of the ox*; as there is a large increase of the fruits of the earth, through the tillage of it by proper instruments; as by the strong and laborious ox, whose strength is employed in ploughing the ground<sup>f389</sup> and treading the corn; which is put for all means of husbandry, where that is used or not: so through the unwearied labours of Gospel ministers, the blessing of God attending them, there is much spiritual food; (see <sup><4033></sup>Proverbs 13:23). There is an increase of converts, a harvest of souls is brought in; and an increase of gifts and of grace, and of spiritual light and knowledge, and plenty of provisions; which spiritual increase, through the ministry of the word, is owing to God, (<sup><4116></sup>1 Corinthians 3:6,7).

**Ver. 5.** *A faithful witness will not lie*, etc.] For that would be contrary to his character as faithful; and as he will not witness to a falsehood upon oath in a court of judicature, so neither will he tell a lie in common conversation. This may be applied to Gospel ministers, who are witnesses of Christ; the Gospel they preach is a testimony concerning him, and they bear a faithful witness to the truth; nor will they, knowingly and willingly, deliver out a falsehood, or a doctrinal lie, since “no lie is of the truth”, (<sup><4121></sup>1 John 2:21); the character of a faithful witness is given to Christ, (<sup><4115></sup>Revelation 1:5 3:14); who is a “witness” of his father’s love and grace, of his mind and will, and of the doctrines of the Gospel relating to himself, and the method of salvation by him; and he is “faithful” to him that appointed him; nor can he nor will he lie, for he is “truth” itself;

*but a false witness will utter lies*; or “blow”<sup>f390</sup> them out, and spread them abroad in great plenty; he will not stick to tell them, and, having no conscience, will utter them as fast as he can, with all boldness and confidence; for one that fears not to bear testimony to a falsehood upon oath, will not scruple to lie in common talk. Or the words, “nay” be rendered, “he that uttereth lies [will be] a false witness”; he that accustoms himself to lying, in his conversation with men in private company, will become a false witness upon occasion in a public court of judicature: such an one is not to be depended on; lesser sins lead to greater, lying to perjury. So false teachers, and the followers of the man of sin, speak lies in

hypocrisy, doctrinal ones, which they are given up to believe; and such as do so are false witnesses, deceivers, and antichrist.

**Ver. 6.** *A scorner seeketh wisdom, and [findeth it] not,* etc.] So the scornful Greeks, that scoffed at the plainness and simplicity of the Gospel, sought natural wisdom, and thought they found it, and professed they had; but professing themselves to be wise they became fools, and with all their wisdom knew not God; and false teachers, that boasted of their evangelical wisdom, and of their great attainments in Gospel light, and derided others, were ever learning, and never came to the knowledge of the truth; and the scornful Jews, that mocked at the true Messiah, would seek him, the Wisdom of God, as they have done, and find him not; (see <sup><4073></sup>John 7:34); Men often seek for wisdom in a wrong way and manner, in the use of wrong means; and seek it of wrong persons, and to wrong ends and purposes, and so seek amiss and find not; and some seek for wisdom, even evangelical wisdom, in a scornful manner, in a jeering sarcastic way, as the scoffing Athenians did, (<sup><4478></sup>Acts 17:18,19); and find it not, nor Christ the substance of it, and so perish for lack of knowledge of him;

*but knowledge [is] easy unto him that understandeth;* the knowledge of Wisdom, or of Christ, is easy to him that has a spiritual understanding given him; the knowledge of the Gospel, and the doctrines of it, is easy to him to whom it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven; there is nothing perverse or froward in the words and doctrines of Christ; they are all plain to man whose understanding is opened by the Spirit of God; especially such as relate to the glory of Christ's person, and to the way of life and salvation by him; (see <sup><4088></sup>Proverbs 8:8,9).

**Ver. 7.** *Go from the presence of a foolish man,* etc.] A wicked one; avoid him, shun his company, depart from him, have no fellowship with him, it, being dangerous, infectious, and hurtful;

*when thou perceivest not [in him] the lips of knowledge;* when it is observed that his lips pour out foolishness, what is corrupt and unsavoury, unchaste and filthy; what does not minister grace to the hearers, nor is for the use of edifying, nor any ways improving in useful knowledge, but all the reverse: the Targum is,

“for there is no knowledge in his lips,”

in what is expressed by them; some understand this ironically, and render the words thus, “go right against a foolish man”<sup>f391</sup>; join in company with

him, “and thou shalt not know the lips of knowledge”, or learn anything by him; if you have a mind to be ignorant, keep company with a foolish man; so Jarchi and Gersom: or rather to this sense the words may be rendered, “go to a foolish man, seeing thou knowest not the lips of knowledge”<sup>f392</sup>, since thou dost not approve of wise and knowing men, whose lips would teach knowledge; and despisest the Gospel, and Gospel ministers the pope of Rome, as Cocceius on the text serves, and hear him, what his holiness and infallibility says; or some other false teacher.

**Ver. 8.** *The wisdom of the prudent [is] to understand his way*, etc.] The way of his calling, in which he should abide, and how to manage it in the best manner; the way of his duty, that he may walk inoffensively both towards God and men; and the way of life and salvation, which is by Jesus Christ, which to understand and to walk in is the highest wisdom and prudence;

*but the folly of fools [is] deceit*: or “the wisdom of fools”, which the opposition requires, and is meant, and is what the Holy Ghost calls “folly”, as elsewhere, (<sup>f438</sup>1 Corinthians 3:19); this is itself “deceit”; it is science, falsely so called; it lies in tricking and deceiving; and the issue of it is, not only the deceiving of others, but themselves also: such is the folly of the man of sin and followers, which lies in deceiving the inhabitants of the earth with their sorceries and superstitions, with their lying wonders and miracles; (see <sup>f410</sup>2 Thessalonians 2:10) (<sup>f634</sup>Revelation 13:14 18:23).

**Ver. 9.** *Fools make a mock at sin*, etc.] At sinful actions, their own or others; they make light of them, a jest of them, call evil good, and good evil; take pleasure in doing them themselves, and in those that do them; yea, sport themselves with the mischief that arises from them unto others; they make a mock at reproofs for them, and scoff at those that instruct and rebuke them; and laugh at a future state, and an awful judgment they are warned of, and in a scoffing manner say, “where is the promise of his coming?” Some, as Aben Ezra observes, render it “a sin offering”; and interpret it of the sin offerings and sacrifices under the law, as derided by wicked men; but may be better applied to the sin offering or sacrifice of Christ, who made his soul an offering for sin, to make satisfaction and atonement for the sins of his people; this is mocked at by false teachers, who deny it; and is exposed to derision and contempt by the Papists, by their bloodless sacrifice of the mass, and by their merits and works of supererogation, which they prefer to the sacrifice and satisfaction of Christ.

The words may be rendered, “sin makes a mock of fools”<sup>f393</sup>; it deceives them, it promises them pleasure, or profit, or honour, but gives them neither, but all the reverse;

*but among the righteous [there is] favour*: they enjoy the favour of God and man; or “there is good will”<sup>f394</sup>, good will towards men; they are so far from making a mock at sin, and taking delight in the mischief that comes by it to others, that they are willing to do all good offices unto men, and by love to serve their friends and neighbours: or “there is acceptance”<sup>f395</sup>; they are accepted with God upon the account of the sin offering, sacrifice, and satisfaction of Christ, which fools mock and despise.

**Ver. 10.** *The heart knoweth his own bitterness*, etc.] Or “the bitterness of his soul”<sup>f396</sup>, the distress of his conscience, the anguish of his mind; the heart of man only knows the whole of it; something of it may be known to others by his looks, his words, and gestures, but not all of it; (see <sup><410></sup>1 Corinthians 2:10 <sup><421></sup>Job 23:2); bitterness of soul often arises from outward troubles, pains, and diseases of body, losses, crosses, and disappointments, (<sup><4010></sup>1 Samuel 1:10,15 <sup><4310></sup>Job 3:20 7:11 10:1 <sup><4385></sup>Isaiah 38:15,17).

Sometimes it is upon spiritual accounts; but this is not the case of every heart; men may be in the gall of bitterness, and have no bitterness of soul on account of it; the sensualist and voluptuous worldling feels nothing of it, nor the hardened and hardhearted sinner; only such who are awakened and convinced by the Spirit of God; to these, as sin is a bitter thing in itself, it is so to their taste; it makes bitter work for repentance in them; it brings trembling and astonishment on them; fills them with shame and confusion of face, causes self-loathing and abhorrence, and severe reflections upon themselves; seeing sin in its own colours, they are cut to the heart and killed with it; they are pressed down with the guilt of sin, and the load of it; and, having no views of pardon, are in that distress and bitterness of soul which no tongue can express nor heart conceive but what has felt the same;

*and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy*; or “mingle himself with it”<sup>f397</sup>; he does not share in it or partake of it; this is more especially true of spiritual joy, which, as it is unspeakable to the man that possesses it, it passes the understanding of a natural man; he can form no true idea of it: spiritual joy is what a sensible sinner partakes of upon the Gospel, the joyful sound of salvation, reaching his ears and his heart, at the revelation of Christ in him and to him, as a Saviour; when an application of pardoning grace is made to his soul, and he has a view of the complete righteousness



of Christ, and his interest in it, and can see all his sins expiated and stoned for by his sacrifice; when he is favoured with a sight of the fulness of grace in Christ, and of the spiritual and eternal salvation he has wrought out for him; and likewise when he is indulged with a visit from him, and enjoys communion with him; and when he has a glimpse of eternal glory, and a well grounded hope of right unto it, and meetness for it: now a stranger, one that is a stranger to God and godliness, to Christ and the way of salvation by him, to the Spirit and his work of grace upon the heart, to the Gospel and the doctrines of it, to his own heart and the plague of it, to the saints and communion with them; knows nothing at all of the above joy, nor can he interrupt it, nor take it away.

**Ver. 11.** *The house of the wicked shall be overthrown*, etc.] Houses built to perpetuate their names and eternize their memory; and which, though built high and stately, strong and firm, yet by one accident or another shall come to ruin, when they imagined they would continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations, (<sup><1991></sup>Psalm 49:11); or their families shall become extinct, none to be their heirs and inherit their estates, and transmit their name to posterity; or the substance of their house, their riches and wealth, especially that gotten dishonestly, shall waste away: and in a spiritual sense the house or hope of such, as to eternal salvation, being built on the sand, or something of their own, their external duties, or an outward profession of religion, shall not stand; though they lean upon it and would hold it fast, but it shall fall, and great shall be the fall of it; and particularly the apostate church of Rome, that synagogue of Satan, that habitation of devils, that hold of every foul spirit, and cage of every unclean bird, shall be overthrown with an utter overthrow, shall fall and never rise more, (<sup><681></sup>Revelation 18:2);

*but the tabernacle of the upright shall flourish*: their low and mean cottages, which are put up quickly, like tents movable from place to place, yet shall be established, (<sup><215></sup>Proverbs 15:25); their families shall become numerous like a flock of sheep, (<sup><1974></sup>Psalm 107:41,42); and their substance increase; they shall flourish in worldly things and grow rich, or however in spirituals, in girls and grace; shall flourish in the courts of the Lord, and tabernacles of the most High, like palm trees and cedars; for the allusion is to the flourishing of trees, (<sup><1923></sup>Psalm 92:13,14); especially they will be in such flourishing circumstances in the latter day, when antichrist will be destroyed, and when the tabernacle of God will be with men, (<sup><1978></sup>Psalm 72:8 <sup><621></sup>Revelation 21:3).



**Ver. 12.** *There is a way which seemeth right unto a man*, etc.] As the way of sin and wickedness does, it promising much carnal pleasure and mirth; there is a great deal of company in it, it is a broad road, and is pleasant, and seems right, but it leads to destruction; so the way of the hypocrite and Pharisee that trusts to his own righteousness, and despises others, and even the righteousness of Christ; or however does not submit to it, but tramples upon him, and counts the blood of the covenant an unholy thing, and so is deserving of sorer punishment than the profane sinner; yet on account of his good works, as he calls them, fancies himself to be in a fair way for heaven and happiness; so Popery, through the pomp and grandeur and gaudiness of worship, through the lying miracles of the priests, and the air of devotion that appears in them, seems to be a right way;

*but the end thereof [are] the ways of death*; which lead unto eternal death; for that is the wages of sin, let it appear in what shape it will.

**Ver. 13.** *Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful*, etc.] As Belshazzar's was in the midst of his feast and jollity, when he saw the writing on the wall; so sin may stare a man in the face, and guilt load his conscience and fill him with sorrow, amidst his merriment; a man may put on a merry countenance, and feign a laugh, when his heart is very sorrowful; and oftentimes this sorrow comes by sinful laughter, by mocking at sin and jesting at religion;

*and the end of that mirth [is] heaviness*: sometimes in this life a sinner mourns at last, and mourns for his wicked mirth, or that he has made himself so merry with religious persons and things, and oftentimes when it is too late; so the end of that mirth the fool in the Gospel promised himself was heaviness, when his soul was required of him; this was the case of the rich man who had his good things here, and his evil things hereafter.

**Ver. 14.** *The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways*, etc.] One that is a backslider at heart, whose heart departeth from the Lord; in whom there is an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; and indeed apostasy begins at the heart, and shows itself in the life and conversation: there may be a backsliding when the heart does not wickedly depart from God; but is through the infirmity of the flesh and the force of temptation; from which backslidings the Lord's people are recovered, and which are healed by his grace; but here such an one is meant who willingly and heartily backslides; and such shall have the reward of their hands and actions given them, or the full and due punishment of their sins; they shall

have their bellyful of their own wicked ways and works, the just recompense of reward for them;

*and a good man [shall be satisfied] from himself*; shall eat the fruit of his own doings, shall be blessed in his deeds, and have peace and satisfaction therein; though not salvation by them, or for them: he shall be satisfied with the grace of God bestowed on him and wrought in him; and, from a feeling experience of the grace of God within him, shall be satisfied that he has in heaven a better and an enduring substance; or he shall be satisfied “from above himself”<sup>f398</sup>, from the grace that is in Christ, out of the fulness which is in him; and shall be filled with all the fulness of God he is capable of; and especially in the other world, when he shall awake in his likeness. The Targum is,

“a good man shall be satisfied with his fear;”

and so the Syriac version, with the fear of his soul; it may be rendered, as by the Vulgate Latin version, “a good man shall be above him”<sup>f399</sup>; that is, above the backslider; shall be better tilled, and be more happy than he.

**Ver. 15.** *The simple believeth every word*, etc.] Every thing that is said to him every story that is told him, and every promise that is made him; and so is easily imposed upon, and drawn in to his hurt: every word of God, or doctrine of his, ought to be believed; because whatever he says is true, he cannot lie; every word of his is pure, free from all error and falsehood; it is a tried word, and found to bear a faithful testimony, and, if we receive the witness of then, the witness of God is greater; besides, his word is profitable for instruction, and for the increase of peace, joy, and comfort, and is effectual to saving purposes: every word of Christ is to be believed, who is a teacher sent from God; whose mission is confirmed by miracles, and whose doctrine is not his own as man, but his Father’s; he is the faithful witness, and truth itself; his words are more than human, and besides are pleasant and wholesome: and every word and doctrine of his apostles, who received their mission commission, and doctrines from him, is also to be believed; but every spirit, or everyone that pretends to be a spiritual man, and to have spiritual gifts, is not to be believed; but the words and doctrines of ordinary men and ministers are to be first tried by the unerring rule of the sacred Scriptures; yea, the doctrines of the apostles were examined by them; (see [Gen](#) 1 John 4:1 [H71](#) Acts 17:11); they are “simple”, weak, silly, foolish persons, that believe all they hear, whether right or wrong, true or false, good or hurtful; they are children in

knowledge, who are tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, and are deceived with good words and fair speeches, (<sup>(4044)</sup>Ephesians 4:14) (<sup>(4168)</sup>Romans 16:18). This truly describes the followers of the man of sin; who give heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; who believe as the church believes; that believe with an implicit faith; believe every word and doctrine the pope and councils say they should, though ever so absurd; as, for instance, the doctrine of transubstantiation: these are “simple” or fools with a witness, who give up their understandings, and even their senses unto, and pin their faith upon, another;

*but the prudent [man] looketh well to his going;* or “its going”<sup>f400</sup>; to the course and tendency of the word he hears, or the doctrine which is proposed to his faith; he considers well whether it is agreeable or is contrary to the perfections of God; whether it derogates from the glory of any of the divine Persons; whether it makes for the magnifying the riches of God’s grace, and for the debasing of men; or for the depreciating of the one, and setting up of the other; and whether it is a doctrine according to godliness, or not, that tends to promote holiness of heart and life, or to indulge a loose conversation; and according to these criteria he judges and determines whether he shall believe it or not. Or, “to his going”; that is, to the going of the deceiver and impostor; he observes narrowly the methods he takes, the artifices he makes use of, the cunning sleight by which he lies in wait to deceive; how craftily he walks, and handles the word of God deceitfully; and he takes notice of his moral walk and conversation, and, as our Lord says, “ye shall know them by their fruits”, (<sup>(4176)</sup>Matthew 7:16). Or else the meaning is, and which seems to be the sense of our version, that he looks well unto, and carefully observes, his own goings; he takes heed to his ways, that they are right; that he is not in ways of his devising and choosing, but in God’s ways; in the way of life and salvation by Christ; in the path of faith on him, and in the way of holiness; that he has chosen the way of truth, and walks in that; and that every step he takes in doctrine is according to the word of truth; and that whatever he does in worship is agreeably to the divine rule; and that every path of duty he treads in is according to the same, and as he has Christ for a pattern, and the Spirit for a guide; and that his walk is as becomes the Gospel, worthy of the calling wherein he is called, and that it is circumspect and wise; and such a man may be truly said to be a “prudent” man: the Targum is,

“he attends to his good;”

and so he does.

**Ver. 16.** *A wise [man] feareth, and departeth from evil*, etc.] He fears God, and is careful not to offend him; wherefore he departs from sin, stands at a distance from it, abstains from all appearance of it; being influenced by the goodness and grace of God unto him, he fears the Lord and his goodness, and therefore avoids all occasions of sinning against him: his motive is not merely fear of punishment, as Jarchi, but a sense of goodness; and now, as it is through the influence of divine fear that men depart from evil; so to do this shows a good understanding, and that such a man is a wise man, (<sup><2016></sup>Proverbs 16:6 <sup><1828></sup>Job 28:28);

*but the fool rageth, and is confident*; he fears neither God nor men, he sets his mouth against both; he “rages” in heart, if not with his mouth, against God and his law, which forbid the practice of such sins he delights in; and against all good men, that admonish him of them, rebuke him for them, or dissuade him from them: and “is confident” that no evil shall befall him; he has no concern about a future state, and is fearless of hell and damnation, though just upon the precipice of ruin; yet, as the words may be rendered, “he goes on confidently”, nothing can stop him; he pushes on, regardless of the laws of God or men, of the advices and counsels of his friends, or of what will be the issue of his desperate courses in another world.

**Ver. 17.** [*He that is] soon angry dealeth foolishly*, etc.] A man that is quick and short, of a hasty spirit, and presently discovers anger and resentment in his face; he says and does many foolish things, which he afterwards is sorry for, and repents, and is ashamed of; and he is to be pitied and forgiven;

*and a man of wicked devices is hated*; one that hides his anger, covers his resentment, contrives schemes to revenge himself, and waits an opportunity to put them in execution, is justly hateful to God and men.

**Ver. 18.** *The simple inherit folly*, etc.] It is natural and hereditary to them, they are born like wild asses colts; the foolish sayings and proverbs, customs and practices, of their ancestors, though they have been demonstrated to be mere folly, yet these, their posterity, approve them; they love, like, and retain them as their patrimony, (<sup><18112></sup>Job 11:12) (<sup><19413></sup>Psalm 49:13). Such are the foolish traditions, customs, principles, and doctrines, of the church of Rome, handed down from father to son; and

because Popery is the religion they have been bred and brought up in, though so foolish and absurd, they will not relinquish it;

*but the prudent are crowned with knowledge*; natural, civil, and spiritual, especially the latter; evangelical knowledge, the knowledge of Christ, and of God in Christ, and of Gospel truths; they are honoured with an acquaintance with them; and they esteem the knowledge of these above all things else, and reckon all things else but loss and dung in comparison of them; they are as a crown unto them, and the knowledge of them is the way to the crown of life; yea, is itself life eternal, (<sup><518B></sup>Philippians 3:8 <sup><517B></sup>John 17:3). Or, they “crown themselves with knowledge”<sup>f401</sup>; they labour after it, pursue it with eagerness, follow on to know the Lord, and attain to a large share of it; surround, encompass, and lay hold upon it, and gird themselves about with this girdle of truth. Or, “they crown knowledge”<sup>f402</sup>; do honour to that, by putting it in practice; by adding to it temperance, and every virtue, and by bringing others to it; and are an ornament to it in their lives and conversation; they adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour.

**Ver. 19.** *The evil bow before the good*, etc.] Wicked men before good men. This, as Jarchi observes, respects future time; even the latter day glory, or the spiritual times of the Messiah, when the kingdom under the whole heaven shall be given to the saints of the most High: for though there may have been some few instances of this kind, as Haman bowing before Mordecai, and the Heathen emperors before Constantine; and there may be some now, in some cases where obligation requires; yet this is far from being general, as it will be in the spiritual reign of Christ; when the sons of those that afflicted the church will come bending to her, and they that have despised her shall bow themselves down at the soles of her feet; and even great personages too shall bow down and lick the dust of her feet; the kings of the earth, who before have been in confederacy with antichrist, and have persecuted the saints, now shall hate the whore, and honour the true church of Christ: this will be in the Philadelphian state, which is the same with the spiritual reign of Christ; such who called themselves Jews, and are not, shall come and worship before the feet of the church, and own that she and her members are the favourites of heaven, (<sup><217B></sup>Daniel 7:27) (<sup><242B></sup>Isaiah 49:23 60:14 <sup><618B></sup>Revelation 3:9);

*and the wicked at the gates of the righteous*; or, “come to the gates of the righteous”, as the Syriac version supplies it; they come and knock there,

stand and wait, or lay themselves down; become prostrate and humble supplicants for relief and protection, as beggars do. This may also respect their attendance at Wisdom's gates, at the gates of Zion, on public ordinances, for counsel and instruction, which before they despised, (<sup>208b</sup>Proverbs 8:34). The Septuagint version is, "shall serve thy gates"; that is, at them; (see <sup>230b</sup>Isaiah 60:11,12).

**Ver. 20.** *The poor is hated even of his own neighbour*, etc.] As well as of strangers; that is, he is shy of him; he does not care to take any notice of him, or be friendly with him, lest he should be burdensome to him. Poverty brings a man into contempt and disgrace; the same man, in affluence and indigence, is respected or disrespected: this is true, as Gersom observes, of a man that is poor, whether in money or in knowledge, in his purse or in his understanding;

*but the rich [hath] many friends*; or, "many [are] the lovers of the rich"<sup>f403</sup>: for the sake of their riches; either for the sake of honour or profit, or because the rich want nothing of them, or because they themselves may gain something by them: this also is observed by the above Jewish commentator to be true of the rich in substance or in wisdom; but the former sense is best; for a wise man, if poor in the world, is but little regarded.

**Ver. 21.** *He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth*, etc.] He that despiseth his neighbour in his heart, speaks slightly of him, overlooks him, is not friendly to him, will neither converse with him, nor relieve him in his necessity; for it seems to be understood of his poor neighbour; and so the Septuagint and Arabic versions render it, "he that despiseth the poor"; that despises him for his poverty; because of his pedigree and education, and the low circumstances he is in; or on account of his weakness and incapacity, or any outward circumstance that attends him; such an one sins very greatly, is guilty of a heinous sin; and he will be reckoned and dealt with as a sinner, and be condemned and punished, and so be unhappy and miserable;

*but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy [is] he*; or,

"that gives to the poor,"

as the Targum; who has compassion on him in his distress, and shows it by relieving him: he that shows favour to the meek and humble ones, as the word<sup>f404</sup> may be rendered, and as they generally are that are in affliction

and poverty, for these tend to humble men; and such who regard them in their low estate are “happy” or blessed; they are blessed in things temporal and spiritual, and both here and hereafter; (see <sup><1940></sup>Psalm 41:1-3 <sup><1087></sup>Matthew 5:7).

**Ver. 22.** *Do they not err that devise evil?* etc.] Certainly they do; they go astray from the right way, from the word of truth, from the Gospel of Christ, who contrive schemes to commit sin, and do mischief to their neighbours; or who “plough”<sup>f405</sup> it, and sow it, and expect a fine harvest; but they will be mistaken, and find it will not turn to account, and that they have took a wrong course, and have gone out of the way: none more mischievous devisers or contrivers of evil than the Papists, and none more sadly and fatally err;

*but mercy and truth [shall be] to them that devise good;* who devise liberal things, to do good to the poor and needy; to their neighbours, their fellow creatures and fellow Christians: such receive grace and “mercy” at the hands of God, and his “truth” will appear in making good all promises to them; mercy and truth will preserve them from the evil way, and guide them in the right way, so that they shall not err as others do; neither from the doctrines of grace and truth, nor from the practice of them.

**Ver. 23.** *In all labour there is profit,* etc.] Or “abundance”<sup>f406</sup>; much is got by it, food, raiment, riches, wealth, wisdom, honour; either with the labour of the hands or head, and nothing is to be got without labour; and he that is laborious in his calling, whether it be by manual operation, working with his hands that which is good; or by hard study, much reading, and constant meditation, is like to gain much for his own use and the good of others;

*but the talk of the lips [tendeth] only to penury;* or “want”<sup>f407</sup>, of food and raiment, the common necessities of life; a man that spends his time in idle talk, boasting of what he can do and does, and yet does nothing, is in a fair way to come to beggary: so all talk about wisdom, and knowledge, and religion, without making use of the proper means of improvement, tends to the poverty of the mind; and generally they are most empty of knowledge, natural or spiritual, that talk and brag most of it; empty casks make the greatest sound; good discourse, wholesome words, sound doctrine, thoroughly digested, tend indeed to edification, to the enriching of the mind; but vain words, the enticing words of men’s wisdom; logomachies, striving about words to no profit; and all great swelling words of vanity,



which are all mere lip labour; they tend to spiritual poverty and leanness of soul.

**Ver. 24.** *The crown of the wise [is] their riches*, etc.] Riches being used by them to increase and improve their knowledge and wisdom, and for the good of men, are an honour to them, and give them credit and reputation among men of sense and goodness; (see <sup>2071</sup>Ecclesiastes 7:11, 12);

*[but] the foolishness of fools [is] folly*; mere folly, extreme folly, just the same as it was; riches make them never the wiser; yea, their folly is oftentimes made more manifest through the ill use they make of their riches; spending them in the gratification of their sinful lusts; and making no use of them for their own improvement in knowledge, or for the good of their fellow creatures. The Targum is,

“the glory of fools is their folly;”

and that is no other than their shame, and in which they glory; such fools are wicked men.

**Ver. 25.** *A true witness delivereth souls*, etc.] Or, “a witness of truth”<sup>f408</sup>: one that witnesses truth upon oath in a court of judicature, he “delivers souls”; men, not one man only, but many; a whole family, or more, in danger of being ruined; he delivers them, as the Septuagint and Arabic versions add, “from evils”; from evil charges and accusations brought against them; from the oppression of their enemies, from the loss of their good name, and from ruin and destruction, that otherwise would have come upon them; he delivers their “lives”<sup>f409</sup>, as it may be rendered, in danger of being lost by false accusations: so a witness of the truth of Christ, or a faithful minister of the Gospel, not only saves himself, but them that hear him; and is an instrument of delivering the souls of men from error and damnation;

*but a deceitful [witness] speaketh lies*; boldly, openly, by wholesale; he blows them out<sup>f410</sup>, to the ruin of the good names and characters, and to the destruction of the lives, of the innocent; and so a false teacher, one that lies in wait to deceive, speaks lies in hypocrisy, doctrinal lies, to the ruin of the souls of men. The Targum is,

“he that speaketh lies is deceitful;”

he is “deceit”<sup>f411</sup> itself, as in the Hebrew text. Such is the man of sin, and such are his emissaries.

**Ver. 26.** *In the fear of the Lord [is] strong confidence*, etc.] Such who fear the Lord may be confident that he has a love to them, a delight in them; that his eye is upon them, and his heart towards them; and will communicate every needful good to them, and protect and defend them: or the Lord himself that is feared, who is the object of fear, called the fear of Isaac, (<sup><0314></sup>Genesis 31:42); he is a strong tower, a place of defence to those that fear him and trust in him, (<sup><0380></sup>Proverbs 18:10);

*and his children shall have a place of refuge*; the children of God, as those that fear him are; the Lord is a place of refuge to them, from the avenger of blood, from the vindictive justice of God; from the storm and tempest of divine wrath, and from the curses of a righteous law; as well as from the rage and persecutions of men.

**Ver. 27.** *The fear of the Lord [is] a fountain of life*, etc.] Where the true fear of God is, there is a real principle of grace, which is “a well of living water, springing up unto everlasting life”, (<sup><0044></sup>John 4:14); eternal life is connected with it; it makes meet for it, and issues in it: or the Lord, who is the object of fear, he is the fountain of life: as of natural, so of spiritual and eternal life; spiritual life springs from him, is supported and maintained by him, the consequence of which is life everlasting;

*to depart from the snares of death*; sins, transgressions, as Aben Ezra interprets it; these are the works of men’s hands, in which they are snared; these are the cords in which they are holden, and so die without instruction; the wages of them are death, even death eternal: likewise there are the snares of the world and of the devil, temptations to sin, with which being ensnared, lead to death; now the fear of the Lord is a means of delivering from and of avoiding those snares, and so of escaping death.

**Ver. 28.** *In the multitude of people [is] the king’s honour*, etc.] For it is a sign of a good and wise government, of clemency and righteousness being exercised, of liberty and property being enjoyed, of peace, plenty, and prosperity; which encourage subjects to serve their king cheerfully, and to continue under his reign and government peaceably; and which invites others from different parts to come and settle there also; by which the strength and glory of a king are much increased. This is true of the King of kings, of Jesus Christ, who is King of saints; his honour and glory, as

Mediator, lies in a large number of voluntary subjects, made “willing” to serve him “in the day of [his] power” upon them, as numerous as the drops of the morning “dew”, (<sup><4811></sup>Psalm 110:3); such as he had in the first times of the Gospel, both among the Jews and among the Gentiles; and as he will have more especially in the latter day, when those prophecies shall be fulfilled in (<sup><2804></sup>Isaiah 60:4-8); and so this is interpreted of the King Messiah, in an ancient writing<sup>f412</sup> of the Jews;

*but in the want of people [is] the destruction of the prince*; or, “the consternation”<sup>f413</sup> of him; if his people are destroyed in wars his ambition or cruelty has led him to; or they are driven out from his kingdom by persecution or oppression; hence follows a decay of trade, and consequently of riches; lack of cultivation of land, and so want of provision: in course of time there is such a decrease, that, as there are but few to carry on trade and till the land, so to fight for their prince, and defend his country; wherefore, when attacked by a foreign power, he is thrown into the utmost consternation, and is brought to destruction. This will be the case of the prince of darkness, the man of sin, antichrist; who, though however populous he may be, or has been, ruling over tongues, people, and nations, yet before long he will be deserted by them; one nation after another will fall off from him; they and their kings will hate him, make him bare and desolate, and burn him with fire, (<sup><6675></sup>Revelation 17:15,16). Some render it, “the consternation of leanness”<sup>f414</sup>; such consternation as causes leanness in a king.

**Ver. 29.** [*He that is slow to wrath [is] of great understanding*, etc.] Or “long in wrath”<sup>f415</sup>; it is long before he is angry; he is longsuffering, bears much and long, is very patient; such an one appears to understand himself and human nature, and has a great command over his passions; which shows him to be a man of great wisdom and understanding;

*but [he that is] hasty of spirit exalteth folly*; or is “short of spirit”<sup>f416</sup>; is soon angry; presently discovers resentment in his words, looks, and gestures; such an one “exalts folly”, prefers it to wisdom, sets it above himself, and makes it his master: or he “lifts” it<sup>f417</sup> up; exposes his folly to public view, so that it is seen of all men to his disgrace.

**Ver. 30.** *A sound heart [is] the life of the flesh*, etc.] A heart made so by the grace of God, in which are sound principles of truth, righteousness, and holiness; these preserve from sin, and so from many diseases; whereby the life of the flesh or body is kept safe and sound, or that is kept in health and

vigour; or a “quiet heart”<sup>f418</sup>; a heart free from wrath, anger, and envy, and such like passions and perturbations; this contributes much to the health of the body, and the comfort of life: or a “healing heart”, or “spirit”<sup>f419</sup>; that is humane, kind, and friendly; that pities and heals the distresses of others, and makes up differences between persons at variance: such an one is “the life of flesh”<sup>f420</sup>, as in the original text; or of men, of the same flesh and blood; the life of others, as well as of his own flesh; such an one contributes to the comfortable living of others as well as of himself;

*but envy the rottenness of the bones*; a man that envies the happiness and prosperity of others, this preys upon his own spirits, and not only wastes his flesh, but weakens and consumes the stronger parts of his body, the bones; it is as a “moth” within him, as the Arabic version: the Targum is,

“as rottenness in wood, so is envy in the bones;”

hence Ovid<sup>f421</sup> calls it “*livor edax*”, and so Martial<sup>f422</sup>.

**Ver. 31.** *He that oppressteth the poor reproacheth his Maker*, etc.] That does him any injury, either by scoffing at him, and reproaching him for his poverty; or by vexatious law suits; or by withholding from him his wages; or not giving him that relief which he ought: such an one not only injures the poor man; but reproaches God that made him, not only a man, but a poor man; and who is the Maker of the rich man also, (<sup>311B</sup>Proverbs 22:2);

*but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor*; he that is desirous of honouring God, and glorifying him, will give of his substance to the poor; having compassion on him in his necessitous circumstances, will relieve him; and in so doing he honours God, whose image the poor man bears, and who has commanded him so to do. The words may be rendered, “he that hath mercy on the poor honoureth him”; that is, his Maker: so the Targum,

“he that hath mercy on him that suffers injury honoureth him.”

**Ver. 32.** *The wicked is driven away in his wickedness*, etc.] That is, at death, as the opposite clause shows; he is driven out of the world, his heart is so much set on; from all the good things of it, which are his all, his portion; from the place of his abode, which will know him no more; and from all his friends and acquaintance, with whom he has lived a merry and jovial life; he shall be driven out of light into darkness, even into outer darkness; into hell, which is a place of torment, a prison, a lake burning

with fire and brimstone; he shall be driven as a beast is, driven: and such is the man of sin, who shall go into perdition; and such are his followers, and that will be their end, (~~610~~ Revelation 13:1,11 17:8); he shall be driven sore against his will; the righteous depart, and desire to depart; but the wicked are driven, and go unwillingly, with reluctance; they would fain flee out of the hand of God, and yet they have no power to withstand; go they must, they are driven forcibly and irresistibly: and it may also denote the suddenness of their death, and the swiftness of their destruction. The driver is not mentioned; it may be understood of the Lord himself, who, in and by a storm of his wrath, hurls them out of their place; or of death, as having a commission from him, when a man has no power over his spirit to retain it; or of angels, good or bad, employed by the Lord in driving their souls to hell upon their separation from their bodies. The circumstance, “in his wickedness”, may denote their dying in their sins, unrepented of, unforgiven, and without faith in Christ; in the midst of them, in their full career of sin, under the power, faith, and guilt of it; and as sometimes, in the horror of a guilty conscience, in black despair, without any hope or view of pardon, the reverse of the righteous man; and so will have all their wickedness to answer for, it being not taken away, but found upon them: or this may be expressive of the cause of the wicked man’s being driven away, namely, his wickedness; for so it may be rendered and interpreted, “because of his wickedness”,<sup>f423</sup> it is for that he shall die and go to hell: or it may be rendered, “into his evil”<sup>f424</sup>; and so denote the everlasting punishment into which he shall go, being driven;

*but the righteous hath hope in his death*; not in the death of the wicked man, as Aben Ezra, when he shall be delivered, and he can do him no more hurt; but in his own death; he dies as other men; his righteousness, though it delivers him from eternal death, yet not from a corporeal one; though the death of a righteous man is different from others; he dies in Christ, in the faith of him, and in hope of eternal life by him; and to die his death is very desirable: he has a hope of interest in the blessings of grace and glory; which is a good hope through grace; is wrought in him at regeneration; and is founded on that righteousness from whence he is denominated righteous, even the righteousness of Christ; and is of singular use and advantage to him in life: and this grace he exercises at death; it carries him through the valley of death, and above the fears of it; he hopes, though he dies, he shall rise again; and he hopes to be in heaven and happiness, immediately upon

his dissolution, and to all eternity; he hopes to see God, be with Christ, angels and good men, for evermore. Jarchi's note is,

“when he dies, he trusts he shall enter into the garden of Eden, or paradise.”

**Ver. 33.** *Wisdom resteth in the heart of him that hath understanding,* etc.]

It is in his heart, as the treasury where it is laid up, and where it is kept in safety; here it lies hid and undiscerned, unmolested and undisturbed; no noise is made about it, or any ostentation of it; it dwells quietly and constantly there;

*but [that which is] in the midst of fools is made known;* the least share of knowledge which such persons have, or think they have, does not lie long in the midst of them; they take every opportunity of showing it to others, or of letting others know what they have attained to; and thereby, instead of getting the character of wise and prudent men, obtain that of fools; for, though a prudent man is communicative of his knowledge to others, it is at proper times, and in proper places, and to proper persons, which fools do not observe; but, without any manner of judgment or discretion, or regard to persons, places, and seasons, vainly thrust out their knowledge, and so proclaim their folly. The Syriac version is,

“in the heart of fools it shall not be known;”

it has no place there.

**Ver. 34.** *Righteousness exalteth a nation,* etc.] Administered by the government, and exercised by subjects towards one another; doing justice between man and man: this exalts a nation, as it did the people of Israel, while practised among them; this sets a people above their neighbours, and high in the esteem of God and men; and is attended with privileges and blessings, which make a nation great and honourable. Some understand this of aims deeds, or beneficence to the poor; which, both in the Hebrew and Greek languages, is called righteousness; (see Gill on <sup>4001</sup>Matthew 6:1”). It may be put for the whole of true religion, which is an honour to a nation, where it obtains; and is what makes the holy nation, and peculiar people, so truly illustrious; and particularly the righteousness of Christ makes such who are interested in it really great and noble, and promotes and exalts them to heaven and happiness;

*but sin [is] a reproach to any people*; where vice reigns, iniquity abounds, profaneness, impiety, and immorality of all sorts prevail, a people become mean and despicable; they fall into poverty and contempt; are neither able to defend themselves, nor help their neighbours, and so are despised by them. The word rendered “reproach” most commonly signifies “mercy” or goodness; and some render it, “and the mercy of a people is a sin offering”<sup>f425</sup>; or as one: or it is so “to the nations”; it is as good as a sacrifice for sin, of which the word is sometimes used, or better, more acceptable to God, “who will have mercy, and not sacrifice”, (<sup>4093</sup>Matthew 9:13); even beneficence and kindness to the poor, the same with righteousness, as before. I think it may be as well rendered, “the piety” or religion “of the nations is sin”<sup>f426</sup>; it being idolatry, as Aben Ezra observes: such is the religion of the antichristian nations, who worship idols of gold and silver; and though they may afflict themselves, as Gersom remarks of the idolatrous nations, with fasting and penance, with whippings and scourgings; yet it is nothing else but sin, will worship, and superstition.

**Ver. 35.** *The king’s favour [is] toward a wise servant*, etc.] Who does his prince’s business well, committed to him; manages all his affairs wisely and prudently; is diligent and careful to do everything for the king’s honour, and the good of his subjects; such an one has a share in royal favour, a place in the affections of his master; and is sure to be promoted to honour by him, and exalted to higher places of trust and profit, as well as to be protected and defended by him: so Christ, the King of kings, shows favour to his wise and faithful servants, (<sup>4122</sup>Luke 12:42-44);

*but his wrath is [against] him that causeth shame*; who neglects his business, or does it foolishly; in such a manner as his prince is ashamed of him, and which brings shame and disgrace to himself; all which provokes the anger of his master, who discharges him from his service, and this fixes a mark of infamy upon him; (see <sup>4125</sup>Luke 12:45-48).